

Think You Have Your Pick Of Top It Talent In Today's Market? Think again.

EVEN WITH A RELATIVELY HIGHER IT UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, EMPLOYERS SEEKING THE BEST WORKER REQUIRE STRONG VALUE PROPOSITIONS.

While the national unemployment rate rises, a Towers Perrin study performed in late 2008 cites that 89% of companies do not plan large scale reductions. What's more, a recent Veritude study indicates that 62% of companies plan to continue the same rate of hiring or even increase it in 2009. What is the net result? Even though IT unemployment has likely grown from the 3.3% rate BLS reported in Q4 2008, it is not likely to be more than 5%. This means that approximately 95 out of every 100 IT employees are still at work. (For certain highly marketable skill sets, such as software engineers, that percentage is highly probable to hold near 98% even as economy weakens.)

Consequently, it's no surprise to me that TEKsystems' most recent customer studies, as well as SIA's and Veritude's analyses, show IT employers' top concern to remain what it was in 2008: "finding qualified talent."

Layoffs affecting between 1% and 5% of a company's workforce are most likely the result of top-grading rather than cutting deep into an organization's talent pool. Finding top talent - those employees who enable an organization to "do more with less" and who have the necessary skills to support mission-critical engagements - is still no easy task. First, employers need to know where to look for the best professionals. Of equal if not greater importance, they must understand how to approach these professionals so their solicitations stand out among the sea of 50 plus recruiting calls the average IT worker receives each month (TEKsystems Technical Professional market study, 2008).

Today, employees' job security is low. They may humor the recruiting solicitations they receive to accumulate some back-up options should they find themselves out of work. Nonetheless, they are fearful of jumping ship to new and uncertain opportunities when they currently have bird-in-hand.

So what's the bottom line for an IT manager looking for quality staff members? Especially in a weakened economy, your openings must stand out significantly to catch the attentions of the best technical professionals. More specifically, electronic job descriptions outlining your positions' daily responsibilities and technical requirements aren't going to cut it when it comes to recruiting top talent. Every position has at least that much to offer. A compelling set of reasons your specific opportunity is one of the best on the market is essential to attracting the cream of the crop.

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What I'm talking about here is, of course, an Employee Value Proposition, known as EVP for short. Most of my clients have heard of this buzz word, and assume they are off to the races once they've added details about the salary and benefits to the job description. While compensation is critical, an EVP extends beyond compensation into the "intangibles" that can make or break intrinsic job satisfaction.

In addition to the basics — duties, location, rate, duration, etc. — the top professionals in the market want to know about the security and stability your company offers. They are also interested in the projects they'll support, the IT culture, the manager they will work for, and why people enjoy working at your company. More often than not, this is the type of information that requires a verbal dialogue between recruiter and hiring manager, or even recruiter and project team.

Helpful Components of an Employee Value Proposition (in addition to job duties and compensation):

- **Company overview:** What are the mission, vision, and history of the organization? Where does the company rank in its industry? What are the reasons for its success? What is its strategy going forward?
- **Group overview:** What are the goals and definitions of success for the group the open position supports? What critical role does it play in helping the organization execute its strategy?
- **Manager style:** What is the background of the direct manager of the position? What makes him great in his role? What do others appreciate about working with him?
- **Career growth opportunities:** Is there a defined path? What have others in the role previously been able to achieve as next steps in terms of their careers? With what other roles does this position interact? How visible are the projects?
- **Training and development:** Does the company provide tuition reimbursement and/or complementary training? How often and how robust is the performance review process?
- **Employee culture:** What values and behaviors define the organization's culture? Why do people enjoy working at the company? What is the average tenure? In what specific ways does the company demonstrate how it values its employees (special perks, events, work / life programs, etc.)?

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Certainly, such a dialogue does take upfront time and energy. But, I can assure you this is an investment with a solid return to the IT manager. With more IT candidates entering the market, each job opening is likely to have a high number of applicants. By enabling your recruiters to source and screen candidates with a solid EVP, you can avoid the time drain of sorting through unqualified resumes, chip away at the time your positions remain unfilled, and prevent attrition issues which cost you more time and money in the long run.



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