The Changing Roles of IT Professionals

Cheryl Austin
Austin Strategic Partners

info@austinstrategicpartners.com

Disruptive Technologies

- iPhone / iPad

- Social Media / Web

- Big Data

- Cloud Computing

Researcher IHS Technology expects spending on cloud infrastructure and services to hit $174.2 billion in 2014, up 20 percent from last year.

It expects this growth rate to continue with enterprise spending on cloud to soar to $235.1 billion by 2017. That would be triple the amount spent on cloud in 2011.

Globalization of IT

- Sourcing / Manufacturing

- Outsourcing

- Off-shoring

- Mergers/Acquisitions

- Virtual teams

- IT departments are smaller and leaner

- More decentralization

- Fast development cycles

- Greater need for automation

- More collaborative virtual teams

- Holy Grail: Connect everything into a unified seamless enterprise IT strategy

IT is Pervasive in Society

IT is no longer a necessary evil, but a strategic asset and differentiator

Touches all industries & all departments

Your next IT job may not be in IT!

- Don't be thrown by titles

- Size of the organization matters

Economic Climate

- Businesses exist to make money
- Quick ROI / More impatience
- Expenditures scrutinized, justified
- Tighter budgets, more cost-cutting
- Doing more with less
  - Combining job roles
  - Fewer or less substantial raises

Software Development & SDLC process

- New/evolving programming languages
- Target / platforms
- App economy
- Paradigm shift: Agile, Scrum, or Lean
- Automation in SDLC processes
  – Modeling, Testing, Continuous Build
- Speed / performance metrics

Distribution & Support

- No distribution media
- Less hands-on, more virtualization
    - Call center (off-shore)
    - Instant chat online, email, remote login
- Transition to self-service
    - Downloadable manuals/updates/fixes, FAQs, "Group" help, Forums
- Implementation & Training
    - Web-based, or "road warrior"

Morphing of Jobs

- DBA - Database Architect
  - Large-scale Data Modeling
  - Data Warehouses
  - Business Intelligence
  - Data Mining, Analytics
- Reporting
  - Statistical Analysis & Trending, Dashboards
  - Decision Support, Strategic Planning (Influence!)
- SA - Data/Systems Architect
  - Interoperability, Data Exchange, Sharing
  - Data Formatting, ETL
  - Meta Data, Data Dictionary

Morphing of Jobs

- Storage Architect
  - SAN, NAS, OSD, VSA
  - Certifications (EMC, NetApp, Hitatchi, etc.)
- Infrastructure
  - Data Center Architect, Facilities Planning
- Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity
- Security
  - Certifications (CISSP, CISM, CEH, more)
  - Encryption, Firewalls, Monitoring & Reporting
  - Compliance & Regulatory (SOX, HIPAA, PCI)
  - Forensics

More Jobs

- IT Project Management
  - PMI Certifications (PMP)
  - Implementations, Conversions, Consolidations, Data Center Start-up or Move
  - Development projects
    - Agile - Scrum Master, Product Owner (PMI-ACP)
- Business Analysis
  - IIBA certifications (CBAP)
  - Gather & document requirements
  - Testing, QA

Changes in the Work Environment

- More contract, less permanent
- Working for a "third-party" (staffing company or outsourcing company)
- Temporary/Project-based
- More Collaborative, Teams, Social
- Matrixed Environment
  - Interact horizontally rather than vertically
  - Requires broader people skills
  - Question of priorities, cooperation, control

Effect on Work-Life Balance

- Less likely to pay for relocation
- Less money for training & professional development
- Fewer benefits & perks
- More virtual/telecommute opportunities
- Less need to "dress up" (more casual)
- More "odd hours" as IT has become a 24x7x365 endeavor: shift, on-call, etc.

Effect on IT Hiring

- Industry-specific skills
  - Know lingo and regulations
- Greater transparency
  - Your reputation precedes you! (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- Group interviews with team/peers
- Emphasis on "soft skills" and processes
  - Project management skills & strategic thinking
  - Communication skills more important than technical skills

Soft Skills: A Recent BI Architect Job Ad

- Excellent communication skills, ability to translate complex concepts to non computer users and various levels of personnel from executives to end-users

- Ability to create effective interpersonal relationships

- Able to resolve conflict and negotiate compromise solutions where necessary

- Expert analytic skills

- Knowledge and skills in formal systems analysis techniques

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills and presentation skills

- Ability to work in a complex and matrix team environment; experience working in a team-oriented, collaborative environment

- Ability to handle multiple tasks, set priorities, schedule, and meet deadlines

- Possesses the ability to provide sound and reliable judgment, take initiative, and accomplish task with minimal supervision in complex situations.

- Provides technical leadership for the design and development of the AIM solution and associated projects and systems

Is There A Soft Skills Shortage?

Share this: Tweet

Posted by Debbie Fledderjohann on October 10, 2013 at 9:00am

View Blog

There has been a lot of talk about a technical skills shortage in the United States. Some industries have already experienced it, but there have been warnings that, with the aging workforce and other factors, this will someday be an issue in nearly every industry.

But could American employers already be struggling with a different kind of skills shortage? According to a recent survey by Adecco, published in *The Wall Street Journal*'s *MarketWatch*, the answer is yes. Ninety-two percent of senior executives surveyed stated that they felt there was a serious gap in workforce skills, but the biggest area of concern is not technical skills. The real problem, cited by 44% of the respondents, is the lack of **soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.**

"It's interesting to see how the definition of the skills gap has evolved from being so heavily focused on technical and computer skills to 'soft' skills related to communication and creativity," said Janette Marx, Senior Vice President at Adecco Staffing US. "Educational institutions may overlook these elements in today's digital age, but schools must integrate both hard and soft skill sets into their curriculum, which in turn will help better prepare candidates and strengthen our country's workforce."

Unfortunately, the lack of soft skills is often something that is not revealed until AFTER an employee is on the job. Technical skills are easy to test for. Soft skills - not so much. Assessments and carefully selected interview questions can help, but things like the ability to effectively communicate on a day-to-day basis can still be hard to assess until someone is actually doing the job.

So do employers just have to cross their fingers and hope for the best when they select a candidate? No. There is a way that they can effectively assess a candidate's soft skills . . . and you, as a recruiter, can help. You can offer to let them **try candidates on a contract-to-direct basis.** That way, they can see the candidate's communication, critical thinking, creativity, etc., skills in action BEFORE they make the direct hire commitment. If they like what they see, they can extend the direct hire offer. If that happens, you can earn a conversion fee on top of the income you make for each hour they work during the contract period. If the candidate's soft skills aren't up to par, they can simply end the contract assignment and try someone else.

Only time will tell how the skills shortages will affect the American workplace. But by offering the contract-to-direct option, you can lessen its impact on your clients and become their valued staffing partner.

Approaching the job market

- Learn skills required for various roles by reading job ads
- Check salary range for your demographic
- Interviews:
    - Attitude is key: Confidence & Passion
    - Emphasize transferrable/soft skills

Once you're hired…

Be the automator, not the automated.

Be the catalyst for change, not a casualty of it.