



IT WORKFORCE PERSPECTIVES



To optimize how organizations attract, develop and retain great IT people, it is critical to evaluate what happens at the line levels of IT and how organizations source, screen, onboard and manage their workforce. TEKsystems' IT Talent Management Survey series provides insight into what's on the mind of IT leaders and IT workers alike.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A QUALITY SCREENING PROCESS

Having a successful screening process in place can make the difference between finding the perfect fit for your team and making a bad hiring decision.

A quality screening process is critical to business success. Many staffing firms claim to be dedicated to screening candidates thoroughly. But few have a screening process in place with tangible results and outcomes that can prove their due diligence.

TEKsystems surveyed more than 2,000 IT professionals and more than 1,500 IT leaders. IT professionals provided specific insight from the employee's perspective, and the leaders who responded provided their insight from the employer's perspective. We asked each group to share insights on what most screening processes are like, what methods work best to qualify IT skills and what information they look for when making decisions about job opportunities. This paper explores the survey's findings.

Every corner cut can cost you

Businesses who commit to building and executing a quality screening process significantly improve their chances of identifying a candidate who is the right fit for the position and who integrates well with the company's corporate culture.

Eighty-one percent of IT professionals and 95 percent of IT leaders surveyed indicate the more thorough the screening process, the better the chances of making a high-quality match for both the candidate seeking employment and the employer. Conducting screening stages such as in-person interviews, technical assessments

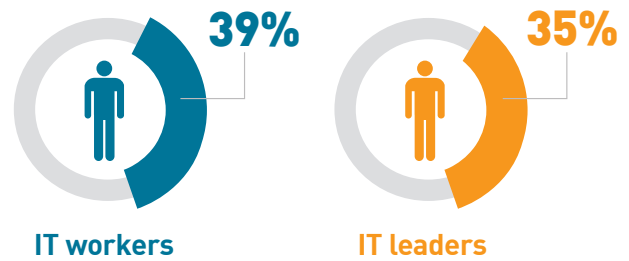
and detailed reference checks are big investments in time. However, not spending quality time on these important screening functions is costly. Hiring the wrong person drains organizational productivity, team morale, customer satisfaction and even competitive advantage in the marketplace. According to a recent CareerBuilder survey, 24 percent of U.S. employers estimate that a single bad hire can cost them more than \$50,000. Hiring the wrong person also usually means rework. The employer has to start the search and screening process all over again to identify a candidate who performs well and demonstrates potential to establish tenure within the organization.

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Is the resume you are reviewing 100 percent accurate?

In today's competitive marketplace, job seekers realize the pressure to differentiate themselves and sometimes resort to questionable tactics. Thirty-nine percent of IT professionals and 35 percent of IT leaders say that most IT resumes contain outright lies. Sixty-three percent of professionals and 77 percent of leaders believe most IT resumes exaggerate the job seeker's work experience. Along the same lines, 64 percent of professionals and 78 percent of leaders say most IT resumes contain buzzwords that are completely irrelevant to the job seeker's actual work experience.

But perhaps most troubling is that two out of five IT professionals and leaders agree that inadequate screening processes result in the hiring of vastly unqualified IT professionals. The consequences of these trends are dire. Imagine the impact to your business if over 40 percent of your workforce was underqualified for their jobs.



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How thorough are most screening processes?

Ultimately, the goal of a quality screening process is to make a successful match for the employer and the prospective employee. In order to accomplish this goal, the screening process should validate the candidate's qualifications for the position. Likewise, the candidate should be given the opportunity to validate the position's employee value proposition (EVP). Successful staffing firms facilitate a screening process that validates both perspectives.

So how are most staffing firms doing in terms of validating the qualifications of their candidates?

An in-person interview is a screening tactic that can provide many nonverbal insights into how well a candidate may perform within an employer's organization. Cues like eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures and how a candidate handles spatial boundaries are only gauged through a face-to-face format. However, only 50 percent of recruiters conduct face-to-face interviews before submitting candidates.

A technical assessment is another valuable screening step. It gauges proficiency for a specific skill, confirms a skill highlighted in a resume and identifies where a candidate lacks competency. But, only 45 percent of IT professionals and 49 percent of IT leaders say staffing firms perform technical assessments before submitting candidates to an employer.

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Reference checks are also a critical screening mechanism. Sixty-nine percent of IT professionals say most IT staffing companies secure at least two references. When performed correctly, references offer practical points of view on how a job candidate has performed in the past and how they may fare in the employer's open position. Although only 14 percent of IT professionals believe that firms actually contact references, 41 percent of IT leaders report that candidates' references are always validated. Moreover, many firms do not require references to meet specific success criteria. For example, almost 40 percent of references do not include information about the candidate's technical and soft skills. Additionally, professionals report that more than 50 percent of references most staffing firms obtain are not from past supervisors.

Most screening processes do an equally poor job of offering job seekers the insight they want and need to make good decisions about prospective job opportunities. Fifty-seven percent of IT professionals do not feel that candidates receive an accurate picture of what the job really is during the screening stages, while just 32 percent of IT leaders agree. In fact, nearly 70 percent of professionals say the average screening process provides little to no insight into critical dimensions of the jobs to which they are applying. Yet, leaders reportedly have more confidence in the screening process.

Comparatively, IT professionals and IT leaders have conflicting positions with regard to what can be learned about a job based on the average screening process. For example, less than 40 percent of professionals report gaining insight into several key dimensions

of the job, while leaders scored significantly more favorably on those same metrics. The following table illustrates how perceptions of screening differ according to the two perspectives.

*Job Aspects	Insight IT professionals receive	Insight IT leaders give
Team dynamics	33%	61%
Performance criteria	35%	73%
Training/development opportunities	30%	57%
Personality or work style of manager	29%	54%
Career path	25%	55%
Work/life balance	23%	56%

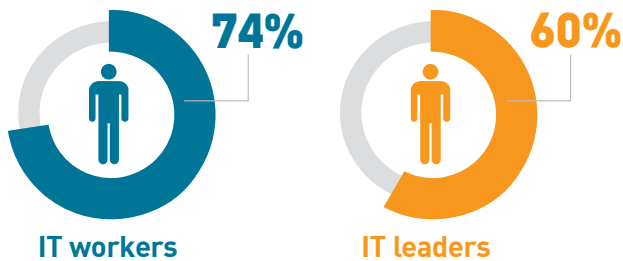
*Responses to: Rate the level of insight you receive about each of the following job aspects from the average employer's screening process. Data reflects "very detailed" to "some" insight.

Perhaps most alarming, when asked which areas of the average employer's screening process professionals would most like to receive more insight on, 70 percent say job roles and responsibilities—the most fundamental aspect of the job itself. Meanwhile, 82 percent of leaders emphasize that candidates are obtaining—at least some to very detailed—insight on this dimension. It is apparent that professionals and leaders do not see eye to eye in terms of the value screening is providing the candidate.

Screening keys to success

Care about maximizing the screening experience for job applicants

Candidates start making perceptions about an employer at the start of the screening process. To prevent employers from losing out on talented workers with solid experience, it is important to consider and design the screening process in part



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from the applicant's perspective. Seventy-four percent of IT professionals and 60 percent of IT leaders agree that the employer's screening process affects their decision to continue or remove themselves from candidacy. The employer isn't impacted only by the talented candidates who remove themselves from the process, however. The average IT job seeker knows 10 other talented individuals with a similar skill set. As a result, word about a job seeker's positive or negative screening experiences can travel fast, impacting the way the employer is viewed by other potential candidates in the market. Great recruiters should be able to explain how their screening processes consider the needs of employers and job candidates alike.

Share the details

IT professionals say they would ideally like to obtain at least a 75 percent accurate picture about a job before accepting an offer. However, they report they typically receive a picture of the job that is only 46 percent accurate. The bottom line: candidates want lots of information about the positions they consider—far more information than they think they are getting. When prospective employees don't have the critical details they want (about work/life balance, career paths, access to training, team dynamics, benefits and other factors) they are far less likely to make a move that results in a successful hire. No hiring manager has the time to share detailed insight into

their openings with every potential candidate. That's what great recruiters should do. The best recruiters will work with you to get as much information about the position as possible and they will share this information with candidates during the screening process. Armed with this important information, candidates can make confident, informed decisions.

Streamline your application process

Assess your application process. And keep in mind that time is a precious commodity. Sixty-three percent of applicants say it takes too long to complete a job application. It is understandable for employers to want to gather as much information as possible on interested candidates as this allows profiling and more targeted database searches. However, if it is taking applicants more than 20 minutes to complete your application, streamline the process. If you don't, you risk losing qualified candidates who are leery of investing the time to complete a lengthy application without guaranteed results. In fact, 46 percent of IT professionals say they will not apply to some job opportunities they are qualified for simply because the application is too time-consuming. Great recruiters can help you ensure your application captures the most important information without going overboard.

Focus on high-impact screening stages

Ninety-four percent of IT professionals say the in-person interview is the best way to qualify candidates for a position. But the in-person interview is most impactful as a part of a larger screening process. The most effective screening processes also include other screening stages that help to qualify all relevant knowledge, skills and abilities, including



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telephone interviews (before the in-person interview), technical interviews, technical skill assessments and reference checks. Great recruiters thoroughly screen candidates through each of these stages before even submitting a candidate to the employer for consideration.

The interview process: make it thorough and fast

Employers generally prefer to have candidates interview with a variety of stakeholders to gather multiple opinions before making an offer. But job candidates want the interview process to move quickly. In fact, IT professionals say they prefer the entire process to take under one month. To work toward an efficient interviewing process, without sacrificing quality, great recruiters work with their hiring managers to establish their availability for interviews and block off interview days in advance. They may also advise that employers consider having multiple stakeholders conduct a single interview together. This allows the candidate to obtain perspectives from more than one source. And, at the same time, the hiring manager can obtain input and insight on each candidate from his/her respected colleagues.

Candidates want feedback—even when they aren't your top choice

Ninety-seven percent of IT professionals want feedback when they are not selected for a position. Additionally, most IT professionals say they want detailed, personal feedback after every stage of the screening process. But no hiring manager can invest this type of time in each candidate considered during every stage of the process. They need to focus on getting the right person hired before they spend time talking at length to those who aren't the right fit. Great recruiters work with their clients to set expectations around collecting timely candidate feedback. Then, they do all the heavy lifting, diplomatically communicating with each candidate why they will or will not move on to the next stage in the screening process.

Conclusion

Every competitive organization requires qualified IT talent. Great recruiters know how to find the best IT professionals, how to engage them and how to screen them for a good fit. By partnering with the best staffing firms, you can access the most qualified talent in your market and hire only those candidates who can and will make a long-term positive impact as an employee within your organization.

ABOUT US

People are at the heart of every successful business initiative. At TEKsystems, we understand people. Every year we deploy over 80,000 IT professionals at 6,000 client sites across North America, Europe and Asia. Our deep insights into IT human capital management enable us to help our clients achieve their business goals—while optimizing their IT workforce strategies. We provide IT staffing solutions, IT talent management expertise and IT services to help our clients plan, build and run their critical business initiatives. Through our range of quality-focused delivery models, we meet our clients where they are, and take them where they want to go, the way they want to get there.