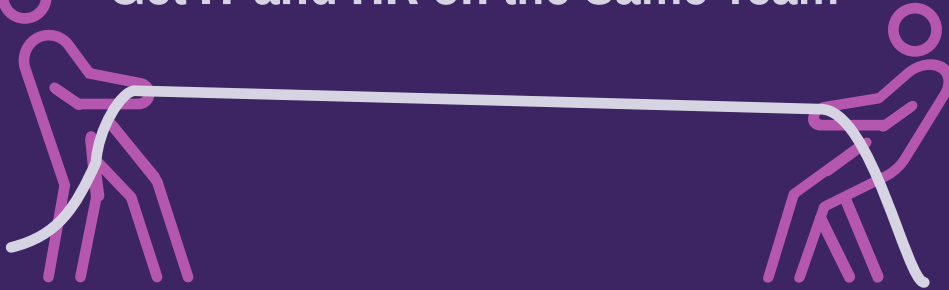


How to Win the War for Tech Talent:

- Get IT and HR on the Same Team



In the world of technology,

employers have been competing for the same talent for popular, hard-to-fill positions for years. Consider this: As of Q3 2019, there was only a 2.8% unemployment rate for technology professionals while the 10-year job growth rate was expected to be 13%.

For software engineers, the unemployment rate was even lower at 1.9% with a 16.2% growth rate.

Granted, recent shifts in the labor market due to the coronavirus pandemic have changed the hiring ecosystem, but even in times of uncertainty, top tech positions remain hard to fill. These include software engineers, software developers, applications engineers, data architects, and data scientists.

With competition for these candidates as fierce as it is today, companies are taking a closer look at their hiring strategies to see what they can do to improve outcomes.

That's what inspired Monster and IDG to join forces to conduct an extensive survey of IT and HR leaders; to try and understand what about the tech hiring process is broken.

What we found is that **what often stands between a hiring win and an unfilled role is a disconnect between the two groups.** Between a lack of trust, misalignment in terms of who should take the lead during various steps in the process, and an overall breakdown in communication, the survey showed some clear areas where HR and IT professionals were at odds, potentially creating unnecessary chasms in the hiring process.

And that's a shortfall that companies can't afford. In fact, the survey found that

36% of IT projects or initiatives were negatively impacted due to a lack of tech talent.



“ With the need for legacy business to transition from old technology stacks to newer ones, it is not surprising that many companies and projects are needing to find newer, in-demand talent to drive that evolution, ”

- says **Steve DeLisle**, Chief Technology Officer, Monster.

“While evolving and training existing staffers is always important, bringing in talent who have done it before is also critical to lead those initiatives”, he adds. To better understand the challenges and frustrations shared by IT and HR through every step of the hiring process, this whitepaper delves deep into the survey results. Among the key findings:

77% of companies plan to hire tech talent in 2020 – but HR & IT say 80% of roles will be hard to fill



More than half of IT hiring managers don't see HR as a strategic partner

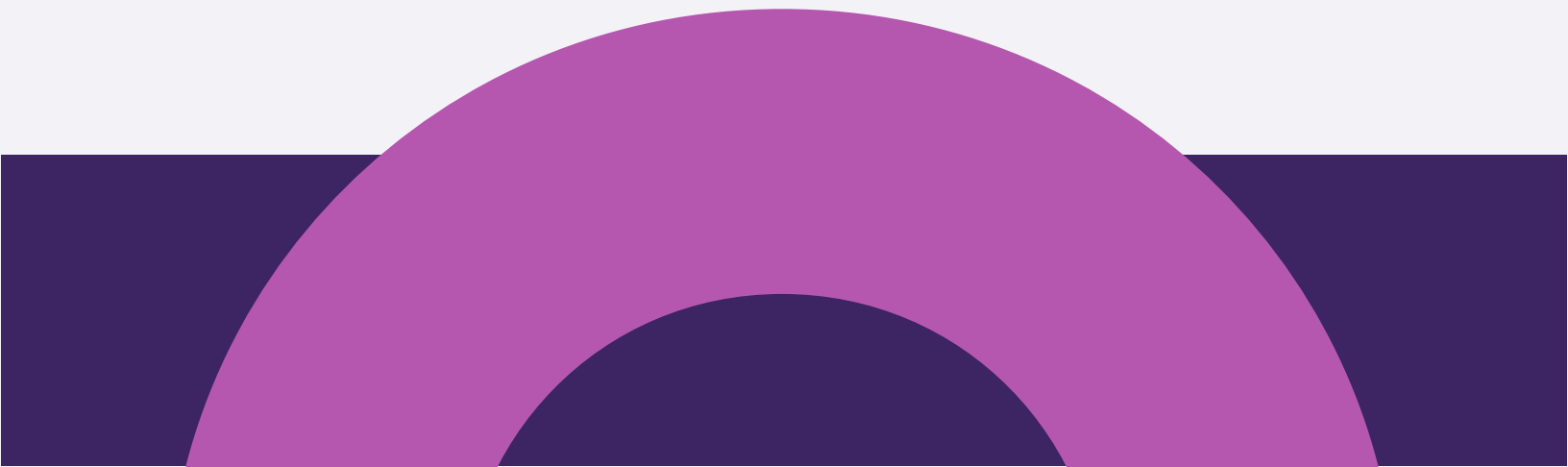


Differences in hiring criteria for HR vs. IT create unnecessary pain points

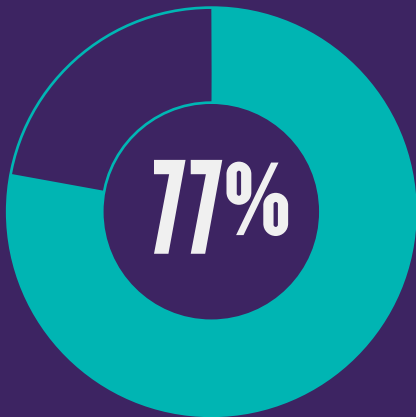


Breakdowns in the tech hiring process exist

The good news is these challenges can be overcome by focusing on a more streamlined process. Monster turned to the experts to share insights and strategies that will create powerful hiring teams – instead of talent acquisition adversaries.



The IT Hiring Crunch



Companies plan to hire tech talent in 2020.



HR & IT say roles will be hard to fill.

Why the need for so much tech hiring? “It really comes down to two key factors, says DeLisle. The first is that many traditional businesses are facing re-platforming or cloud-evolution requirements, resulting in a huge demand for talent in those areas. Second, as the platforms for building modern applications and solutions are continuously evolving, finding the right skills in the relevant areas only gets more challenging”.

As for why hiring is so difficult, Katelyn Ilkani, co-founder & CRO, Scopedive, a cybersecurity firm, says the answer is simple: the talent pool

is scarce. “Highly skilled, experienced IT staff tend to have many career opportunities, and it is definitely true that there just aren’t enough people with the right skills for some IT roles,” she says.

What ends up happening is IT teams are expected to do more with less, adds Ilkani, and ultimately, the business can end up suffering. In fact, the survey reveals that the business impact is real, with 36% of IT projects either postponed (16%), downsized (11%) or failed (8%) due to lack of technical talent.

Challenge 1: Communication Breakdown

More than half (57%) of CIOs/Hiring Managers don't see HR as strategic partners. And another 47% said they find it hard to partner.

The top three areas where CIOs and Hiring Managers feel a disconnect from their HR partners are:

- **They lack an understanding of the impact of talent on business outcomes (72%)**
- **They doesn't understand our business (56%)**
- **They Lack urgency (50%)**

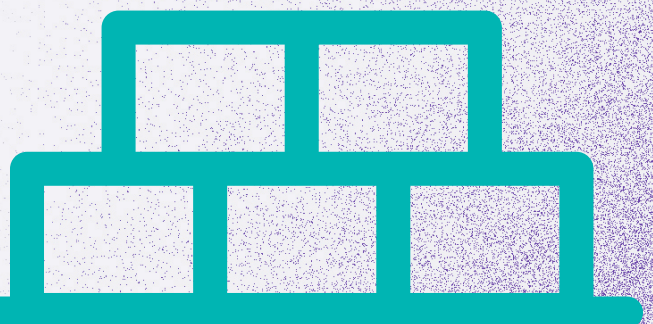
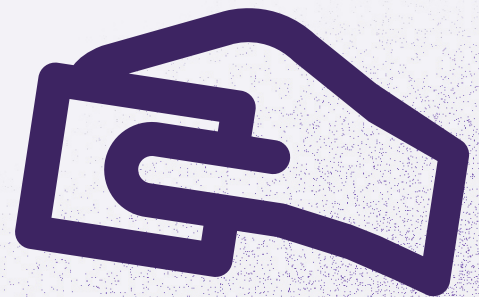
But on the other side, 63% of HR/Staffing professionals think they are valued strategic business partners. In other words, they don't necessarily know that IT feels this way.

One possible reason contributing to this disconnect might be generational differences, where HR professionals generally tend to be younger (18-35) while IT hiring managers are usually 45+.

Whatever the case, stronger relationships between the two is key, says DeLisle. "Far too many times, I've had experiences where candidates that clearly weren't a good fit were presented to me largely because there wasn't a deep enough understanding of the nuance of the role and the experiences of the candidate," he says. "With any successful partnership, frequent communication and constant feedback are the fundamental building blocks to successfully build a pipeline of key IT talent."

For cyber security roles in particular, says Ilkhani, HR struggles to understand the complexities of the roles. "They inadvertently disqualify potentially great candidates because of this."

But we can't blame it all on HR, says Beth Zukowsky, senior director of software engineering, Monster. "IT hiring managers are expecting HR to go out and recruit for specific skill sets, but it's hard for them to know what questions to ask," she says. "In successful cases, HR and IT partner from the start with the job description and talking about key criteria for hiring." That way the HR team understands which are the best candidates to pass onto IT, who can make further evaluations.



Challenge 2: Different Mindsets

49% of HR managers say that the skills/talent for the roles hiring managers set are unrealistic. And **44% of IT managers** feels that the job descriptions posted attract candidates whose talents don't often match

In general, the survey found that IT values soft skills more and puts less importance on the functional hiring criteria that HR often relies on like location, career level, and years of experience. Both groups agree that concrete tech skills are the most vital, however.

What's more, **only 11% of IT managers are confident that HR understands the IT job description and technical role**, yet 66% of HR professionals say they are confident they understand.

"For the partnership to work, it is important that the HR team understands both hard and soft requirements and has proper dialogue with the hiring managers," says DeLisle. "Once that is established, constant feedback and tweaking are necessary to really refine the approach."

Sometimes, even when both parties understand the key skill sets for the role, there might be other disconnects as far as salary expectations and job levels, says Brenda Garcia, VP, senior HR business partner, Monster. "We might have a great description for software engineers, but it isn't clear if they are looking to hire a senior software engineer or an entry-level one."

HR and IT don't always have the same understanding of what goes into the initial screening process, adds Garcia. "Where I've seen it break down is where a hiring manager may receive several resumes but doesn't understand the volume of resumes that have already been screened," she says. As such, IT might still be waiting to see more, but on the HR side, they feel like they have not been getting any feedback on the few they've already sent forward. "Are those the right profiles of the candidate or not? They don't want to go back and screen multitudes of candidates if they're not on target," says Garcia.

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Solution #1: Break Down the Hiring Process and Make Improvements

The best practice is a “true partnership” where each group’s expectations of who is going to cover which part of the recruitment process is really clearly defined, says Zukowsky. “One of the challenges to this is that there might be a lack of transparency in that process, where IT is not always seeing how many candidates have been screened or what might be going on behind the scenes.”

That’s why the first thing IT hiring managers and HR teams need to do is map out each stage of the hiring process and have a real discussion about who has ownership of each.

It may look something like this:

Start of the Hiring Process Start:

- *Planning for roles and open job requisitions*
- *Scoping job requirements*
- *Writing the job description*
- *Posting the job*

Middle of the Hiring Process Middle:

- *Sourcing candidates*
- *Resume screening applicants*
- *Phone screening applicants*
- *Initial Interview*
- *Follow-up interviews*

End of the Hiring Process End:

- *Short-listing candidates*
- *Making the final hire decision*
- *Making the offer*
- *Onboarding*

Unfortunately, the survey found that for some of these steps, there is real confusion between the two groups as to who should be leading the effort.

For instance, it’s unclear who should write the job description: 45% of IT claims responsibility. The other half of IT thinks HR should also be involved – and HR agrees (53%). But only 5% of IT hiring managers are confident that HR even understands the IT description.

When it comes to phone screening, HR claims sole responsibility (68%), while only 37% of IT think it should only be HR. And for the initial interview, 55% of IT thinks they should own it, 44% of HR thinks they should own it, and about a third of each say it should be both.

Even as far into the process as coming up with a short list of candidates, IT thinks they should have final say (64%) while only 39% of HR thinks it should solely be IT.

Start with the job description. “Big breakdowns happen right at the beginning when the job description is written, and tackling that first will take you a long way,” says Ilkhani, adding that job descriptions need to be realistic. “IT managers should work closely with HR to appropriately define the job description and only include the really necessary technical skills so that the job description doesn’t disqualify great candidates inadvertently.”

Ideally, the job description should outline three to five key requirements that applicants must have in order to move forward, says Ryan Sutton, district president for Robert Half Technology and The Creative Group. “Other qualifications should be considered negotiable or ‘nice to have,’” he says.

Open communication to speed up time-to-hire. All of this miscommunication can result in a slower process and a poor candidate experience, which doesn’t do anyone any good. “If candidates need to meet with multiple individuals, plan to schedule those interviews consecutively so the process doesn’t get drawn out,” says Sutton. That means tech leaders need to move quickly to bring top talent on board, while HR follows the company’s hiring protocols. “The two need to agree on what a compromise looks like,” he says.

Have an offer plan ready to go. Once you’re at the offer stage, the last thing you want is to have the talent drop off because IT and HR can’t come together. “Hiring managers need to work with their HR partners regularly so they’re able to make a competitive offer to a top candidate as soon as possible. Any delays in the process can cause job seekers to move on to another offer,” says Sutton. In addition to including a salary range that leaves room for negotiation, tech leaders should verify with HR what perks and benefits can be negotiated as well.

Make sure onboarding is being properly managed. Bringing talent on board is yet another area of contention, with 37% of IT leaders rating the onboarding process negatively, and 56% of HR pros saying the onboarding process is excellent/very good. Those very first days and weeks are crucial for engaging a new hire, however, so it’s in everyone’s best interest to work together.

“It’s so important, especially with developers, to get started right away,” says Zukowsky. They need to have access to the tools they need on day one and know what’s expected of them in the first week and the first month, she adds, while also making sure all their personnel things are taken care of. “It’s also understanding who the people are that they are going to interact with day to day, and having those meetings set up ahead of time, and getting them all of the HR documents and forms, letting them know what Slack channels to be part of, etc.,” says Zukowsky.

Solution #2: Get on the Same Page About Candidates

The good news is there is some agreement: Technical skills are considered the most important hiring criteria for both IT and HR. And both agree culture fit is important as well. Beyond that, however, there are some clear differences.

HR teams are mostly concerned with:

- Years of experience – 55%
- Industry experience – 46%
- Salary – 41%

IT managers are mostly interested in:

- Demonstrated problem solving skills – 64%
- Proven ability to learn – 47%
- Proven ability to work on a team – 43%

“Tech is a rapidly evolving field. Unlike others, years of experience or experience in a particular industry don’t carry as much weight as a professional’s ability to perform the task at hand,” says Sutton. That’s why IT hiring managers might instead look for talent with earned certifications and other credentials, and for many roles, applicants are often expected to take a knowledge test.

To get past these different mindsets, Garcia encourages that both teams come together and hash out what the ideal candidate looks like. “It’s not just one quick meeting, or doing an intake call with someone hiring. Sometimes it takes all of the hiring managers to come together with all of the recruiters and engaging in dialogue about the type of people we want to bring into the organizations.”

Sutton agrees. “While HR and IT might approach hiring, onboarding, training or retention processes differently, it’s important for decision makers from each area to work together and get on the same page, or risk losing out on top tech talent,” he says.

Bonus Solution: Leverage Upskilling and Reskilling

One of the main reasons why hiring for tech talent is challenging is because of a growing skills gap. In other words, in many instances, there are fewer candidates than open roles. In order to address some of that gap, many organizations are turning to upskilling and reskilling programs.

Upskilling and reskilling lets you leverage the talent you already have in your company by training them with additional skills to stay in their jobs as they evolve, or having them learn completely new skill sets to move them laterally into emerging hard-to-fill roles.

Another benefit of having these programs in place is that it allows companies to bring on “trainable” talent who might not have all the skills required on day one, but who have a demonstrated aptitude to learn and grow.

The challenge is that 54% of IT managers find it difficult to communicate with HR managers as to which skills can be taught and which are required. On a positive note, just about half of the leaders in the survey say their companies are building in-house training to address the difficulties they face in hiring technical skills.

What that means is that IT needs to involve and educate HR about these opportunities so that they can be integrated into the hiring process. Once they understand that they have the ability to look for adaptable candidates, it can help them manage the future talent pipeline.

“ I think it is important for the both sides of the partnership to understand related job families/ skills to enable upskilling/ reskilling,” says DeLisle.

Sutton agrees, adding that once again, communication is key. “IT leaders should pinpoint the most-needed areas for their team’s development and provide feedback to their HR colleagues. HR can likely help plan internal trainings for staff and allocate budget for external opportunities, like certification courses or virtual conferences,” he says.

In summary, when IT and HR work together, great hires can happen. However, it requires a big commitment by both parties including:

- *Getting on the same page from the very start as to what the ideal candidate looks like*
- *Working on job descriptions together*
- *Figuring out who owns each stage of the hiring process*
- *Sharing feedback along the way*
- *Collaborating on upskilling and reskilling programs to leverage in-house talent and inform hiring practices*

Tech Hiring Checklist Continued

Objective skills needed vs. nice to have

Objective skills	Needed	Nice to have	Notes
Business acumen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Years of experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Degree/major	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Company where previously worked	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Salary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Career level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Industry Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Tech Hiring Checklist Continued

Subjective skills needed vs. nice to have

Subjective skills	Needed	Nice to have	Notes
Perceived emotional intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Proven ability to work on a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Proven ability to work independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Demonstrated problem solving skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Passion/Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Culture fit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Proven ability to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Diversity – offers a different perspective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**“In today’s fast evolving environment,
attracting and retaining key talent
is critical to the success of any project,”
says DeLisle.**

**“Having a trusted HR partner
in any IT organization
is critical to getting the right talent
excited about opportunities.”**

Searching for the right talent?

Learn about Monster’s tech hiring solutions at

<https://hiring.monster.com/solutions/information-technology/>

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