

# Chapter 6

## IT Hiring Criteria vs. Valued IT Competencies

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### ABSTRACT

*Since a significant proportion of IT hiring includes the use of external IT recruiters, opportunities for differing perceptions of the ideal job candidate are introduced. An examination of the steps in the IT recruitment and hiring process suggests many occasions where IT professionals need to take a more active role. The ubiquity of technology throughout a firm ensures that IT professionals interact with a variety of stakeholders in the organization. Pursuant to this, the chapter addresses the relationship between IT recruiters and IT executives in the hiring process from both a conceptual and empirical standpoint.*

*Following a discussion of best practices for IT recruitment and hiring, an empirical analysis of recent IT recruiter and IT executive data are presented. Solutions to the recruiter/executive gaps are discussed along with the identification of areas for further scholarly research.*

### INTRODUCTION

Hiring for the IT milieu is both art and science. The number and breadth of competencies desired in the successful applicant necessitate a thorough screening process. Thus, it's incumbent upon the HR professional to identify job candidates with

the requisite technical skills in addition to the right mix of soft skills, personality, and attitude. In many instances, the successful IT professional must resemble a chameleon—able to change at a moment's notice. The change might be from discussing IT's role in the company's strategic plan with the CIO, to going over web design options with a company technician, to meeting with an end user, unhappy with the new software installation.

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## ***IT Hiring Criteria vs. Valued IT Competencies***

Hiring a person who can successfully perform all of these roles is a daunting task, yet it's one that an increasing number of HR professionals must face. The material that follows will provide an overview of IT hiring, including a discussion of the hiring process and the screening venue (in-house HR professional versus IT recruiter). After a discussion of the special considerations involved in IT hiring, the results of current scholarship assessing the disparity in valuation of IT hiring criteria used by IT recruiters and the valuation of those criteria by IT executives is presented.

### **Overview of IT Hiring**

The screening/hiring process must be as thorough as the IT environment is complex. Thus the overview will begin with an emphasis on the necessity of performing a job analysis, and will emphasize the utility of the data gathered in this initial phase as input throughout the remainder of the process. An enumeration of the steps in the recruiting process, including new media options available, the pros and cons of using internal versus external recruiters, as well as internal versus external job candidates will be covered. Finally, the import of metrics in the screening stage is discussed.

Anyone who thinks that writing an IT job description is easy, has probably never had to write one. Irrespective of where that position might fall on the IT food chain, it takes a variety of data to craft a description that accurately depicts the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to facilitate an incumbent's success. If the person writing the job description has not previously held that job or is not intimately familiar with every nuance, then a job analysis must be considered. Despite the availability of standardized job descriptions from the U.S. Dept. of Labor (DOT, Dictionary of Occupational Titles), the operative term "standardized" suggests why conducting an onsite job analysis is preferable. A job analysis (collecting data about the jobs performed in an organization) is conducted to determine the knowledge, skills,

and abilities (KSA's) necessary for successful job performance.

- Knowledge – Specific technical knowledge the incumbent must possess
- Skill – Adequate performance on tasks requiring tools, machinery, and equipment
- Ability – Physical and mental capacities needed

Based on the KSA profile, it should be apparent that there are several types of information that must be collected. Along with an enumeration of any and all types of tools, machinery, and equipment, the job analysis must specify the human skills needed to competently utilize tangible work aids. Depending on the position within IT, the relevant equipment list could be quite lengthy considering the innumerable hardware, software, and network physical layer configurations that might be involved. Finally, the requisite levels and types of knowledge must be stated. Specific to IT, this may include the specification of particular degrees, certifications, training, or experience. Equally important, though, is the enumeration of what might be called, personal characteristics-- such qualities as the ability to communicate at multiple levels, the ability to escalate, flexibility, attitude, and decision-making abilities.

In addition to collecting many different types of data, it is necessary to have multiple measures of each type, i.e., data from several sources (either several persons currently employed in this job or input from multiple persons familiar with the requirements of the job). Information based on just one person's perception runs the risk of being anecdotal and unique. The probability that a single observation or data source would contain some skewness is high and a subsequent job description or screening metric based on these data would be similarly biased. Thus the importance of multiple measures is emphasized.

A final consideration while planning a job analysis rests on how granular the data collec-

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