IT Talent, Decoded - Key Points from the Webcast – The Wrap

One of the most important concerns of IT leaders in companies of all sizes is attracting and retaining highly qualified people for key technology positions. In a recent survey of IT executives conducted by the CIO Executive Council (CEC), 83%, or four out of five IT leaders with hiring authority, report they plan to add to their staff within the next six months.

Unfortunately, only 11% of those executives polled admit to having a 'robust' talent acquisition pipeline, which is a problem in an increasingly competitive market.

The CIO Executive Council (CEC) recently hosted a Webcast focusing on this and other issues, presenting findings from its research as well as insights from a panel of IT executives. Presenters included *Bill McCorey*, SVP-CIO of Universal Parks & Resorts, *Frank Sirianni*, VP & CIO of Fordham University, and *Peter Weis*, VP/CIO of Matson Navigation Company. *Brendan McGowan*, Global Media Bureau and Client Research Manager, moderated the discussion and revealed the results of the CEC's *2015 IT Talent Assessment Survey.*

The following is a summary of key points made during the Webcast, viewed in its entirety by clicking here: IT Talent, Decoded.   Also available is the complete IT Talent, Decoded Assessment report.
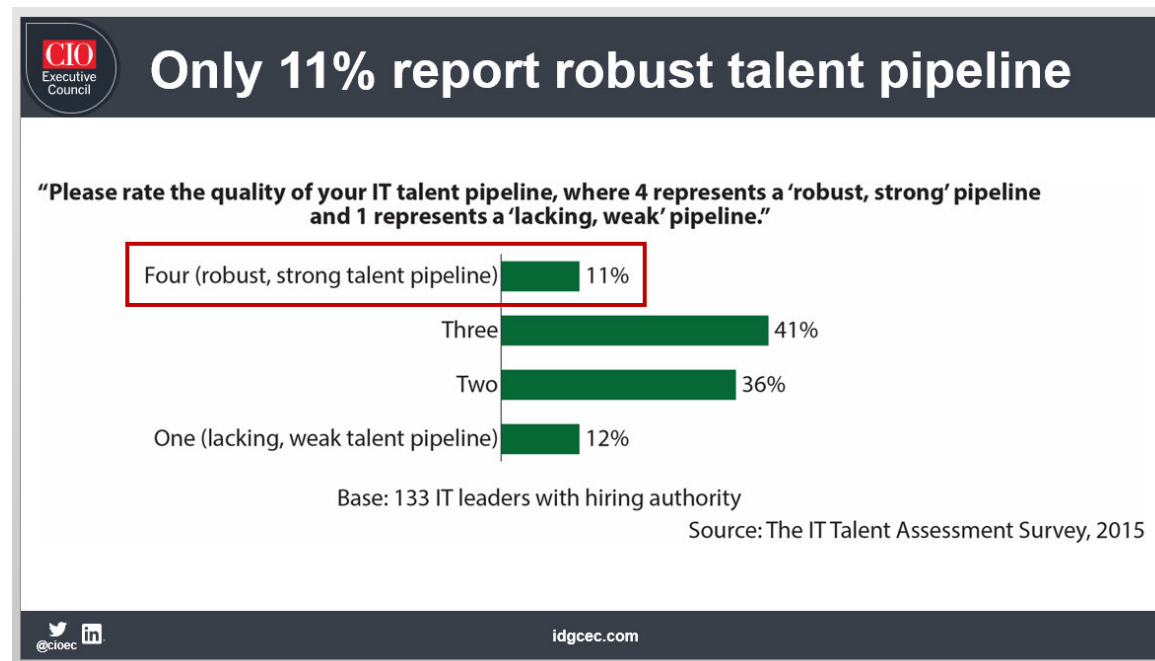
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Research Summary Points:

- While IT leaders are very interested and focused on hiring talented individuals, there is a massive gap between the desire to recruit and capabilities to attract and acquire qualified people. In fact, 38% of the IT leaders participating in the *IT Talent, Decoded* survey admit that finding talent is a significant challenge.

- Most executives claim there is a limited talent pool and just not enough qualified candidates (69%). Many admit playing a game of 'hide and seek' when trying to find these individuals and existing budgets may not be enough to attract people looking for higher compensation levels.

- The good news is that many companies point to a current low attrition rates (9%), which means that existing retention strategies may be working.
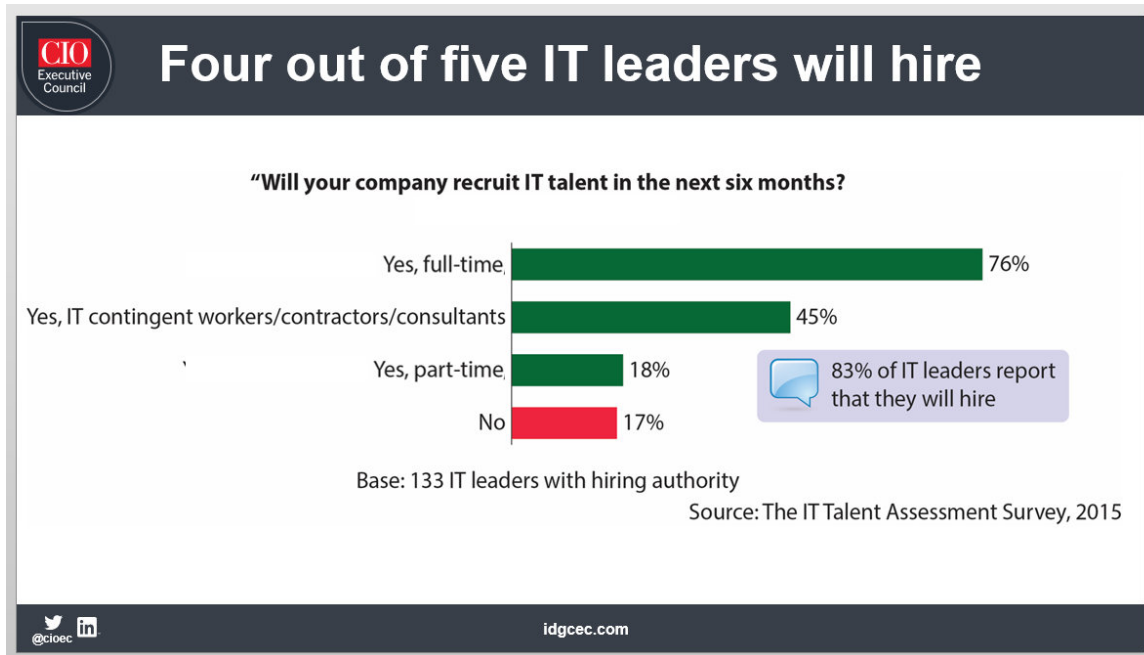
Tips on Maintaining and Motivating Existing Talent

Bill McCorey
SVP-CIO of Universal Parks & Resorts

- Manage change purposefully – do not tackle too much at one time. Put the team first, and build on success; find early wins and celebrate those wins.

- Recognition is important. Personal notes to staff help motivate people. Also, acknowledge the top performers – not necessarily with compensation, but in general recognition. People like to be involved with team where they are getting recognition for what they are doing.

- Be aware of the importance of culture. This is critically important to success and the transition from being an order taker and silo into becoming a business partner.

- Be diligent in responding to requests in what you can deliver. There will be 'blank check moments', but you have to have a purposeful process. Deliver what you promise.

Only 11% report robust talent pipeline

"Please rate the quality of your IT talent pipeline, where 4 represents a 'robust, strong' pipeline and 1 represents a 'lacking, weak' pipeline."

Four (robust, strong talent pipeline) 11%
Three 41%
Two 36%
One (lacking, weak talent pipeline) 12%

Base: 133 IT leaders with hiring authority

Source: The IT Talent Assessment Survey, 2015

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Four out of five IT leaders will hire

"Will your company recruit IT talent in the next six months?"

- Yes, full-time — 76%
- Yes, IT contingent workers/contractors/consultants — 45%
- Yes, part-time — 18%
- No — 17%

83% of IT leaders report that they will hire

Base: 133 IT leaders with hiring authority

Source: The IT Talent Assessment Survey, 2015

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Frank Sirianni
VP & CIO of Fordham University

- Focus on middle managers and have a 'middle out approach' in creating a community of change agents.

- Ask questions of everyone that relate to IT's capabilities and business demands – even those people and departments involved in *Shadow IT* projects. Typical questions include: How do you think you will benefit from the program? How do you think the university will benefit? It also helps to break individuals into two groups: those with management experience and those with more of a heads-down, tactical approach.

- Engage in self-coaching and initiation opportunities and programs. Incorporate 'action learning' tactics – statement in response to questions – identify 'action learning issues'. Also, consultative meetings: incentive to participate: upward and downward communications, as well as cohort projects. These can be used for sharing experiences, successes and challenges of colleagues.

- Cohorts have evolved to become teams others can call on and keep in touch with to maintain communications.

Peter Weis
VP/CIO of Matson Navigation Company

- Never cut the skills development budget, even during down years. Recognition cannot be just money – there also has to be public or private recognition and it has to be real, authentic and right so it does not come across as disingenuous.

- People of all generations – millennials or not - want their careers to matter. It is important to keep a talented and engaged workforce. The hardest part of job is discovering if you are properly positioned for today and tomorrow.

Peter developed eight traditional talent management building blocks:

- ✓ Training and skills development
- ✓ Meaningful career ladder
- ✓ Legacy skill set transition
- ✓ Mentoring and high performer management
- ✓ Retention management
- ✓ Compensation management by market
- ✓ Variable compensation
- ✓ Recognition

He also promotes and sticks to an '**IT Talent Mantra'**:

- ✓ Know thyself
- ✓ Every single headcount matters
- ✓ Cultural fit as a strategic differentiator
- ✓ Ignore legacy issues at your own peril
- ✓ Treat your partners as partners
- ✓ Karma. Treat staff as if they have a choice.
- ✓ Look beyond the technology

- Given the type of company, it is important to focus carefully on the notion of a cultural fit when attracting IT Talent. Matson Navigation is a 133-year old shipping company that previously had a lot of legacy IT systems and no real reputation for innovation. Today, after a decade of transformation, all of the mainframes and legacy apps are gone and the IT operation are 100% virtualized and cloud-enabled (AWS).

- Competing with tech startups and high-tech companies in general can be difficult – especially if you are based in the San Francisco area like Matson. So, stress a company's other strengths that make it attractive, in this location, involvement in IoT, and a global business ecosystem. It is important to promote these benefits and clearly eliminate others that are not a fit since this can avoid a "cultural mismatch will cause turnover down the road."

- Look for people who have spent time with external customers – with expertise in customer-facing and relationship skills. They also look foe 'emotional intelligence' is such areas as finance, negotiation and change management.

- Find meaning in your job and what it means in your organization. The energy of leaders is contagious. When you do things everybody sees it, and conversely when you are not they see that as well. Make a difference beyond the core work.

Final Thoughts:

- **Bill McCorey's** transformation goes back to 2007, when I took on the challenge of climbing Mt. Rainier, the largest glaciated peak in North America. At 12,500 feet his team came upon a four-foot crevice, which they had to jump. He jumped and didn't quite make it, falling about 25 down. However, his climbing team did exactly what they were trained to do and broke his fall with ropes tied to one another. He uses this experience as a mechanism not only in his personal life but professionally as well - how he leads and values the team and thinks about the power of team.

- When he came on board at Universal, he was initially asked to change the team, but he did an assessment and found they were lacking in leadership and clarity. He knew that in building a team it is important to develop a team culture, so in the first two years on the job he interviewed as many people as he could - a couple of hundred in total. The results was a new understanding and clarity. He promotes the journey in his leadership, climbing one step at a time, which led to the place we they are today – engaged with leadership and networked.

- **Frank Sirianni** notes that Fordham University is in a business that has not changed its model in about 450 years. I was faced with set of discouraged employees and no leadership. Previously there were incentives like rich benefits and life-long employment, but that is no longer the case for IT. So, we introduced programs that would offer growth and promotion capabilities, as well as professional development. There are also new opportunities with the shift toward cloud, and a need for such skills as vendor management, contract negotiations.

- **Peter Weiss** points out that it is important for the CIO has to communicate during time of change. There is a real reluctance for IT people to get out and communicate face-to-face. People wonder how change and innovation will affect them, so you have to spend time out in the field. You earn the right to communicate remotely by paying your dues in face-to-face communications.'

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- Tim Scannell
CEC, Director of Strategic Content

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The CIO Executive Council, an IDG Brand and a business unit of IDG Communications, was founded to serve the evolving, challenging and demanding role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO). Now in its eleventh year, the CEC has expanded its highly regarded leadership services beyond the realm of the CIO to include professional advisory services for any executive charged with strategic technology leadership.