

Study of Employment Bright Spot Yields Innovative Strategies

There's a bright spot in Indiana's employment landscape: information technology.

The Battelle Technology Partnership Practice report, "Indiana's Competitive Economic Advantage: The Opportunity to Win the Global Competition for College Educated Talent" notes that, in general, Indiana does not have available enough high-skilled, high-wage jobs for the number of Indiana college graduates.



But the report also showed that information technology (IT) is a sector that stands out as a huge field of opportunity for Indiana's college grads, with the supply of highly attractive jobs clearly exceeding the supply of qualified applicants.

That finding piqued the interest of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP) and TechPoint, its technology growth initiative.

With a 2013 grant from the Endowment to the CICP Foundation, CICP and TechPoint explored the Battelle study findings and conducted additional research specific to the IT sector. Building on this research, TechPoint piloted a first-of-its-kind talent recruitment program called IndyX, aimed at attracting and retaining skilled individuals

by connecting them to the Indianapolis community and thousands of open jobs in area technology companies.

Among TechPoint's findings: Indianapolis IT jobs are growing at three times the national average, with at least a dozen tech company acquisitions or initial public offerings since 2007 that yielded more than \$4.5 billion in market value and more than 3,500 jobs. Companies in the Indianapolis area like Apparatus, which builds and manages enterprise IT solutions, posted more than 9,000 technology-related jobs in 2013 alone.

Software application developers, web developers, database administrators and graphic designers are most in demand, as well as college graduates with computer science and software engineering degrees.

Apparatus employs more than 150 professionals at its office near downtown Indianapolis and is growing rapidly. "Attracting the best and brightest to Indianapolis is crucial to our success," emphasizes the company's founder and CEO, Kelly Pfledderer.



“We’re always looking for top technical talent. Attracting the best and brightest to Indianapolis is crucial to our success,” says Kelly Pfladderer, the founder and CEO of Apparatus, one of the fastest growing private companies in the country.

In TechPoint’s survey of 26 local tech companies, 85 percent reported that hiring is a challenge, with 58 percent finding competition for tech talent in Indianapolis to be at a very high level, according to Mike Langellier, TechPoint president and CEO.

“Executives at area growth companies continue to tell me that one of their critical needs is recruiting skilled talent. Most companies report that hiring is difficult. One CEO described finding talent as ‘impossibly difficult,’ and most said the situation has had a negative impact on growth,” Langellier says. “This is a community hungry for talent.”

Connections

The IndyX pilot hopes to feed that hunger in two ways. IndyXpat is an events and communication program designed to create a buzz among 24- to 40-year-old Hoosier expatriates and out-of-towners. An IndyXpat event in December, for example, targeted those visiting friends and family in Indianapolis for the holidays, showcasing the local tech community in a festive atmosphere, complete with a dueling piano bar.

Eighty-one percent of companies surveyed by TechPoint indicated that at least eight out of 10 of their tech employees are from Indiana or have an Indiana family connection. “Connection to Indiana is where we are winning,” Langellier says. “We need to connect more people to the Indiana tech community.”

IndyXtern is a “summer in the city” immersive internship program for tech-skilled college students who will work for the summer at some of the top tech companies in Indianapolis. Participants will live together with their peers, experience the city with friends, and advance their careers through exposure to guest speakers, company tours and special projects.

Both strategies are built on the idea that if college grads are aware of opportunities, they are more likely to consider Indianapolis seriously as a place to live and work.

Langellier—an Illinois transplant himself who came to Indiana for college, founded a tech company and stayed in the state—is optimistic. “Indianapolis is a next generation city whose future has not been scripted yet,” he says.

Others share that optimism, according to David Johnson, president and CEO of CICIP. Members of the Indiana tech community and the Indiana Economic Development Corp. have joined the IndyX effort, too, since it was rolled out in the fall of 2013.

“The Endowment’s funding to help us better understand the IT employment needs and opportunities in our community and to pilot IndyX—along with the significant support of other funders—sends the message to those thinking of returning to Indianapolis that our major philanthropic, public and corporate leaders are here to welcome them,” he says.

Nearly 250 people attended IndyXmas, a social event designed to attract and repatriate out-of-towners who were back in Indianapolis for the holidays. Several tech companies hired individuals they met at the event.

