

- HOME
- ABOUT CISCO
- PUBLICATIONS AND MERCHANDISE
- IQ MAGAZINE
- CURRENT ISSUE
- Attracting Technology Talent

IQ MAGAZINE

Attracting Technology Talent

Tips for hiring and retaining staff who have the networking expertise your business needs.
By Tom Stamer

Summary

Although value-added resellers, managed service providers, and other sources of outside expertise are often the best option for meeting the technology needs of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), many organizations require some "in-house" IT expertise to handle routine functions, coordinate projects, or manage outsourced technology providers.

[Finding the Skill Set](#) | [Attracting and Retaining Talent](#)

Using internal staff can give you a level of control over project and program management and schedules that you may not have with outside resources. The larger your business, the more likely you are to hire a networking professional instead of outsourcing the function, notes Stephen Ibaraki, an industry analyst and director of the board of the [Networking Professionals Association](#) (NPA).



If you decide to staff the network function internally, the challenges are to find, attract, and then retain the talent you need.

Finding the Skill Set

However you search for staff, it's critical to start with a clear job description. "Make sure the job description is accurate and that the requirements you list, such as certifications and experience, are relevant to the job you have available," advises Neill Hopkins, vice president for Skills Development at the [Computing Technology Industry Association](#) (CompTIA).

Once you've defined the position, the next step is to solicit referrals. "Ask your employees, business colleagues, and people you know in IT," Ibaraki suggests. He also recommends seeking referrals from professional IT associations such as the NPA, CompTIA, and [Women in Technology International](#).

Employment Websites such as [CareerBuilder](#), [Dice](#), and [Monster](#) are other good resources, as are local community colleges, according to Hopkins. "Most community colleges will work with local employers to place their students in jobs," he says. "They also help groom future talent through apprentice and internship programs."

Professional IT certifications are some of the strongest indicators of an individual's proficiency in specific technologies. Certifications are offered both by professional associations and by technology vendors. "When a job candidate with recognized and accepted professional certifications comes to you, you have independent verification of the candidate's knowledge," Hopkins says.

Attracting and Retaining Talent

Once you begin finding good candidates, you'll move into the "attract" phase, and, if that succeeds, the "retain" phase. The strongest attraction for IT job seekers is a company's reputation, followed by its competitive compensation and challenging work environment, says Lily Mok, research director at [Gartner](#).

Directly related to your organization's reputation and work environment is perceived job security. Any legitimate reassurance you can offer candidates about your organization's ongoing viability is helpful, Ibaraki says. "Job security is a major issue for IT workers." Other critical factors include:

- A competitive benefits package
- A salary within the top third of the industry range in your region
- Other incentives offered to any job candidate, such as profit sharing, job promotions, and flex or vacation time.

Ibaraki also suggests perks that tend to appeal to the best IT candidates:

- The opportunity to work with advanced and interesting technologies, or on high-visibility projects
- Technology training, management training, or mentoring
- Bonuses for attaining professional certifications or advanced degrees
- Bonuses for completing important projects ahead of schedule or under budget, and for achieving other business goals and objectives
- The option to telecommute if appropriate

Once candidates accept an offer and join a company, Mok cautions, their professional and personal needs, and what they value often change as they progress in their career. To minimize turnover, Mok recommends a strategy that matches your HR programs with the needs of individual employees.

"Engaged, happy, and productive employees are the most important asset that sets leading companies apart," Mok explains. "To inspire loyalty and boost productivity, consider a total rewards package customized to the profile of each individual employee."

Ibaraki concurs. "If you really want to retain talented people, you have to make it as attractive as possible," he says. "One of the drivers of the current market upswing is that companies now realize that IT is critical to their business."

[Back to Top](#)

Download This

[Attracting Te](#)
(PDF - 94KB)

From Cisco: Fir Candidates

Cisco Systems o resources for tec directly and throu party training par these resources helpful to compar hire IT staff:

- The [Cisco Car](#) programs. The identify three l achievement: professional, certification (e also identify a industry track acknowledge certification in such as secu and wireless. acquire the sk for the Cisco (exams throu Partners and t Networking A. More than 70C worldwide ha Cisco certifica
- [Cisco Career](#) global job plac development p graduates and Networking A with employer ready IT and r candidates.

Next Steps

- [Explore learni resources](#)
- For informati tasking and ou network proje [Outside for IT](#)

[Back to Top](#)

About the Author

Philadelphia-based writer Tom Stamer has contributed to a diverse range of publications.

iQ Magazine, First Quarter 2006

[Products & Services](#) | [Ordering](#) | [Technical Support & Documentation](#) | [Learning & Events](#) | [Partners & Resellers](#) | [About Cisco](#)

© 1992-2006 Cisco Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. [Terms and Conditions](#), [Privacy Statement](#), [Cookie Policy](#) and [Trademarks](#) of Cisco Systems, Inc.

