

IBM Hiring Managers Share Advice for New Collar Job Seekers

ARMONK, N.Y., May 12, 2017 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Three IBM (NYSE:[IBM](#)) hiring managers today shared valuable advice for [New Collar Job](#) seekers pursuing careers in some of today's fastest growing technology fields, from cloud computing and cybersecurity to cognitive systems and digital design.

There are more than 500,000 technology jobs available today in the United States, but businesses like IBM and other high-tech employers often cannot find enough candidates with the right skills to fill them. Many of these jobs are New Collar positions that prioritize skills over credentials and that do not always require a traditional four-year college degree. Skills required for these roles can be built through modern career education models, such as the [P-TECH program](#) pioneered by IBM, coding camps, industry training and certifications, and more.

For candidates interested in those roles, IBM hiring managers have the following guidance:

1. Current and relevant skills take precedence: *"The first things I look at are the skills and knowledge that a candidate has and how it will enable them to be successful at IBM. We value diversity in our candidates, so how the skills were attained is secondary to the fact that the skills are current and relevant in the marketplace. A candidate's interest in ongoing personal learning and development is a strong indicator that they will be able to continue to embrace growth and change and develop their careers once at IBM. When I'm interviewing, there are a few areas I like to hone in on:*

- *Critical thinking and problem solving skills. Will you challenge the status quo, looking for new and innovative solutions to solve some of the world's biggest challenges?*
- *Teamwork. You'll be part of globally diverse teams that are embracing new, more agile ways of working.*
- *Adaptability. Can you handle uncertainty and change? The world is changing at a rapid rate, and IBMers need to be able to grow and adapt with it, through ongoing learning and development and the attainment of new skills."*

-Sam Ladah, VP of Talent, IBM –Armonk, NY

2. Know the core elements of the craft: *"The first thing I try to convey to new IBM recruits in design is a sense of pride in our mission. We create the things that make the world run – the world's largest banks, the biggest big box stores and global commerce. But I also tell them that their role in achieving those big picture goals starts with having an understanding of the root elements of the design craft – things that are not necessarily taught anymore – like basic visual and type skills, layout and hierarchy. Given we're in a time where it's a delicate balance between the old and the new, I believe an understanding of the core elements of a craft is essential preparation for learning the new technologies that are driving us into the future. As it pertains to design, I look for non-traditional individuals who are committed to understand users, explore concepts, prototype designs and evaluate them with users and stakeholders."*

-Oen Michael Hammonds, IBM Design –Austin, TX

3. I look for the "it" factor: *"When interviewing candidates, the initial characteristics I'm looking for are three things: How well someone communicates, if a person is coachable, and if an individual will work well in a team setting. Once I have those items determined, I'm then curious to know how the interviewee learns – visual, verbal, hands on, etc. – and try to understand if the person has the mindset and drive to quickly learn new skills and/or processes. The last – and most important – aspect I'm looking for is if a candidate passes the 'it' factor, which is the ability to see a problem and/or issue not as a roadblock but as an opportunity. During interviews, I ask each candidate to describe a problem and/or issue they can remember either in a personal or professional setting, how they overcame the obstacle, and if it was accomplished by working as a team or individual. I then ask them why this moment stuck out in their mind amongst the many situations they have experienced over time."*

-Christopher Wingler, Public Sector Infrastructure Services -Columbia, MO

New Collar roles can be pathways to prosperity for candidates with non-traditional backgrounds who want to live and work in parts of the country historically underserved by the technology industry. Last year, New Collar candidates with less than a four-year degree accounted for around 15 percent of IBM's U.S. hiring. At some of the company's major U.S. facilities, more than one-third of employees are in New Collar positions.

To address the broader high-tech skills gap and open technology career opportunities to more Americans, IBM has pledged to invest \$1 billion in U.S. workforce training and development over the next four years, and also is advocating for policy measures, such as the bipartisan HR 2353, the [Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#), which will help create more pathways for Americans to build New Collar skills.

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