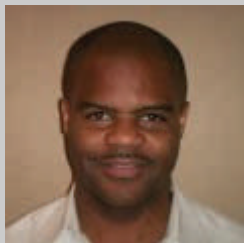


Meet CFUS



Joseph C. (Joe) Hibbitt
Principal, President
Los Angeles, California



Manny Mangahas
Principal, VP—East Coast Operations
Clifton, Virginia (Washington DC)



Burnie Reed
Principal, VP—Midwest Operations
Dallas, Texas

CFUS Update!

Industry: Real Estate

Provided operation and maintenance support for their Oracle eBusiness installation. Services included integration with third-party products, application extensions to handle proprietary data, and end-user training.

Technology : Oracle eBusiness Suite

Industry: Insurance

Provided corporate identity consulting to re-brand the organization's web presence. Designed, developed, and implemented a fresh and progressive website based on current industry standards and client requirements.

Service: Enterprise Website Implementation

How to avoid an IT staffing nightmare

As CEO, you're likely convinced that having an IT department in your company is critical, but as far as the task of actually hiring technowizards - you've probably happily left that to somebody else. You're not in the HR department, right?

But when your computer or the network goes down, you're going to be in the same boat as every other employee - helplessly reliant on the folks in the IT department to fix whatever's ailing. But what if the wrong people have been hired? What if they're not really qualified for the specific tasks needed to complete your company's timely projects? The costs of the ensuing delays could be astronomical. So how do you make sure you find the right person, particularly in an environment where there seem to be a million other companies looking for people with the same capabilities and expertise? Here are some tips.

Understand your need. Too often, managers searching for temporary help formulate only the vaguest of job descriptions,

particularly with IT people. Avoid this common problem with a general job description to broadly document your needs. Specify the primary skills required, to ensure the candidate can hit the ground running with little down time. Specify the secondary skills required. For example, if they know cost accounting in the consumer electronic industry, they may also have the ability to analyze across business functions. Specify precisely what you expect the candidate to do. This is critical; leading placement agencies aim to find candidates that have been there, done that. But that's difficult when managers don't specify what they expect the candidate to do

Validate the candidate's qualifications by asking the right question - again. The difference between finding the right person and the almost-right person is a matter of asking the right questions and then reformulating the same question to check your answers. In this way you have a much better chance of correctly identifying a potential candidate's real skills, not just giving them a slow pitch they can hit, and allowing them to tell you

what you want to hear. Ask the same question from three or four different angles. The end goal is to nail down a more exact understanding of the candidate's skill sets. Without going to this extra trouble there's a good chance a candidate can be placed in a job situation that doesn't quite match your needs. And that's what you want to avoid.

Understand the HR/IT communication gap. If you didn't think there was a communication problem in your organization, that may be the problem. Because in eight of 10 larger companies with well-developed HR and IT departments, the HR staff honestly doesn't have a clear picture of the needs of the IT department. Just look at how many IT candidates get hired within your own company as contractors or permanent hires, with IT managers bypassing HR.

The problem arises because HR too often focuses on the candidate's list of skills, while failing to match what the candidate has done and what the manager expects the candidate to do.

Say you're looking for a carpenter to build a house. You have two candidates who both have experience using a saw, a hammer, and a drill. One has employed those skills installing windows, doors, building fences, and laying tile. The second has employed the same skills building houses. Which one would you want to build your new house?

Check references - always. This step sounds so basic, and yet, too often, it doesn't get done adequately. Contrary to popular belief you'll find most former employers surprisingly willing to pass along their honest recommendations, or concerns. If you're using the services of a placement consultant, you'll want to make certain they check all refer-

ences for the past several years. Personally, I attempt to obtain three references for all contractors and permanent hires - two managers and one peer.

Get your money's worth from a placement firm. Companies spend a lot of money hiring placement firms to find qualified IT personnel, but sometimes they're left wondering what they spent the money for. To prevent that, don't deal with placement firms that don't do the up front work. Check the references of the placement firm, companies they're currently doing business with. Don't initiate a search until you're sure the placement consultant understands your requirements entirely. Interview only those candi-

dates who have been screened by the placement firm first. Have the firm provide proof of the internal interview by submitting their interview documentation. Before deciding on a candidate, have the firm perform reference checks. And make sure the firm has a mechanism for evaluating the candidate's performance once they're hired.

Managing and integrating technology personnel and IT managers is hard enough. Make your job easier by taking the time to choose the right people for the job right from the start. Remember - technology is only as good as the people who make it work.

Spending wisely during down times

Conventional wisdom suggests that during a recession, companies should preserve cash wherever possible. Of course, this "wisdom" ignores two very important facts. First, if everyone follows that advice, then recession will quickly turn to depression as demand for goods and services evaporates. Second, and most importantly, recessions tend to drive prices downward, resulting in opportunities to invest in infrastructure, cost-saving, or productivity assets at a significant discount.

Making these kinds of investments now will make your company even more profitable when the economy turns around. Here are the four most common investment ideas I've collected through discussions with CIOs and technical managers.

1. Dual displays

Although once considered a perk because of cost, many companies have found that outfitting key technical or operational employees with multiple displays dramatically increases productivity.

Ideally, you should equip your technical team with laptops whose monitor outputs will drive both the internal LCD display and a separate monitor. This is especially true for

software developers. They can load their development environment or code/debug environment on one screen and then work with the program output on the other. They can also use help files or training materials on one screen and the programs on the other. (I prefer to have my e-mail loaded continuously on one of the screens while I'm working on software on the other.) Many customer areas—finance, customer service, help desk—may also benefit from the extra virtual workspace provided by a second monitor. They can dedicate the space on one monitor to their major work area and dedicate the other to their productivity applications; e.g., Word and Outlook.

Adding multiple-monitor capability is very inexpensive. You can purchase additional 17-inch monitors for around \$150. Many corporations have excess monitors from situations in which their companion PCs were cycled out, but the monitors still had a useful life. If you have desktop or tower systems, you can get a second display card for about \$75 or a dual-display graphics card for about \$150. And modern operating systems have support for multiple displays built in. Windows 2000 and Windows XP support up to nine monitors out of the box. Many dual-display cards have drivers for Windows 98

as well.

2. Increase workstation memory

Over the last year, memory prices have dropped precipitously. But the decrease in supply of higher-speed memory to match new Intel processors has already prompted prices to rise. You should expect costs to rise over the next 12 months and for memory to cost twice what it is now, as new, high-speed memory formats (DDR and Rambus) become dominant and older excess inventories of SDRAM become exhausted.

Most engineering and development managers I have spoken with recommend that technical personnel and power users have a minimum of 512 MB of RAM and that others should have a minimum of 256 K. If you have the cash to do it, now's the best time to buy.

3. Go mobile

Fueled by wide acceptance and rock-bottom prices, many companies have begun cashing in on the 802.11b wireless craze. Working with wireless and portable equipment makes your technical team much more efficient. They can take their work with them to a comrade's desk, a meeting room, or home.

Having a laptop lets them move around, yet it's a wireless connection that lets them stay connected. And now that many homes are equipped with high-speed cable or DSL access and wireless connectivity, you can allow your employees to connect from home using a VPN.

Using the VPN also allows you to get around the number one problem with accessing wireless networks from home: the weakness of the Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP), an 802.11 security protocol for wireless networks. The WEP encryption method is designed to provide the "equivalent" security available in wired networks. The compressed, encrypted data passing through the VPN channel cannot be compromised by external sniffers.

4. Virtual machine technology

As single processors surpass the speed of last year's multiprocessor machines, they have extra horsepower available for other tasks. In fact, they have the power to become multiple, simultaneous machines. Software from [VMware](#) and [Connectix](#) allows any speedy PC with a lot of memory to appear to the user as several machines sharing a single keyboard and monitor.

There are two key scenarios in which you may want to make an immediate investment in this technology. First, when used as a migration technology, these packages allow you to run legacy DOS, Win32, and Windows 95/98 programs in separate virtual machines (VMs) when they don't run properly on Windows 2000 or Windows XP. You can even

use server-based VM technology (like VMware's GSX or ESX servers) to centralize all of the legacy programs and serve them to clients using remote control and management software.

Second, you may want to invest in VM technology for testing of engineering scenarios or development environments. The ability to simulate these environments using VM technology can save companies thousands of dollars on both equipment costs and the cost of the time to configure the equipment for testing. Although the cost of these products has remained fairly constant, the price of the hardware necessary to use them effectively (faster processors, lots of memory) is lower than it's ever been.

Working Out at Work

It's hard to find time to exercise, but now you don't have that excuse anymore. You may think you don't have time to workout at work, but there are opportunities everywhere if you pay attention. All it takes is a little planning and some inspiration to squeeze in the exercise all day long.

The Basics

You already know the drill about being more active at work. Take the stairs whenever you can, park further away from the door, etc. But, there are some other things you may not have considered.

- Sit on an exercise ball instead of a chair. This will strengthen your abs and back and you'll work on your posture without even trying.
- Set an alarm to go off every hour to remind you to stand up and move around. Even

if you just swing your arms or take a deep breath, you'll feel more alert.

- Use the restroom on another floor and take the stairs
- Use a pedometer and keep track of how many steps you take. Aim for 6,000 to 10,000 steps a day.
- Leave something important in your car (your lunch, your briefcase, etc.) so you have to run out to get it (and take the stairs)
- Deliver documents or messages to co-workers in person rather than by email
- Go to the mall for lunch and park on the opposite end of the food court. Don't forget to buy something healthy.
- Get a headset for your phone so you can move around while you talk.

Be creative. Any movement is better than none, so don't feel like you have to do sprints all day long. Adding short bouts of exercise

throughout the day will help you burn more calories and will also reduce stress so you can easily smile at your boss when she piles more work on you.

Exercise Equipment

If you have your own office, consider keeping a resistance band, ankle weights and even a couple of sets of dumbbells in your desk drawer. You can squeeze in some quick upper body exercises while you're on the phone. If you work in a cubicle or don't want people to see you exercising at your desk, all you really need is a chair and a couple of large, full water bottles you can use for any dumbbell exercise.

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