INSIDE THE HEADS OF JOB SEEKERS:

U.S. IT Candidate Preferences

This is a supplement to a series of reports by ManpowerGroup Solutions analyzing the results of a proprietary Global Candidate Preferences Survey.
Any human resources (HR) professional these days will tell you that there is a talent shortage in the U.S. information technology (IT) workforce. IT candidates represent one of today’s most competitive talent markets, and positions seeking specific skills and experience are the hardest to fill. Moreover, there is increasing preference for IT professionals who have soft, or interpersonal, skills that help them lead enterprise-wide teams in a world where technology has become mission critical. Twenty-six percent of IT leaders report communications skills as most in-demand, followed by collaboration skills (18 percent), according to “The Softer Side of IT,” a report from Experis, the professional resourcing and project-based solutions arm of ManpowerGroup.

In the ManpowerGroup 2016-17 U.S. Talent Shortage Survey, IT staff ranked second globally among the top 10 hardest jobs to fill. And in many cases, the best candidates for a job are often the ones who are already employed somewhere else. Savvy companies need to understand what motivates IT candidates and how to reach them in a credible and authentic way. From companies where technology and innovation are the primary products to corporations where technology supports business model transformation, IT candidates are essential to organizational success.

To better understand how employers can leverage global candidate preferences and perceptions, ManpowerGroup Solutions, the world’s largest Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) provider, went directly to the source: candidates. In the Global Candidate Preferences Survey, nearly 14,000 individuals currently in the workforce between the ages of 18 and 65 shared what matters to them in the job search process. The survey was fielded in 19 influential employment markets around the world during the fourth quarter of 2016. In the United States, ManpowerGroup Solutions surveyed 1,384 candidates and special emphasis was given to the fastest growing industries: IT, healthcare, retail and financial services.

The second in a series exploring U.S. candidate preferences by industry, this report provides new insights into the successful recruitment and retention of IT candidates. The results reveal how employers can be led astray by presuming that all candidates think, feel and behave exactly the same way. IT candidates are a unique breed; they are a new group of disruptive candidates that inherently challenge commonly held perceptions about career advancement.

The technical capability and credentials that some companies seek may make suitable IT candidates almost impossible to find.

Stephen Rees
Managing Director
ManpowerGroup Solutions
IT candidates embrace career disruption

Nearly half (43 percent) of IT candidates believe the best way to advance their careers is to change jobs frequently — almost two times the national average. This figure also is significantly higher than some other industries, such as healthcare, where only 15 percent of candidates feel this way. And when it comes to compensation, nearly two-thirds (60 percent) of IT candidates believe that changing jobs frequently is the best way to increase their salaries.

For IT candidates, the ethos of the industry is disruptive innovation. Disruption occurs when innovation creates a new market that eventually transforms an existing market. This leads to displacing established market-leading firms, products and alliances. From cloud computing to the “Internet of Things,” in which virtually all devices become smart devices attached to the Internet, the IT industry values out-of-the-box thinking above all. Early generations of IT workers have upended and redefined virtually everything from taxi cabs to grocery shopping. Therefore, it makes sense that career advancement comes from disruption. Job-hopping is no longer feared by candidates as a poor reflection on their performance or loyalty. Practically speaking, changing jobs frequently can actually enhance IT candidates’ skill sets and provide experience with new technologies that make them more marketable in the future.

Candidates Who Agree That Changing Jobs Frequently Helps Them Get Ahead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Increases my compensation</th>
<th>Advances my career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Average</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Tech.</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea of changing companies or industries has become an expectation for candidates generally. But within the IT space, the comfort level with this practice is significantly higher. It is the nature of product evolution and technological advancement.

Jon-Ray Rivera
Vice President, Client Delivery
ManpowerGroup Solutions
It takes more than money

Given that so many IT candidates believe that changing jobs frequently will increase their compensation levels, it would follow that compensation would be far and away the top motivator for candidates to switch jobs. Compensation is the top motivator for most U.S. job seekers. However, this is not the case for IT candidates.

Culture and work environment are some of the first things IT candidates want to know about. Regardless of the role or money offered, if a company is not a cultural fit for them, they will exclude themselves. It is our job to sell the culture as part of the overall package.

Jon-Ray Rivera
Vice President, Client Delivery
ManpowerGroup Solutions
First, compensation alone is significantly less of a motivator for IT candidates to pursue a new job opportunity right now or to immediately look for a new position. Fewer than one in four IT candidates (23 percent) say money is the top motivator versus 35 percent among all U.S. job seekers. For IT candidates, compensation (23 percent) is comparable to both opportunity for advancement (22 percent) and benefits (21 percent) as a reason to switch jobs.

Opportunity for advancement is almost twice as important to IT candidates as it is for candidates from virtually any other industry, especially in the growth industries of healthcare, financial services and retail. However, the meaning of opportunity for advancement in this industry moves beyond traditional notions of career advancement. It includes the opportunity to develop new skill sets, work with new technologies that make them more marketable in the future and the ability to contribute meaningfully to a product or project that advances the company in the marketplace. IT candidates recognize they are being compensated with education and experience that will help them earn more money later in their careers.

Secondly, for IT candidates, it is important to recognize that they are likely expanding the traditional definition of benefits from retirement programs or health and dental coverage to acknowledge perks, such as Kombucha on tap, pool tables and nap pods. Company culture plays a significant role recruiting IT candidates.

The importance of employer review sites

IT candidates are more likely than average to be brand driven. One in five IT candidates consider a company’s brand a top-three reason for making career decisions (20 percent versus the U.S. average of 14 percent). Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of them believe an employer’s brand is more important today than it was five years ago. However, IT candidates rely on employer review sights for credible information about an employer’s brand far more than candidates from other industries. They also are significantly less likely than average U.S. candidates (26 percent versus 36 percent) to believe that current employees are the most credible source of information.

“Sometimes companies are not paying close enough attention to the differences in candidate preferences and desired communications channels. A one-size-fits-all social media strategy to tap talent may actually be turning off some coveted IT candidates. This fact may be quite surprising to some executives and their recruiting teams.”

Christine Johnson
Director, Business Development
ManpowerGroup Solutions
These beliefs are supported by their actions. When asked what job sites they had visited in the past two weeks, IT candidates were twice as likely to have visited Glassdoor and SimplyHired as the national average. Overall, IT job seekers are well-informed candidates; they have more information about a job or company earlier in the process than other candidates.

The importance of social networks and industry associations

Although company websites remain the primary source of information about a company or position among IT job seekers, they rely more heavily on social media and industry associations than other candidates. Social media is tied for second place with search engines as a source for information while industry associations rank third. Almost twice as many IT candidates use industry associations compared to other candidates (33 percent versus the U.S. average of 18 percent). These results indicate that IT candidates can be quite insular about research sources, preferring information from those they perceive to be in the know about companies and positions.
However, industry associations in the IT space have evolved far beyond traditional membership-based networking associations of young professionals. Specifically, many organizations have emerged around certification or training programs, hacking events or other ad-hoc groups. Within these groups, there is mentorship and knowledge exchange that is credible and relevant to candidates' interests.

Sources of Information
About Job Opportunities Among IT Candidates

IT candidates desire frequent dialogue with companies that interest them

IT candidates prefer more frequent email outreach from employers they are interested in than the average candidate. Over half (55 percent) of IT candidates prefer weekly emails from potential employers of interest. Candidates from other growth industries, such as healthcare, retail and financial services, do not crave the same frequency of communication; they are comfortable with more sporadic outreach.
IT candidates’ desire for ongoing dialogue is likely linked to their tendency to be continuous candidates. Two-thirds of IT candidates (65 percent) agree that they are always looking for the next job opportunity. The prevalence of this mindset suggests that it supersedes members of the contingent IT workforce, representing a larger industrywide trend.

### Frequency of Recruiting Outreach

#### By Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Once per week or more often</th>
<th>2-3 times per month</th>
<th>Once per month</th>
<th>Every 6 months</th>
<th>Every 2-3 months</th>
<th>Once a year or less often</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Industries</strong></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retail</strong></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Services</strong></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthcare/Pharmaceutical</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT</strong></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outreach to IT candidates needs to be focused on engagement, not just an email blast. The candidate needs to see that elements of the messaging are directly targeted to him or her so that even if a specific opportunity is not right, the candidate is open to another outreach in the future.

Jon-Ray Rivera
Vice President, Client Delivery
ManpowerGroup Solutions
Employers need to be open to new ways of finding and recruiting talent. They cannot assume that they can find it in their backyards. They must be prepared to relocate talent in.

Stephen Rees
Managing Director
ManpowerGroup Solutions

Meet the most mobile candidates

IT candidates are open-minded about job location and are more willing than candidates from other industries to move for a good opportunity. They also are significantly more likely than average to consider moving to a new city, state or region. However, moving out of the U.S. is much less appealing to them.

The mystique and culture surrounding California and the companies located there likely play a role in the willingness of IT candidates to consider relocating for a new position. The portability of IT skills and technology can make relocation more practical for IT candidates than those with geographically based credentials that are less portable.

Age and mobility are inversely correlated; younger candidates are more likely to be willing to move to a new city, state or country. Interest declines among candidates who are over the age of 35, when property ownership and familial responsibilities may make relocation more complex.

For an industry that has revolutionized nearly every aspect of daily life and business, it is not surprising that IT is leading the revolution of disruptive candidates. The competition for top IT talent shows no signs of abating in the near future. Yet this group’s mobility, brand cognition and engagement level suggest that employers must totally rethink how they identify and engage IT candidates. Understanding and reflecting candidates’ motivations and preferences is key to successful engagement. Disruptive candidates demand disruptive approaches to sourcing and recruitment.

Willingness to Relocate
For a Job Opportunity by Industry

- Willing to move to a new city
- Willing to move to a new state/region
- Willing to move to a new country
- Would not move for a jog opportunity
10 Strategies for Engaging IT Candidates

The Global Candidate Preferences Survey results reveal that a unique approach to recruitment is warranted when recruiting in information technology. Employers should consider the following recommendations:

1. Appeal to advancement of skills and compensation
   Money still talks. However, skills development leads to higher salaries. Employers looking to hire IT candidates need to develop and communicate their employer brand, understand the technology opportunity and be able to convey to candidates what they will learn and how they will contribute to that company. These fundamental messages should be conveyed in job descriptions, outreach emails, on company websites and during the interview process.

   Part of the appeal for many IT candidates who prefer contract work is the ability to be at the forefront of technology. They increase their skill sets by moving from contract to contract, developing and working on the latest technologies. Although contract work is not for everyone, this model for advancement is common knowledge. Candidates can be wooed by current employees and other brand ambassadors that speak firsthand about how moving to the company has taken their skills and opportunity to work with new technologies to a higher level. Using video technology to convey these stories is also increasingly powerful as a recruitment tool.

2. Frame opportunity as disruption
   Although it is likely that many technology companies embrace this way of talking about career development, companies outside the IT industry may be less comfortable with straightforward language that recognizes the perceived advantages of frequently changing jobs. Employers that welcome the idea and engage candidates in this way send subtle messages about their understanding of IT culture. Candidates will recognize such outreach efforts as more reassuring evidence that an employer is in the know and speaking their language. Having a common cultural connection is another reason why recruiting IT candidates is a specialty best handled by experts and not simply added to the task list of an HR professional assigned to recruit all positions within a company.

3. Evangelize for the brand
   Not every company is Apple, Google or Amazon. Many companies that need IT talent may not have the brand awareness or comprehension of these high-profile firms. This is especially challenging when IT candidates are so brand-driven. Conveying the total employer brand — the technology, the role and the company culture — is essential to getting on the consideration list for talent who is unfamiliar with the company.

4. Reach them first
   Many IT companies these days are traveling to new markets where hubs of potential talent are being developed. They hold information sessions, inviting candidates to come and meet with senior software engineers or other attractive representatives of the company. These sessions may offer training or educational opportunities that benefit the attendees. Tapping into certification and training programs outside of one’s area of expertise is also a good way to build awareness and interest in a company. Some companies have gone so far as to create incubators for start-ups and entrepreneurs.

5. Invest in non-local candidates
   Although IT candidates are more comfortable with Skype interviews than the average candidate (72 percent versus the U.S. average of 48 percent) and three times as many prefer Skype over other interview formats (18 percent versus the U.S. average of 6 percent), companies and candidates benefit from face-to-face interviews. Paid travel for interviews for the most promising interviewees helps attract the highest quality candidates. Reimbursement of travel shows a candidate that an employer is willing to invest in them and reinforces a candidate’s self-esteem.

   Companies that are already spending top dollar for talent may also be reluctant to provide relocation packages for new hires. Some companies make potential hires ask and negotiate such assistance while other companies are upfront about such incentives. Proactively engaging out-of-town candidates in this discussion sends a strong message about company culture and employer-employee trust as well as eases the onboarding process.
6. Give them a challenge

Resumes are so last millennium. Often, resumes and even interviews have nothing to do with what skills a candidate has and even less to do with the personality and cultural fit he or she needs to succeed. That is why many firms are turning to specific coding challenges, hackathons and other real-world tests as a first line of defense in finding talent. Some firms guarantee a call back within five business days for anyone who passes a coding challenge. Because it is relatively inexpensive and channels a hiring manager’s energy into candidates vetted for proficiency, challenges are an efficient way to identify qualified candidates.

7. Accelerate the process

Speed of hire is key not just to fulfilling requisitions but to engaging the most qualified candidates. It is quite likely that candidates are employed at other companies and entertaining multiple offers. Savvy companies are developing condensed formats for evaluating and hiring talent in which challenges are presented, candidates provide solutions, interviews are conducted and the hiring team identifies potential hires and declines the same day. Candidate offers are made the very next day.

8. Confidently address employer review sites

While employers cannot always control what is posted about them on employer review sites, they can control how they respond to it. It is important for employers to know what is being said and not be shy about what is out there. How does what is being said compare with the reality? If it is true, what is the company doing to address it?

Employers should be equipped with the appropriate information to disarm candidate concerns. Being prepared and having a strategy in place allows employers to address negative reviews head on and with confidence. Maneuvering around the information only raises candidate suspicions.

9. Careful... your algorithm is showing

Although sending mass communications may be tempting when cultivating a talent pool or reaching out about a specific opportunity, it is important to remember that these candidates see through such artifice and it actually damages their perception of the employer brand. Since candidates desire frequent communications, be sure to reach out with information about the company, industry and achievements — not just job opportunities.

10. Invest against churn

Once they are hired at a new company, IT candidates will not suddenly change their beliefs that career disruption advances careers and compensation. Those attitudes can only be changed by contradictory experiences. Employers need to cultivate current employees in the same way they build talent pools — by engaging with them and offering raises and opportunities to advance. Knowing that the cost of churn can significantly impact the bottom line as well as institutional memory and morale, managers must recognize external competition for those employed by their company is an ongoing challenge.

Conclusion

Candidates gravitate toward particular industries for many reasons. However, few industries have earned the reputation for making an impact in the world like the IT industry has. The influence of technology has become mission critical to nearly every industry. As a result, IT candidates are leading a revolution among job seekers by changing the way disruptive career paths are perceived, expanding career change motivators and stimulating a new pattern of worker migration.

In order to compete effectively for top IT talent, HR professionals must become an extension of companies’ marketing departments. They must build awareness and comprehension of the employer brand and demonstrate specifically how their opportunities to enhance skills and work with new technologies can take candidates to the next level in their careers. IT job seekers are savvy and they know they are in demand; appeals must be customized by job role and to the individual to be successful. Industry and individual customization is a vital tool all companies should employ to maintain competitive advantage in today’s global search for the recruitment and retention of top talent.
More About the Respondents

Overall, the survey respondents were between 18 and 65 years old and currently in the workforce (not retired or homemakers). In total, there were 1,384 U.S. respondents from the South (39 percent), Midwest/Great Lakes (22 percent), Northeast (21 percent) and West (18 percent). They represented a cross-section of age, income, employment status (i.e., full-time, part-time, contract), career level and industry. With respect to career level, experienced non-managers accounted for the largest group at 28 percent, followed by managers (22 percent), entry-level employees (16 percent), students (15 percent), executives (4 percent) and senior-level executives (6 percent).

About ManpowerGroup Solutions

ManpowerGroup Solutions provides clients with outsourcing services related to human resources functions, primarily in the areas of large-scale recruiting and workforce-intensive initiatives that are outcome-based, thereby sharing in the risk and reward with our clients. Our solutions offerings include TAPFIN-Managed Service Provider, Strategic Workforce Consulting, Borderless Talent Solutions, Talent Based Outsourcing and Recruitment Process Outsourcing, where we are one of the largest providers of permanent recruitment and contingent management in the world. ManpowerGroup Solutions is part of the ManpowerGroup family of companies, which also includes Manpower, Experis and Right Management.