Journey to the well of talent: Finding and Growing New Mainframers

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November 2018

Session QI

Agenda

Business viewpoint

- Selection
- Training
- Which Mainframe area?
- Development
- Retention & Career Progression

Academic view

- Interest
- Aptitude
- Curriculum
- Perseverance
- Recognition

Who are we?

- Senior Lecturer, University of Wolverhampton
- Software Developer (Large Systems High Availability)
- Research in Modelling & Simulation
- Academic Initiative 2010
- Invited to Hursley to meet other Academics
- IBM Z Champion

- Joined Hampshire County Council in their graduate programme
  - 7 started …
- Worked in Italy at European Space Agency
- Contractor at Esso (Benelux, UK)
- EDS/HP/HPE
  - System programmer, UK Mainframe lead, Data Centre Services Lead, Mainframe strategy, involved in graduate apprenticeship at Erskine.
- Blue Chip

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Selection

- Graduate hiring days
  - Needed to "Sell" mainframes ... no idea what they were, what they did
  - Candidates did an aptitude test
  - Reviewed final year project
  - Staged team working exercise
  - Interview (HR and Mainframe lead)
  - Gave overview of first three years, skills development, salary, certification

- Identified individuals whose aspirations aligned to our requirements
- Team players, able to fit-in, good learning ethos, adaptable

Interest – What's important?

- What do you enjoy?

- What do mainframes do for people

- Do you like puzzles?

- "Best kept secret"

- Mouth organs vs Chuch organs

Initial Training

- Induction into company
- Basic 2 month mainframe introduction … given by CA
- Had a rotation of three 6 week periods to "experience" a specialism helped to determine what area was right for the individual, included a an external overview course
- Also hired an experienced z/OS system programmer to be based with the graduates – on-site mentor/coach
- Each had a z/PDT fob, to play with a z/OS system.

- After allocation to a specific mainframe area
  - More in-depth training, external course in their specific area (CICS z/OS, DB2, etc.)

Aptitude – Sorting Hat?

- Roles on the platform

- Role models and Expectations

- Experience and engagement

- Career Path (Story Arc)

Which mainframe area?

- Most challenging time to match graduate expectations/graduate attributes with company needs … in general it worked okay

- Pressure of business, limited the opportunity to "experience" all mainframe areas

- Given senior SME from their area as coach/mentor

- Also given mainframe lead as "mainframe life mentor"

Curriculum – Could, Should, Must

- Technology mix – Not just (even) mainframe
- Platform basics
- Industry Issues
- Abstract vs Concrete

Development

- All given a specific Individual Development Programme for the first three years
- Annual performance reviews specific to the graduate programme
- Further opportunities for greater in depth external courses, matched to day-2-day work in their area
- Given opportunities to network with their peers in different streams of the graduate programme
- Peer recognition (certification with MTP, Interskill badges)
- Encouraged to attend various IBM/GSE events … chance to network, meet other trainees, SMEs in their area.

Perseverance – Go Go Go

- Distracted vs Attracted
- Networks (Relationships)
- Resilience
- Testing, Testing
- Take a bow

Retention and Career Progression

- How do you keep the interest?
  - Encourage the graduate to be involved with problems, production changes
  - Give specific tasks to stretch the graduate
  - Active support
- Honour the initial commitment, especially on salary
- Continue training, networking, to keep graduates marketable.
- Show loyalty, flexibility, allow staff to move around
- Do not expect staff to stay their whole career, as my generation did.

Recognition – Hats?

- Expectation

- Participation

- Reputation

- Graduation

Closing Thoughts

Questions

We want your feedback!

- Please submit your feedback online at ….
  - ➢http://conferences.gse.org.uk/2018/feedback/QI

- Paper feedback forms are also available from the Chair person

- This session is QI