

IT Leaders Adjust Hiring Strategies With Tech Talent Even More in Demand; IT job market has added about 13,000 positions during each month of 2021 so far

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FULL TEXT

Information-technology leaders say they are boosting compensation packages and flexible work options to widen the pool of prospective job candidates, as demand surges for tech talent.

The IT job market in the U.S. has added an average of about 13,000 positions during each month of 2021 so far, up from a typical monthly average of between 5,000 and 8,000 jobs, said Victor Janulaitis, chief executive of Utah-based consulting firm Janco Associates Inc., which analyzes data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Growth in the IT job market has been largely driven by the push toward digital initiatives such as e-commerce during the pandemic, as well as the need for cybersecurity experts, he said.

Overall demand for workers in the U.S. remained strong, with postings on job-search site Indeed.com up about 39% at the end of August from February 2020, The Wall Street Journal previously reported .

Data from the Labor Department showed there were 10.9 million unfilled jobs at the end of July, when the Delta variant surge started, exceeding the 8.7 million Americans who were unemployed and seeking jobs that month.

To recruit employees and retain existing tech staff, IT leaders say they are offering flexible work options, such as a combination of in-person and remote work. The median salary for IT professionals is expected to grow to between \$96,000 and \$97,000, up from \$94,600 in January and \$95,600 in June, Mr. Janulaitis said.

"The talent market is very competitive and becoming more so, given the continuing importance of digital transformation and digital business models," said Arthur Hu, chief information officer of personal computer-maker Lenovo Group Ltd., which currently has hundreds of IT job openings.

Positions such as technical product managers are in high demand and sometimes difficult to fill, said Mr. Hu, adding that he often sources "nontraditional" candidates who might come from a different industry, geography or discipline.

"Good ideas can come from anywhere," he said.

Software company Autodesk Inc. has hired about 250 IT staffers since the start of the pandemic in early 2020, said Prakash Kota, the company's CIO.

The IT group has not recruited at that rate before, he said. He attributes the hiring push to the company's goal of insourcing technology talent related to artificial intelligence, data science and cloud computing, Mr. Kota said.

Data science jobs are difficult roles to fill, he said.

The company offers competitive pay and the option of a mix of in-person and remote work to recruit IT staff, he said. "Culture plays a significant role" in hiring and retaining talent, he said. For example, it is important to ensure that IT staff members feel like they are contributing to important initiatives and making an impact on the business.

Talent is a top priority for Rob Alexander, CIO of Capital One Financial Corp., which aims to hire more than 3,000 technologists by year's end. Many of those roles include software engineers focused on cloud computing, data, machine learning and cybersecurity.

To differentiate itself from competitors and attract top technology talent, the bank has been putting an emphasis

on continuous learning, diversity and workplace culture, Mr. Alexander said. The company is also using its migration to Amazon Web Services, Amazon.com Inc.'s public cloud, as a selling point for new hires because it allows engineers to focus on building and deploying new applications and services quickly while using the latest software tools.

"For me and my leadership team, our highest calling is to build a world-class technology team and to unleash the potential of that talent," Mr. Alexander said.

Cathleen Southwick, CIO at Pure Storage Inc., a data-management and storage firm, said it is tough to find qualified candidates, particularly software engineers, in the U.S. and globally. The Mountain View, Calif.-based company is competing against other Silicon Valley giants for technology talent. Pure Storage tries to entice prospective employees by offering a flexible work style on a case-by-case basis, as well as competitive compensation packages. Ms. Southwick said the company also offers certification programs in areas such as cloud and IT services, to make IT staffers aware that the company is investing in their careers.

IT leaders will need to play a pivotal role in recruiting and retaining talent in the competitive job market, she said. "We're going to have to keep reinventing how, where and what we offer to employees, whether it's our benefits, flexibility or locations," she said.

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