

ATTRACTING THE FAIRER SEX

Recruiting Strategies that Appeal to Tech-Savvy Women



According to the National Center for Women and Information Technology's 2007 Scorecard Report:

Women currently hold 56 percent of professional positions in the U.S. workforce, but only 27 percent of the professional computing-related positions.

The fairer sex's lack of participation in the technology workforce is leaving IT with a shrinking pool of qualified professionals. As a result, more companies are competing over fewer technology workers.

To thrive in this environment, your company must do everything it can to bring more tech-savvy women into the fold. If you're looking for new strategies to attract women, this article can help. It contains great ideas for recruiting qualified women into your IT department.

Assess your screening process. Examine your current selection process to determine whether women are being disproportionately screened out at any stage. If this is the case, any type of female-specific recruitment efforts will be a waste of your time and energy. Before you change your recruiting strategy, you should first address the screening bottlenecks that are chasing women away.

Make sure your company sends the right message. Counteract the negative messages women receive about technology occupations with your own

strong, positive messages. Make these themes a component of all your recruiting efforts:

- We have women employees in IT occupations
- We want and welcome women
- Women are leaders in our organization and have upward career paths
- Women have career opportunities in all areas of our company

Acknowledge that women are different. Beyond treating women as equals, your company should also send a clear message to applicants that you understand and care about women's unique needs. Consider stocking the women's restroom with appropriate products, or giving away company t-shirts in smaller sizes at your next recruiting conference (most women are not a men's XL). Simple things like these go a long way toward creating a positive image of your company in women's minds.

Create a page for women on your website. Within your site's recruitment pages, add a section just for women. You can feature biographies, interviews and photos of successful IT women (and other diverse groups) already working for your organization. Visitors will perceive your company as one that welcomes and supports women in IT.



Include an e-list sign up on your women's web page. This feature allows you to keep in touch with multiple applicants at once, and the host maintains the subscriber list for you (for an example, visit www.yahogroups.com). You can share articles relevant to the type of women you'd like to recruit, or tips for completing the application process (think key dates, required testing, etc.). Keeping in touch with potential applicants nurtures a relationship with them, and will keep you top-of-mind when they're ready to begin a serious job hunt.

Find authentic ways in which your company improves peoples' lives. Women are attracted to companies whose products or services make a positive difference in the world. Even if your company doesn't explicitly serve the greater good, find and articulate ways your company exercises its social conscience (e.g., give people time off to do volunteer work, match employees' charitable donations).

Hold a "Women in IT" career expo. Organize and conduct a two to three hour session, on a weekend or during the evening (to attract women who are employed), to educate women about IT opportunities within your company. Core elements should include:

- A panel of three or four women from a variety of departments (try to

include a new hire if possible) who will talk about their careers

- Information about the application and selection process
- A keynote address from the CEO and a high-ranking female manager
- A place and time for attendees to ask questions

Take advantage of free media coverage. The press likes to run human-interest stories about women succeeding in traditionally male professions. Why not leverage a little free media attention by issuing "Women in IT" press releases? Consider including: employment statistics; quotes from your female IT employees about why they love their work; a quote from your CEO; a note about job availability; and, of course, details about your upcoming career expo.

Review your publicity materials. We all know that a picture is worth a thousand words. What do your company's pictures (think brochures, websites, flyers, etc.) say? If you want to attract women applicants, make sure that at least one third of your images are of women. A female applicant who visits your home page and finds an image of someone who looks like her is more likely to click through to your recruitment page.

Make your IT department more attractive to women. Women are outspoken about their desire for flexible work schedules, a healthy work/life balance, fitness programs and social consciousness. Naturally, they will be more likely to pursue IT employment with a company that offers:

- Mentoring programs. A program that mentors women in leadership, management and technical areas is vitally important to women in male-dominated fields.
- Professional development training. On-the-job training or employer-paid training courses are attractive to women because they often come into IT via nontraditional career paths.
- Public salary scales. In women's minds, public salary scales level the playing field. You don't have to publicize everyone's salaries, but categorizing jobs and standardizing pay scales have a positive impact on all employees' perception of fairness.
- Flexible work options. Many professional women are also moms – sometimes, single moms. If your company wants to attract more women into IT, you should facilitate unfettered home and remote working, no questions asked.

Sources used to write this article:

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