



RECRUITING TECH WORKERS

Going after geeks

Is your workplace helping or hindering you in the war for top tech talent?

BY GREG MECKBACH, *Associate Editor*

Should every brokerage have a foosball table? Some recruiters say relaxed dress codes, games rooms and technology training programs are things to consider if you want to attract the best and brightest technology workers.

About one in eight Canadian information technology workers are older than 55 in the general workforce, but that figure inches up to one in six in the property and casualty insurance sector, the Insurance Institute of Canada reports.

“Growing competition for IT talent from other industries will continue to hamper the [P&C] industry’s ability to recruit IT workers,” says *Demographics of the P&C Insurance Industry in*

Canada, a study commissioned by the Insurance Institute.

The competition is tough because there is “often a negative stigma” associated with the insurance industry, says Travis O’Rourke, head of talent solutions for Hays Specialist Recruitment Canada Inc.

“Financial services as a whole has a reputation for being a little bit stuffy” in terms of the workplace, O’Rourke observes. In contrast, the IT industry, as well as other sectors such as retail and advertising, attract tech workers by offering relaxed workplaces. “Maybe there are ping-pong tables or people are allowed to wear jeans to work – that sort of environment.”

Offering flexible work hours and cre-

ating a look and feel akin to a large high-tech firm are a couple of ways to attract IT workers, said Juliet Turpin, Toronto-based vice-president of the technologies division of recruiting firm Randstad.

“A lot of software companies do things like provide lunch, provide dinner and gaming areas,” Turpin reports.

Certainly, the P&C industry needs to recruit younger IT workers. There is a “limited number of young people in IT occupations,” the Conference Board of Canada observed in the demographics report commissioned by the Institute.

In the Canadian work force as a whole, 32.6% of people who work in IT occupations are younger than 35. But in P&C,

that figure was only 20.2% in 2017, down from 20.6% in 2012.

The median age of IT employees who joined the P&C industry over the past two years is 34, the Institute reported. “The industry’s older-than-average IT workforce reflects the fact that IT recruits tend to enter the industry at an older age.”

Continuing education is of particular relevance to IT workers because technology changes so quickly. “For most [software] developers, their concern is obsolescence,” Turpin says. “They always have to be re-tooling their skill set, so software companies will put a lot of training into those individuals.”

Industry employers seeking IT workers should therefore consider offering their employees opportunities to learn. For example, allow employees time off from work to upgrade skills, or contribute money to cover employees’ course fees. O’Rourke advises insurance providers to make training part of an offer package. “In insurance, you don’t think about Google as a major competitor [for recruitment], but

insurance is becoming a high-tech play without a doubt, and insurance companies need to do a better job highlighting that.”

Right now, the employment market is looking good for prospective IT workers, O’Rourke observes. “In IT, whether you are a new graduate or not, you pretty much have your choice of where you want to work.”

Brokers and carriers must therefore create an attractive working environment. So consider your office tech, including websites, and ask whether an IT person would be excited working with it.

Although many insurance providers still have outdated “legacy” computer systems, this can actually help attract younger IT workers, O’Rourke says. “Those legacy systems are going to have to be replaced. Investing in a work force that’s willing to grow with your new systems...that’s pretty cool. IT workers like to work on the latest and greatest toys, so if you are making any infrastructure changes like that, that’s absolutely something I would highlight.”cu

TRUSTED ADVISOR

I’m thinking of hosting a networking event at my brokerage, but I’ve never held one before and I’m kind of nervous. What do I need to know so it goes off without a hitch?

— Nervous Nellie



Dear Nervous,
It’s much easier than you think. You don’t need a special skill set and the logistics don’t have to be overwhelming. Many people get so caught up with invitation lists, or searching in vain for a “perfect” combination of guests, that they forget to consider simple things like how many people to invite. Decide if the event will have a theme. If you want to make sure attendees have something to talk about, invite guests who share something in common, even if they may not know each other personally (perhaps they all work in the tech space, for example). Think carefully about the mix of people. The last thing you want is a group in which a lot of people know each other, but a few don’t. “The old pals will almost certainly revert to inside jokes and private conversations, leaving out the newcomers,” says Dorie Clark, a marketing strategist and professional speaker who teaches at Duke University. As you meet and greet people, constantly look for opportunities to connect people who would benefit from meeting each other. Keep track of these connections and follow up next time you see them to see if they benefited from the introduction. Of course, there are always a few people at any event who are off in a corner, not talking to anyone. Get volunteers to be “anchors” to make sure everyone is talking with someone. Lastly, follow up with attendees after the event. Ask how they liked the event and how it could be better. Then get going planning the next one....

BY THE NUMBERS

Why territories matter

Where in Canada are auto insurers paying out the most in claims costs? A 2018 claims study of 68 different communities* reveals that the Greater Toronto Area is one of the most dangerous places to drive in the country.



The Bad

(Mississauga, Markham)
 Claims per 100 cars (2008-2018)

6.4%

Mississauga

6.4%

Markham

The Worse

(Richmond Hill and Toronto)
 Claims per 100 cars (2008-2018)

6.6%

Richmond Hill

6.6%

Toronto

The Ugly

(Brampton, North York, Scarborough)
 Claims per 100 cars (2008-2018)

7.1%

Brampton

7.1%

North York

7.1%

Scarborough

SOURCE: Allstate Canada Safe Driving Study.
 *Study includes only provinces with private passenger auto insurance regimes.