Blended IT Organizations:

A flexible strategy to address today's biggest IT challenges

Finding the right IT talent for your organization feels like a never-ending struggle. Companies, agencies, and nonprofits in every sector of society prowl a finite pool of network engineers, data scientists, application developers, cloud specialists, and more.

Meanwhile, the demands on IT organizations—do more with less, make us more efficient, fatten our profit margins—perpetually escalate.

These pressures oblige IT leaders to shift to a new paradigm: the blended IT organization.

Blended IT uses a strategic mix of full-time, contract, project-based, and hourly IT resources to close the digital-talent gap. Many organizations are turning to this structure to not only answer these challenges, but allow them to embrace innovation and growth.

This eBook from the IT staffing experts at OnX explores the challenges every IT organization faces today and explains why a blended IT model is a sensible response.

The challenges

The IT talent gap

Most CIOs echo a similar lament: The challenge of recruiting, hiring, and retaining experienced IT professionals is not getting any easier. And it's having an impact. The annual Harvey Nash/KPMG Survey,[1] which queried 3,958 IT leaders in 2018, found that 65 percent of respondents said lack of IT talent is holding their organization back.

A 2017 study by LinkedIn and Capgemini illustrates the scope of the IT skills gap.[2] The study surveyed more than 1,200 employees and executives at large corporations in seven industries and nine countries. The survey found that more than 60 percent of companies had strong demand for advanced IT talent however, only around 40 percent had sufficient digital talent in-house.

Fewer resources, higher expectations

It's the IT department's job to keep an entire organization connecting, collaborating, and using digital technologies to improve business outcomes. There's constant pressure to improve customer service across multiple channels: in-person, online, social media, and on the phone. And everybody needs to be able to connect with remote colleagues across the country and around the world.

While budgets shrink and departments contract, expectations expand. You need more diverse people with increasingly varied expertise—preferably for less money than you'd spend through traditional hiring practices.

[1] https://www.hnkpmgciosurvey.com/pdf/2018-HarveyNash-KPMG-CIO-Survey-infographic.pdf

[2] https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2017/study-warns-the-digital-talent-gap-is-widening-here-is-what-you-can-do

Legacy systems get more difficult to support

IT departments haven't given up on standbys like the IBM Power Systems line, which dates to the 1980s, because they are reliable, secure IT workhorses. But these systems can complicate the lives of IT leadership.

Aging systems get more costly and time-consuming to support as the years pass. The expenses of patching and repairing keep piling up.

Meanwhile, the IT pros who know the most about these systems are nearing retirement age. Colleges and universities, by and large, are not training incoming IT professionals on these systems. The prospect of major downtime becomes a more serious threat as these systems reach end-of-life and essential IT experts needed to support them close out their IT careers.

Some IT pros remain certified on these systems, but they might not be easy to find or recruit.

Organizations' IT needs are evolving at a rapid clip

While venture capital firms pour billions into disruptive startups in a broad range of industries, forward-thinking companies are diving into big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, mobile apps, and other transformative technologies. Organizations confront a mountain of compliance demands and increasingly sophisticated cybercriminal threats.

At the same time, an increasingly mobile workforce requires IT support for all their digital devices, while innovations in cloud technologies are enabling companies to elevate customer service and streamline collaborations with partners worldwide.

Thus, everybody needs highly specific IT talent to turn all these technologies to the advantage of their organization. Unfortunately, the old model of filling an IT staff with full-time employees can't always cope with these multifaceted demands.

The solution: Adopting a blended IT framework

The fundamental appeal of blended IT is that you're not locking yourself into a single model of recruitment, hiring, and retention. In the full-time employment model, IT leaders create budgets, partner with recruiters, train new hires, and provide bonuses and other incentives.

But as the persistent skills gap demonstrates, these methods often fall short.

And companies might not be doing enough to keep IT pros engaged in their work and excited about their day-to-day responsibilities. Organizations may need to provide richer training and better mentoring opportunities.

In any case, the limitations of traditional IT hiring and the nuances of contemporary IT careers have fostered the rise of blended IT staffs, which typically hire four kinds of workers: Full-timers, hourly temps, contractors paid for a specific time frame, and project workers paid to complete a specific task.

Here's a quick look at how blended IT staffing may help your company:

Scaling your team for evolving business needs

Seasonal industries need lots of IT expertise for a short time frame. Growing companies have to scale operations up, while shrinking businesses need to scale things down.

After an acquisition, IT people have to reconcile multiple technologies and get everything moving in the same direction. They need to make it all happen without disrupting operations or disturbing clients.

It's not easy meeting these rapidly shifting requirements with only full-time employees. A much smarter strategy is to keep your full-timers focused on core business goals and address your remaining IT challenges with a mix of contractors, hourly temps, and project workers.

Reducing turnover

Your most important technology pros have spent at least a few years learning the subtleties of your marketplace. They know how to streamline operations and customer service to strengthen your business.

But many of the challenges we discussed previously can put a lot of stress and strain onto your team. If they're spending too much time troubling shooting aging technology instead of helping your organization innovate or are overloaded with tasks, they can burnout.

Keeping people committed to your core mission is integral to retention. Taking some of the workload off people so they can keep improving your business is a sound tactic for preventing turnover.

Leveraging diverse technical expertise

Digital transformation often requires more skills and training than companies have on-staff. Migrating IT workloads to the cloud or developing a sophisticated backup-and-recovery program are tasks best done by experts who have devoted years to mastering these niches.

It may be time to hire a full-time cybersecurity expert. If that job takes away an FTE, how do you bridge the workload gap? An hourly temp or contractor could have the skills you need.

Controlling costs

Hiring full-timers is expensive and time-consuming. Fringe benefits can add 20-30 percent to the cost. Moreover, in the time it takes to recruit and hire somebody with the precise expertise you need, you can lose ground on your business goals.

A blended IT structure lets you hire people quickly at hourly rates or fixed project costs. That helps you squeeze more impact out of a limited budget.

The OnX approach to blended IT

Most IT organizations need a nucleus of full-time IT talent to support primary business goals. But as complex technologies become woven into the fabric of today's organization, it's impractical to hire full-time IT staff to handle every IT demand.

IT staffing firms like OnX helps organizations find the right IT professionals for their short-term and long-term business needs with both project-based resources or staff augmentation.

• Project-based resources are available to assist with the design, engineering, and implementation of both short- and long-term projects across multiple technologies.

• Staff augmentation matches specific IT pros with highly detailed IT assignments for a defined time period – usually twelve months.

Many organizations have benefitted from using OnX in the following ways:

• Found IT people with the skills they needed and was able to put them to work quickly.

• Offloaded many of the burdens of IT resource management.

• Gained exceptional thought leadership for strategic projects.

• Implemented innovative technologies using industry best practices.

• Avoided high-priced OEM consulting services.

Talk to an IT Staffing and Consulting representative today to find out if, and how your organization can benefit from a blended IT staffing model to meet your growing list of business IT needs.

For more information, visit **www.onx.com**

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