HIGH-TECH INDUSTRY SHOULD LOOK WITHIN TO FILL SHORTAGE

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Body

THE Information Technology Association of America's claim of a ***shortage*** of qualified and employable workers in the United States (Opinion, Feb. 25) cannot be empirically substantiated. With short product-release life cycles, corporations have no time for on-the-job training. Foreign workers hired under the H-1B visa program are an inexpensive, short-term fix that does not address long-term issues.

High-tech corporations should give something back to the workforce which has been displaced by the very technology that the companies produce. If the ITAA claims are true, then they should contribute to a long-term solution which does not burden taxpayers or the educational system. Paying an additional educational fee for each H-1B visa issued is a good start. This is an act of good faith, in order to give something back to the nation, workforce and economy that has made the corporations' existence possible.

The fee could be used for a program called TRIPP -- Technical Retraining, Investment and Placement Program. Sponsor employers would pay a $50,000 educational fee per year for each H-1B visa issued up to the current nationwide limit of 65,000 per year. Beyond that limit, an employer would have to pay a $100,000 educational fee H-1B visa. The educational fee is applied toward the re-education and placement of disenfranchised and unemployed workers into the ***high-tech industry***. Sponsor employers also receive a rebate of $25,000 from the program funding pool when placing a worker from the re-employment pool for at least one year.

This program would benefit all parties. The ***high-tech*** companies would profit by having a competitive advantage from the immediate placement of H-1B visa employees. A labor pool of newly trained employees would be created, and the ***industry*** will never face another "***shortage***." ***High-tech*** firms will have incentive through the rebate program to cease discriminatory hiring practices and hire out of the TRIPP graduate pool. The competitive advantage and additional profits gained from the immediate infusion of H-1B visa employees would more than offset the sponsor companies' additional costs from the educational fee.

Congress should legislate this program as soon as possible.

-- C. Giovanni Enrico

San Carlos

ABOUT five years ago, I was in the midst of a career change. After almost 20 years as a nuclear engineer, I realized that it was time to find a new career with a future. I condensed a pretty successful technical and management career into a two-page resume, carefully written to eliminate "nuke-speak" and -- hopefully -- pique the interest of the ***high-tech*** hiring managers. After two years and several hundred resumes, I had a small stack of those "we will keep your resume on file" cards and a grand total of three interviews.

Based on my experiences, and those of others I knew in the same situation, I offer the following criticisms of the ***high-tech*** hiring process;

* Don't rely so much on "keywords" in resumes. There's a lot of experience out there that may be applicable to your business. Other _**industries**_ may use different jargon for the same -- or a similar -- skill set.

* Make age discrimination a hanging offense. One of my interviews died the moment I met the interviewer. A _**look**_ of dismay crossed his 30-something face when he saw my 40-something self. We went through the motions, but the conclusion was forgone. His experience was common among contemporaries, as well.

* Hire people, not resumes.

Much of the _**high-tech industry**_'s problem results from a desire to have highly qualified people drop into their lap like a piece of ripe fruit falling from a tree. My experience in hiring suggests that it's more like mining for diamonds. You have to do a lot of sifting and screening, but they're in thereif you're willing to _**look**_.

As for me, I finally found a job with a small telecommunications company. The interview consisted of finding those things I could do that would be of immediate benefit (a couple), future benefit (a few more), and my willingness to learn something new (a helluva lot). I started at the bottom and _**within**_ a few months had been promoted three times. Today, I'm deeply involved in some fascinating projects and am enjoying my new career as much as I did the old one.

I like to think that I could have done the same thing in the _**high-tech industry**_ if someone would have been willing to _**look**_ beyond the resume. The _**industry**_ can solve many of its personnel problems if it stops wandering around the orchard and starts mining for diamonds.

-- J.D. Doyel

San Jose

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