

## The IT Skills Shortage: Will a Change in the Recruitment Approach Ease the Crisis?

But with heightened competition and limited resources, should employers be widening the net in terms of the skills and capabilities they look for? And how does the importance of aptitude and attitude stack up against the desire for recognised qualifications?

Understandably, employers are sceptical about employing trainees, recently qualified, or inexperienced workers to fill vacancies for IT based positions. That's obvious. But currently, the alternative for many businesses is having essential vacancies left unfilled while the search continues for the Holy Grail that is the skilled, qualified, available and willing IT professional.

I believe that employers need to change their approach to recruitment to match the current conditions of the IT industry - to move forward and look at alternative options available and to look further than chasing around in circles after the small number of IT graduates. It is common practice in many parts of business to recruit for aptitude and attitude and use training to build skills, so why are many IT employers so reluctant to give enthusiastic and capable career changers a chance?

The Government has openly recognised the [IT skills](#) shortage, which affects roles from junior help desk technicians to programmers and web designers, but steps taken to tackle the issue have been slow and limited. The Blue Card Scheme, designed to encourage skilled foreign workers to help plug the UK's skills shortage, does offer one option. But when there are people here in the UK, with the potential to fill much needed vacancies, and the desire to change career, it seems logical to help them to gain the skills necessary to meet the demand.

Employers looking to recruit IT professionals in 2008 need to change their outlook and approach. Instead of spending months looking for a needle in a haystack, employers need to recognise the virtually untapped resource that is the career changer. Recruiting somebody who is funding their own IT training towards a recognised qualification, and thus demonstrating determination and enthusiasm for the industry, is one way to plug the gap. This is a mutually beneficial solution as even the salary for someone starting in the IT industry can be attractive to the career changer. The employer gains a good employee at low cost, and the employee gains a fantastic foot in the door of the industry.

Whilst this could be seen as an investment by employers, many are delighted to find that a highly motivated trainee, when given the opportunity to prove themselves in a new career, works hard to demonstrate their value and become productive very quickly. Not only this, but by continuing their study in their own time, they tend to progress their capability quickly to the benefit of the employer as well as the individual. So employers should think laterally and keep an open mind when it comes to recruitment – focusing on the aptitude and attitude of the individual who has funded their own learning and benefiting from a workforce of quick learners with the drive to succeed.

(i) As reported on CBR Online, 30 January 2008 [http://www.cbronline.com/article\\_news.asp?guid=562E4990-C88A-4FC5-95AE-906075488256](http://www.cbronline.com/article_news.asp?guid=562E4990-C88A-4FC5-95AE-906075488256)

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