



Nine Nontechie Skills that Hiring Managers Wish You Had (and How to Get Them) **Thomas Hoffman**

When it comes to technical skills, you either have them or you get them. This year's salary survey shows that there's demand for a broad range of skills, many of which have been hot for several years (see our jobs report snapshots).

But what else makes for a great IT hire? In their continual struggle to align IT with the business, IT executives say they're increasingly looking for staffers who have, in addition to technical chops, solid business acumen and so-called soft skills, like strong communication and listening abilities.

Computerworld's most recent hiring and skills survey confirms that. Survey respondents said writing and public speaking are two of the most important soft skills they look for when hiring new employees.

Classes that teach technical skills are easy to find, but what's the best way to learn soft skills? Here's a look at nine skills employers are looking for, with IT executives and career experts advice on how to get them.

1. Writing ability. Communication skills are a requisite for IT workers, says Tom Casey, senior vice president and architect of the workforce transformation practice at BSG Concours, a Kingwood, Texas-based consultancy. Many community colleges and online universities offer continuing education courses on business writing, says Robert Keefe, incoming president of the Society for Information Management (SIM) and senior vice president and CIO at Mueller Water Products Inc. in Atlanta.

2. An understanding of business-process mapping and tools. If there's one group in the company that needs to excel at process mapping, it's the IT group, says John Roulat, vice president of IT at Carl Zeiss Inc., a Thornwood, N.Y.-based medical technology manufacturer.

Although flowcharts can be used, swim charts, which offer a visual depiction of how business processes flow across functional areas, are very effective, he says. Roulat says there are books galore on the subject, but he recommends bringing in consultants to train IT workers on how to use

swim charts.

3. An aptitude for public speaking. They may be a throwback to the 1960s, but Toastmasters International clubs can help IT workers refine their public speaking skills and get past their jitters. Also, SIM's Regional Leadership Forum can help up-and-coming IT professionals polish their leadership skills, including their speaking ability, says Keefe.

4. An understanding of accounting. Universities, training firms and even professional organizations such as Omicron, an Atlanta-based consortium of IT associations, offer courses in accounting and financial principles. Alternatively, in-house financial experts from a company's accounting or finance department can offer tutorials to IT professionals, says Roulat.

These skills are a great start, but most IT managers want to see even more in their potential hires. Hiring managers say they also look for attributes like entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity and traits like these:

5. The ability to work well with a team. Anyone can muscle their way through an already overburdened IT group, says Roulat. But a person who is able to gain consensus and sell an idea not only gets the job done, but makes the group stronger, he adds. Still, it's not easy identifying and finding people with these traits. You have to see how they do in the field, he says.

6. Initiative. Being a small [IT] shop, I like to hire people who have demonstrated they can deliver without constant oversight, says David Dart, regional head of IT at HSH Nordbank AG in New York, where he oversees a 10-person staff. Dart says his management style is to create a vision or a goal and allow his staff to make it happen without too much supervision.

7. An inquisitive mind. IT professionals need to be able to learn on their own and acquire needed skills through a variety of venues, including online classes, blogs and networking sites, says Roni Krisavage, vice president of IT at World Wrestling Entertainment Inc. in Stamford, Conn.

8. The ability to get a point across. IT professionals should possess not only an ability to speak to business people in terms they understand, but also strong



writing skills and a talent for conversing with people who are in a variety of roles, says Didi Raizen, IT applications manager at Flatiron Construction Corp. in Longmont, Colo. While these types of skills can be developed, some people are just natural-born communicators, notes Raizen.

She encountered people like that at a previous job she had as manager of globalization software at J.D. Edwards & Co. There, a team of business analysts and nontechnical workers she oversaw blew me away with the recommendations they came up with to solve problems on a low-scale budget, says Raizen. Those types of folks are difficult to find.

9. A willingness to take risks. I believe the modern IT person is more of an IT entrepreneur, since he is constantly looking to improve upon existing ways of doing things or identify other business and operational opportunities, says Roulat. He notes how the increasing use of Web-based applications and open architectures is providing opportunities for IT organizations to present approaches that are affordable, quick to implement and disposable.

The bottom line, says Roulat, is to keep your eyes open, take a risk, learn from it, and move on.

This Month's Tech Toy

Chrome

Stability, Speed, Security. It is early in the development, but there is a lot of promise for Google's new Browser Chrome. Like an airplane with multiple engines, Chrome is designed to keep flying (not crash) after the loss of a single engine. Chrome is designed to change the way we use browsers- Google helped to develop Chrome not just for internet web site viewing, but to be able to also run applications such as personal Word Processors,

Spreadsheets, Media Players, Calendars, Task Managers, and a variety of commonly used applications. Best of all, Chrome is Open Source and is free for all to use. The Chrome Development Community will grow and continue to update the browser to meet the needs of business and personal users alike.





Upcoming HDI Events

- **SAC HDI Meeting 3rd Thursday of EVERY Month!!**

Join us at 2:30pm for networking and a useful, timely presentation on managing employee-relations issues-

We will meet at Heald College at:
2910 Prospect Park Dr.
Rancho Cordova, Ca. 95670

FUN Events not HDI related but FUN!!



SEPTEMBER 26 & 27, 2008

<http://www.sacanime.com/fromthelandbeyond/>

**Sacramento's
SCOTTISH RITE CENTER
(6151 H Street - Near CSUS)**

SAC HDI Issue 06 June 2008

SPONSORS



BOMGAR[®]

