AE ashley ellis

November 2010

Thoughts on how to choose the right recruiter for your organization.

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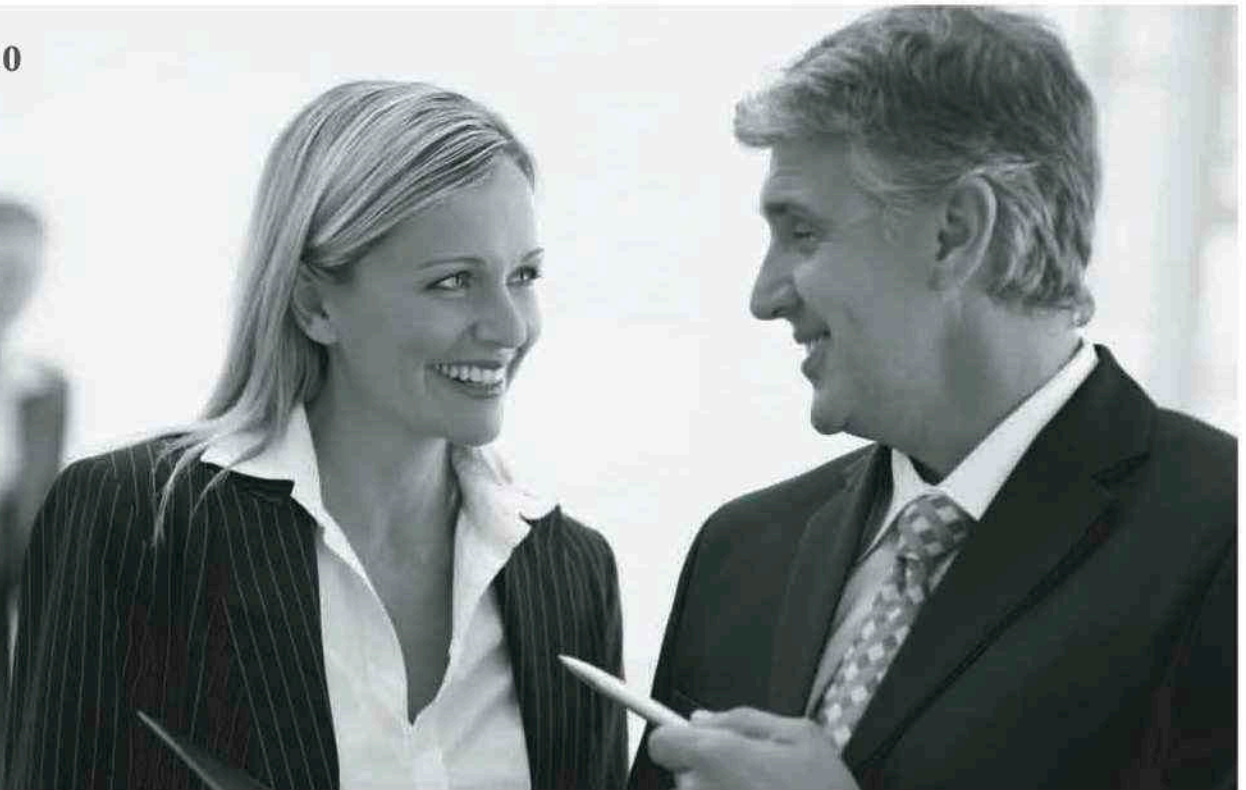
Inside

AE

A glance at Novembers's top IT professionals!

What are people saying about this age old debate? What is your opinion?

An eye on IT: Contractors are the hire of choice as economic recovery is slow.

The Third Degree: Education Vs. Experience

It's an ongoing, fiery debate, and it probably always will be. But the question of education and experience, and which one is more important, maintains its significance, especially as hiring in the IT industry picks up and the technology ball in general gains more momentum than ever.

Curious as to the current status of the debate, I recently sought some answers to the famous question from a number of IT Directors and hiring managers. As expected, opinions, requirements, and preferences vary far and wide. But while a conclusion to this battle is near impossible to reach, the answers are insightful and may prompt you to take a closer look at your own hiring process and your education and experience requirements.

Jenny Laspesa
IT Search Executive

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~Robert G.

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Skills: C#, ASP.Net, Visual Studio, SQL
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Chicago's Direct Hire Solutions at Your Fingertips

What if you could hire high-caliber IT professionals with just 1 phone call?

Don't let your desk pile up with 1,000's of unqualified resumes from job boards and traditional recruiting agencies. Ashley Ellis lets you leap over all those resumes and head straight to an interview with a candidate who ou'll love AND who can do the job successfully.

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Imagine picking up the phone and immediately scheduling interviews with top IT professionals who have the knowledge to successfully fulfill their ole. It really can be that simple.

Our large staff of experienced IT Search Executives are building relationships with the top IT professionals in the area every day. We can quickly locate the talent you need with the speed you require.

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How would it affect your hiring process, if the only candidates you interview are people actually interested in working for and growing with our company, and who have the skills to flourish in their position?

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❝ Niki [IT Search Supervisor at Ashley Ellis] is the most pleasant but persistant recruiter I know. If you need someone in the IT field, Niki is the only person you will ever need to speak to. She will find you the perfect candidate no matter what it takes. I really cannot express how much I appreciate her pleasant attitude, incredible tenacity and excellent knowlege. There simply is no point in ever using anyone else. ❞

~David T.

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Hiring Experience Vs. Education

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In IT, experience trumps education. In my 20 years managing technology staff, I have found that the BEST technologists usually come to technology in a sideways fashion. They pursue it because of passion and a skill for solving problems, using technology as a tool. Experience is always the best teacher. However, it depends upon who's doing the hiring, as many non-technologists place more value upon certifications and education.

~Chuck G.

The advantage of experience is in its application to the nitty gritty details of a field. The liability of experience is that it can transfer poorly or not at all to different fields. The advantage of professional qualifications is opposite - its advantage is that it is multi-deployable in a variety of fields. Its disadvantage is that subtle details can easily be missed due to the abstractions that give it the generality of application across many fields.

~Richard G.

When I hire, it's based off their experience. I like to see work samples to show what they are capable of accomplishing. We are a smaller company, and only one out of four programmers has a degree in programming.

~Yancy V.

Degrees and Certificates have weight with me if the person is very young in the IT world. The less experience they have then the more heavily I weight the education and training. Because technology is constantly changing I want someone who won't mind keeping pace with it.

~Shelly J.

Individuals with degrees are up and coming in the industry, and these degrees show a drive and determination to succeed. However, it's not an A versus B thing. A million other things come into play when hiring. If it comes down to one person with a degree and one without, I go with my gut feeling as to which one would work best overall in my organization.

~Jon L.

It's a combination of education and experience - I like to look at the whole package. At our company, employees with a degree can easily apply what they learn in school, but without the experience, they often get lost if they have to think on their feet and make a new path to complete a project.

~Howard R.

It really depends on the level of opportunity that I'm hiring for. In our company, many seasoned experts do not have a degree while many entry level IT professionals do. Overall, I look for the experience level and general knowledge whether or not they have a degree.

~Peter J.

I think the most important thing is the desire to learn.

~Alessandro L.

When I am interviewing candidates for Technical positions the degree is less important as long as they have one. I look at the degree as a mile marker in a person's life, showing they've finished something and it taught them how to learn and deal with certain situations.

~Bob A.

Clearly, the debate between education and experience depends on multiple factors. And while many people may be willing to agree that the real answer is a combination of both, the exact make-up of that combination will continue to be disputed. As a more highly educated generation starts entering the workforce en masse, the dynamic of the debate may definitely shift, and many companies may have to evaluate their experience and education requirements in the hiring process.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race

An Eye on IT Employment

While IT employment has been steadily growing since January of 2010, last month's activity was basically flat. However, leaders in the industry remain cautiously optimistic for the future, according to DLA Piper, a law firm that recently published the results of their latest Technology Leaders Forecast Survey. Just under half of participating companies plan on hiring over the next 6-12 months, and a similar percentage is optimistic that there will be no more layoffs, despite limited hiring.

Mark Roberts, CEO of TechServe Alliance, agrees, saying that his stubborn optimism is not without reason, adding that demand in the IT staffing industry is continuing to increase.

Dice portrays a similar positive attitude, noting that IT hiring is up about 50% from the low in mid-2009. Their reports state that the biggest challenge currently is to decide between permanent and contract hires. The idea of hiring contractors is popular for several reasons. One of these reasons is that many companies have a backlog of IT projects that have built up over the course of the recession and its slow recovery. Another reason is simply timing: Many hiring managers are still unsure about the coming year's budgets, and contractors are the easiest solution to this doubt.

Ultimately, the optimism is significant enough to suggest a relatively stable - and even strong - end to what has been a steadily growing year.

Source: TechServe Alliance, Dice, DLA Piper

Food for Thought: Choosing a Staffing Firm

There's no doubt that using a staffing/recruiting firm greatly broadens the candidate pool for your open positions, turning up outstanding people you didn't even know existed. But all staffing firms were not created equal. So how do you know which one can fulfill your hiring goals?

The only way a firm can find you the perfect candidate is if they know what you're looking for. This goes beyond mere technical skills. Your company has its own unique culture, people, environment, and values, and the best candidate will have a personality and values that align with these. The firm that can find this best candidate is the one that gets to know you and your company in detail. If they don't ask these kind of questions from the beginning, chances are they won't find you the people you need.

Are they focused on quality or quantity? It's easy enough to advertise a position online and forward every qualifying resume to your inbox. And perhaps there will be an awesome candidate in that mountain of resumes, but the right staffing/recruiting firm won't leave that for you to figure out alone. A quality-focused firm goes above and beyond Internet advertising, and actively searches out quality people who they believe will be a great fit in your company, and only introduces you to the best.

The right recruiter will work hard to establish a long-term relationship with you. They'll give you all the hiring advice you need, and will maintain an entirely open conversation about every candidate. The best of them will create a partnership with you. How are you connecting with your recruiter?