

# The Most Important IT Job Skill? Personality



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Bring your own device, or BYOD, mobility is a welcome convenience for most businesspeople. In embracing BYOD, IT leaders face many challenges in performing the balancing act between safeguarding company interests and meeting the varied needs of the company's employees. As a result, the roles of IT team members are constantly changing, requiring IT employees to be more well-rounded than ever.

When hiring IT professionals, chief information officers and IT hiring managers look for three indicators that demonstrate an applicant is a well-rounded candidate: strong social skills, flexibility, and a wider breadth of knowledge and experience in new and emerging technologies.

## Strong social skills

Today's IT professionals don't just deal with technology — they deal with people. IT employees need both technical and social skills to effectively do their job.

Promedia, a Little Falls, N.J.-based technology solutions provider whose hiring process includes an interview with personnel from different divisions throughout the organization, stresses the importance of being able to interact with all types of people from other departments. Promedia CEO Gene Murphy said that social skills are part of Promedia's friendly, family-oriented environment.

"We want somebody that is not socially inept," Murphy said. "It's more of a team role in any division that you're in because you'll have to interact with different departments, from engineering to purchasing, project management, network operating people — everyone."

Andrew Storms, director of security operations for Tripwire, a network security firm, agrees. He reiterates that everyone in IT needs to remember that IT is a service-based department. This especially applies to companies who have adopted BYOD mobility.

"The consumerization of IT has really made social skills a critical need for IT employees," Storms said. "The days when you could be an awesome UNIX administrator that hangs out in your dark cube tapping on a keyboard are long over. IT team members should be able to speak easily to employees at every level of the organization."

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## IT Job Skill: continued

### Flexibility

In IT, things can go wrong at any time and in any place. With companies relying more and more on remote or virtual employees across the country and all over the world, today's CIOs and hiring managers prefer IT employees who are flexible in their availability and ability to provide support.

"The rapid change in technological innovation demands that employees keep up and [be able to] react and adapt quickly," said Charley Polachi, who specializes in tech and startup placement at Polachi Access Executive Search. He notes that tech firms are looking for candidates who have schedule flexibility and are able to adjust to different working environments.

For instance, IT employees who work with remote employees, especially on a global scale, should be comfortable responding to issues outside of regular work hours. This includes being able to field requests from any time zone and maintain systems thousands of miles away — even at 2 a.m. on a Saturday morning.

While not all companies require 24/7 availability, most require that IT employees are able to solve problems with a sense of urgency. Murphy says that Promedia, which has an alert system set up should anything go wrong in the middle of the night, requires employees to be at the office when the doors open at 6 or 7 a.m. to respond to issues as soon as possible.

### Wider breadth of knowledge

To effectively do their job, today's IT employees must be able to continue expanding their skills, stay up-to-date with the latest technological innovations and quickly adjust to new technologies as they emerge.

"The IT employee has to be familiar with many more devices and come full circle in knowing exactly how those devices interact," Murphy said. This means

having experience with all operating systems as well as expertise in what goes on behind the scenes to keep everything running. (Like many IT firms, Promedia screens applicants by including a lab component in their interview process, where they present candidates with a series of technical questions and situations.)

Furthermore, the BYOD generation requires new IT employees who understand the changing definition of technology.

Jason Lehr, director of technology at Autotask, a leading provider of IT business management software, says that, in the past, technology referred to devices and infrastructures. Today, it includes platforms, applications, toolsets, and the way technological solutions are selected, deployed and supported. These are all rapidly changing, making well-informed IT employees more critical than ever.

Take security, for instance. "There's an absolute need for new hires to fully understand the principles of creating and maintaining a secure, reliable environment that simultaneously provides access to the applications and data employees need and protects that data from misuse," Lehr explained.

An IT employee who is aware of the latest security threats and methodologies can produce well-designed protocols with the proper user permissions, admin rights, access hierarchies, and other safeguards, regardless of which platforms and devices an organization is using. Those employees who aren't put the company and its employees at risk.

Rachel Knight, recruiter at Nashville-based Scout Staffing, a specialized IT staffing agency, emphasizes that CIOs want forward-thinking IT professionals who refuse to get comfortable with any process or product and take the initiative to keep the organization as relevant and secure as possible.

"It's not about maintaining what you have anymore," she said. "It's about preparing for what's next."

