REC Technology

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation's (REC's) specialist technology sector group provides a forum for any recruiter supplying to the technology sector to discuss policy, market conditions and regulatory issues affecting their business.

Sector developments

The UK technology sector recorded the best growth performance for almost a decade in the last quarter of 2013,[1] and this trend looks set to continue. The optimistic forecast is contrasted with an emerging skills crisis with high levels of vacancies across the sector. In the short term, a fair and flexible immigration system will enable access to global talent global talent pools. In the longer term, the UK's education system must ensure the training of students for specific IT roles. Much more needs to be done to reach out to women and candidates from diverse backgrounds who are underrepresented within the sector.

A shortage of candidates for permanent roles with appropriate levels of skills and experience became of acute concern over the last year. Over a third (34%) of recruiters cited this as an issue in 2013/14 (up from 25% in 2012/13 and 14% in 2011/12). The same issue was raised amongst temporary/contract recruiters in 2013/4, almost doubling to 20%.[2]

> *"The growth of the tech sector over the last number of years has established it as a pillar of the UK economy. The sector represents **12% of permanent** recruitment and **9% of contract recruitment** according to Recruitment Industry Trends Survey 2013/2014."*
>
> Aidan Anglin, Chair REC Technology

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Skill shortages

An acute lack of skills blights the technology sector. The REC's Report on Jobs, which asks recruiters about the demand for and availability of candidates in a variety of sectors found that Net developers featured as a skill in short supply for ten of the previous 12 months; Java featured in nine of the 12 months and SQL featured in the last eight of the 12 months.

That's why in our 'Manifesto for Jobs', one of the priority areas identified for immediate government reform is to ensure that IT employers can obtain the necessary skills they need here in the UK. We will continue to highlight the increased freedom, pay and experience available to individuals who contract in IT. As freelancers and contractors will attest, temporary assignments can provide opportunities to gain new skills which can increase the chances of subsequently accessing higher level roles.

More than one in three people (36 percent) in Great Britain has worked as a contractor, freelancer or agency worker at some point in their career and 41 percent are considering working that way in the future, according to Flex Appeal, a report published by the REC.

[1] Tech Monitor UK report by KPMG and Markit
[2] Recruitment Industry Trends Survey, 2013/4

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Immigration

Tapping into global talent becomes all important in the short term to counter the impact of the growing skill shortages in the technology sector. The REC lobbied the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) late in 2014 to include senior developers on the shortage occupation list, as this was a role frequently in short supply amongst recruiters. MAC have taken on board our evidence and called for this role to be added to the list, which should provide a measure of flexibility for recruiters struggling to find suitably qualified domestic candidates for such roles.

Following the closure of the Post Study Work Visa (PSWV) route in 2012, we have seen a seismic drop of 88% in the number of international students remaining in the UK following graduation. International students, trained in key technology disciplines in UK universities could provide some of the vital skills needed to support the technology sector. The REC continues to call for the restoration of a route to work for these well-qualified international students.

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The REC has partnered with stakeholders to develop a code of practice.

Security clearance code

The REC has partnered with IPSE (the association for independent professionals), the Cabinet Office and other stakeholders to develop a code of practice which includes specific guidance for recruiters providing staff for roles which require security clearance. This aims to make sure that technology sector recruiters and the individuals they represent are not excluded from contracting with the civil service because they do not have the relevant security clearance - except in very rare instances where the placement is genuinely urgent and of short duration.

The Code sets out the recommended best practice for government departments, recruiters and contractors. As well as recommending that government departments have adequate succession planning processes in place to avoid short-term and unrealistic timescales when it comes to finding the right people, the guidance also states that recruiters should not shortlist based on a candidate's pre-existing security clearance status.

Get Involved

To find out more about joining REC Technology, visit here. The best way to get involved is to come to the next meeting or join our next webinar – ask your REC account manager for more details.

www.rec.uk.com/technology