

Six (More) Ways to Recruit Women

Several IT women offer suggestions on small and large ways to attract them to work for your company.

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By [Esther Schindler](#)

March 31, 2008 — [CIO](#) — Although men and women may have the same motivations, women are, perhaps, more outspoken about their desire for flexible work schedules, work/life balance, fitness programs and social consciousness. In addition to the advice given in the main article, [Making Your IT Department More Attractive to Women](#), here's a few more suggestions for how to improve the corporate climate.

1. Offer mentoring programs.

"An active mentoring program is crucial, especially for women in a male-dominated field," says Sharon Akkoul, program manager at NYC Metro Fiber Services. "As the manager of membership services for a nonprofit research network which connects to Internet2, I am often the only woman at a meeting. ... All the engineers I work with are truly terrific, but they are all male. Having a program which mentors women in leadership, management and technical areas would be ideal."

For more on mentoring women in IT, see [The Executive Woman's Guide to Mentoring](#).

2. Get serious about training.

Professional development training is another perk that benefits both men and women but is often more immediately valuable to women, since they often come into IT from nontraditional career paths. Most companies promise training, but they set up near-impossible barriers to entry, says Katie Albers, a user experience consultant with firstThought in Santa Monica, Calif. Companies that can demonstrate how they help staff gain new skills will attract women.

3. Be open with employee classification, goals and career paths.

Public salary scales can make a big impact on employees' perception of fairness, says Albers. "You don't necessarily have to publicize everybody's salary, but putting each job in a category and making the pay scale for each category public can answer a lot of questions and make women believe they aren't (or are) getting taken advantage of."

Similarly, publishing and clearly defining career tracks lets employees know where they are and where they're headed, says IT project manager Elizabeth Ross. "That way, if you take a break for a year for a new baby, you know where you are when you leave and hopefully when you come back."

4. Encourage telecommuting and flexible work options.

Heather Burns, a website designer with Idea15 Web Design in Glasgow, Scotland, says that a company wanting to attract more women should permit unfettered home and remote working, no questions asked.

For more on telecommuting, see [How to Negotiate a Flexible Work Schedule](#).

5. Collaborate—and mean it.

"Not all women prefer collaborative environments, but I certainly do," says Bethany, a junior programmer who just finished her second job search out of college and who declined to provide her last name for this story. She expects to find evidence of collaboration, not just talk. "If I'm around for a whole day [in interviews] and mostly see people sitting alone in their rooms I'm not going to believe you when you say it's a collaborative atmosphere," says Bethany.

Gen Y employees of both genders expect companies to encourage collaboration and teamwork. For more information, see [Management Techniques for Bringing Out the Best in Generation Y](#).

6. Teach proper behavior.

Retired university dean Virginia R. Hetrick says executives and managers need to understand what constitutes sexual harassment and they need to provide sexual harassment training to their entire staff. That includes women who direly need to be able to identify the behavior when it happens to them or to other women. "Fully 80 percent of the IT departments where I've been a guest over the past 15 months have this kind of problem," she says. "I turned down three job offers because of the behavior of IT staff while I was being interviewed," she adds. After the training is complete, the CIO needs to identify the consequences of rule-breaking.—*E. Schindler*

Additional Resources

Need more info? Here's a few organizations to get you started.

The Anita Borg Institute and the Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford University are working on a study examining the factors that affect the attraction, retention and advancement of technical women. In the meantime, this literature review (PDF) on [barriers to the advancement of technical women](#) may be useful.

The National Center for Women & Information Technology also has some [research-backed resources](#). Deloitte offers [the Deloitte Women's Initiative](#), "simple principles that help the organization's women succeed."

Quest's Carol Fawcett cited several types of registration or certification programs where companies can be recognized, including [Working Mother 100 Best Companies](#), [NAFE Top 30 Companies for Female Executives](#) and [Catalyst Award Winners](#).

The [CIO Executive Council](#), a professional association of IT leaders founded by CIO magazine, runs a networking and best-practice-sharing program for women IT executives.—*E. Schindler*