



## How To Attract Top Talent—And Keep Them

by Dave Hilbe

(NAPSA)—While many businesses are decrying the mainframe skills shortage, there are steps you can take to keep your company out of their company.

### The Problem

With many mainframe specialists retired or nearing retirement, the race is on to figure out how to fill their shoes. While some universities are adding limited mainframe topics to their curriculum, mainframe skills are no longer widely taught at the university level. At my company, we've taken the approach of developing mainframe talent in-house. Attracting the right talent isn't enough: It's also important to plant it in good soil, water it adequately and let it grow.

### A Solution

Ultimately, you need your mainframe college hire to become a productive and talented mainframe technician. Here's what we've learned.

**Define a career development plan:** Identify the job functions you want your new hires performing in the first two years. For example, the first year may focus on general mainframe, software development or database skills. In the second year, focus more on deep technical knowledge covering a narrower scope as you prepare them to take full responsibility for a project.

Next, break it all down further to one-year and six-month milestones. It's essential to define these milestones for two reasons. First, you have skills clearly defined by which you can measure how well the college hire is progressing. Second, you can use the expected job functions to define



**The next time your company needs mainframe specialists, you may be able to grow your own.**

your training plans. A development plan lets you evaluate various education, training and assignment opportunities in light of where the college hire is in his or her overall career development. This also brings some level of structure to their development.

**Have the professional development talk:** Meet with each new hire, review the two-year development plan and stress:

- Challenge/push yourself.
- Make sure you are always learning.
- Focus on always making a worthwhile contribution.
- Understand your career growth opportunities.
- Feel you're fairly compensated.

Managers should regularly review this list with the college hire and confirm that everything is being addressed appropriately.

**Assign mentors:** A mentor should have strong skills in the area in which you want the college hire to grow. The mentor is there for questions, to help with assignments and company-specific processes and procedures, and to make and evaluate assignments.

**Recognize success:** Receiving acknowledgment for a job well done can be a huge boost to

employee confidence and morale. At BMC, we have a quarterly awards program and several of our college hires have won the award. We push our college hires and, when successful, promote them fairly quickly.

**Create a comfortable work environment:** One way is by having several employees who are at the same stage in their career development. Even workers who are happy inside the office building may want to cut short their tenure with the company if they're miserable once they leave the building, missing friends and family.

**Offer top-notch training:** Several computer-based training self-study programs are available that cover many mainframe topics: operating systems, programming, JCL, network, databases and so on. Give college hires opportunities to attend an industry conference periodically; say, every 18 months.

Many vendor software packages incorporate mainframe expertise. Automation, exception-based analysis, and business policy-based software packages are examples of tools that can help your mainframe talent become productive more quickly.

Expose your college hires to many different aspects of your business. You might discover fresh, new ways of looking at problems and recognizing opportunities.

**Reap the business benefits:** My firm's training program for college hires has proven to be overwhelmingly positive both from a business perspective and from the perspective of the college hires.

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