

## Hiring Trends for 2007 and Beyond

By VIKKI PACHERA

Much has been written about a looming talent shortage in the United States attributed primarily to the 78 million or so baby boomers who, turning 60 this year, have or are about to leave the job market for the joys of retirement. For example:

In "Technology Executive Connections: Successful Strategies for Talent Management," a new report from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), 45% of executives surveyed said that technology talent is already scarce or very scarce, and within the next three years, the figure will rise to 66 percent. What's more, nearly 75% of technology executives felt competition for talent in their industry is worse than in other industries outside of high tech.

In 2006, the Novations Group, a global professional-services firm, surveyed 3,100 senior human resource executives across all industries and found that 61% are seeing signs of a talent shortage.



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The shortage is not limited to the U.S. Results from a survey of nearly 32,000 employers across 26 countries by recruitment specialists Manpower found that roughly 30% of employers would have hired more professional staff over the past six months had the appropriate talent been available.

Clearly, these studies point to a global talent shortage ---- yet, we all know outstanding people who are unemployed, unable to find the right role. So what's really happening and what is the outlook for 2007?

### Questions surround the gap between supply and demand:

With the US unemployment rate at the lowest since 2000 and the economy reasonably solid, most experts are predicting that, from a growth perspective, this year will look like 2006 ----short of a major unforeseen event. Conceivably, this growth would signify a shortage of talent.

Not necessarily so. First, the focus on corporate results, irrespective of company size--so long as there are investors involved--will continue. Sustained scrutiny on CEOs to maximize results will pressure them to maintain a lean, productive staff.

Second, over 939 private equity deals have been announced this year and mergers and acquisitions are approaching the 2000 level.

Whether it's increased pressure on costs with a private equity arrangement or synergies with a merger or acquisition, these deals typically result in a loss of jobs.

So, is this a mixed message? If more experienced people are leaving the job market, and there's modest growth in the economy, then there should be a shortage of talent. But if people are being displaced by corporate restructuring, shouldn't they be able to fill at least some of the gap?

### Deep, well-rounded experts will be in-demand:

Driven by both advances in technology as well as the need to maintain lean workforces, we will see increased demand for specialized, deep experts in a particular domain, such as security, networking, data management, mobile marketers and online advertising gurus. As an executive recruiter, I'm consistently tested to find the deep expert in data or the 'rock star' viral marketing executive who's successfully led numerous campaigns.

By the way, if you have these deep experts in your organization, it would be wise to ensure they are happy. People are happiest when they have some degree of freedom, are intellectually challenged, treated with respect and compensated fairly. And, if you are seeking out one of these gurus, think long and hard about what you have to offer them and why they would be compelled to leave a known environment to do the same thing somewhere else.

In addition to having deep expertise, desirably candidates are increasingly well-rounded. That is, because of the desire to have every employee make a difference, they now must be skilled at getting things done, collaborating effectively, synthesizing customer requirements, able to manage change, and innovate. Finding this person is not going to be easy. In fact, in the PwC study, 83% of those surveyed said that finding employees with engineering skills as well as the ability to think creatively and collaboratively is in short supply.

### Senior level positions will be increasingly tough to fill:

As technology experts, which are often baby-boomer senior managers and executives between the ages of 43 and 60, leave the job force, it will be difficult to replace them.

Though highly educated, the GenX population is about 35% smaller than the boomers.

Where is the senior level talent going to come from? One approach surely will be to identify, groom and promote the best talent out of younger, less experienced talent pools. Another will be to aggressively identify and recruit talent from competitors. While some executives will be able to cross industries successfully, companies interested in remaining highly competitive will be faced with competition for the best talent.

And what about that outstanding person who's unemployed and unable to find the right role? My advice is to play to your strengths. That is, look for work that is a sweet spot for your skill level not a stretch role. Work hard in identifying what makes you both an expert and well-rounded. And most important, become an expert in telling that story throughout the entire process--- from resume through interview.//

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