

Guest Post: Extra Perks for IT Professionals

Posted by [Emily](#) in [Grow IT](#) - [\(0 Comments\)](#)

Graduate education expert Emma Collins joins the blog today to talk about some of the perks job seekers with computer science and high-tech skills are likely to find in today's marketplace. Emma writes a number of articles about the intersection of higher education and corporate advancement, many of [which can found on this page](#). Her advice and insight adds depth to the [IT jobs series posts](#) of the past few months, and should prove useful to anyone thinking of breaking into this field.

Making Companies Work for You: Non-Monetary Benefits and a Free MBA

While many of today's college graduates struggle to find good positions within the competitive job market, employers also struggle to recruit talented workers with requisite technological skills. As a result, many companies and organizations must supplement competitive salaries with non-monetary benefits – additional perks that foster a positive workplace and manage to retain the majority of the firm's workforce.

In October 2012, *Silicon Valley/San Jose Business Journal* Managing Editor Shana Lynch wrote that [job applicants with relevant tech skills were in the "highest demand" for top positions](#). The most desirable proficiency, software development, was a prerequisite for nearly 15,000 job openings nationwide. Quality assurance was another important skill, listed among the criteria for more than 9,000 employment vacancies. Other in-demand competencies include fluency in open-source programming languages (particularly Python, SOAP and Ruby), Android design, and information security. And not surprisingly, employees who possess at least some of these proficiencies stand to earn much higher salaries than their less-skilled counterparts; in 2013, the projected annual earnings for skilled developers will likely fall between \$92,750 and \$133,500. [Salaries in the tech industry are expected to grow](#) by 5.3 percent next year – more than any other industrial sector.

Technological skills are so desirable that employers have begun to offer non-monetary benefits on top of competitive salaries for applicants who meet the criteria. Joyce Slayton of *Wired* recently noted that [several tech companies have already embraced this effective recruitment strategy](#). Sun Microsystems, for example, rewards employees with dry cleaning, an in-house auto mechanic station that provides free oil changes, on-call physical therapists to address injuries and an expansive company gym. Oracle provides floral delivery, shoe repair and six different on-site restaurants. And Netscape provides "office concierges" who manage employee calendars and travel logistics, in-house dental care, car detailing and massage chairs.

Anne Little, the corporate PR manager for Sun Microsystems, explained that all of these bonus perks for employees ultimately create a more productive workplace environment. By incorporating the personal interests of employees into the professional setting, company leaders are essentially making work more "fun" for their workforce, which has proven to be a highly effective factor in terms of employee retention. While implementing these incentives may represent a significant company investment, the initial costs are typically outweighed by the higher levels of productivity generated by a happier workforce.

Forbes contributor Lisa Quast wrote that the push for more non-monetary incentives was brought on by the recession that first took shape five years ago. Due to necessary financial cutbacks, employers were forced to explore alternative means of not only attracting top applicants, but also retaining their services by keeping office morale high. [A survey conducted by McKinsey](#) revealed that, for many employees, motivating factors were just as crucial (if not more so) than financial benefits. Some of the most effective motivators included recognition and praise from company leadership, regular opportunities to meet with top executives (particularly in a one-on-one setting) and opportunities to serve as the team leader for important projects or tasks. "A talent strategy that emphasizes the frequent use of the right non-financial motivators would benefit most companies in bleak times and fair," the McKinsey survey states. "By acting now, they could exit the downturn stronger than they entered it."



For this reason, many employers now offer an additional, non-monetary incentives for top company performers: sponsorship in an MBA program. By selecting employees that excel at their work, financing their graduate-level business degree, and mentoring them throughout their coursework, organizational leaders are able to forge a lasting bond with their staff that often leads to high levels of commitment and retention. And according to Jingying Yang of *The New York Times*, [this strategy has become quite popular](#) over the last five years. In 2007, 52 percent of companies surveyed by Business and Legal Reports offered some form of MBA tuition-funding program; three years later, 85 percent of respondents had adopted this measure – and 78 percent of these companies did not reduce educational spending during the recession.

Many of these programs are part-time, allowing the employee to simultaneously earn a degree and contribute to the company. One such program can be found at Target Corporation, one of the nation's largest employers; workers that are accepted into the MBA tuition-funding program simultaneously work for the company and take classes at the University of Minnesota – Carlton School of Business. Following completion of the program, the MBA recipients must commit to at least two years with Target Corporation before pursuing other positions.

Despite the sagging economy, employees with highly desirable skills are faring quite well in today's job market. They not only are considered hireable by most major employers, but also stand to earn competitive salaries – and be rewarded with numerous non-monetary benefits – by the companies that hire them.

