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## AMERICA'S GOT TALENT, JUST NOT ENOUGH IN IT

*Companies sweeten perks to land tech workers; a \$250,000 signing bonus for an executive role*

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Six-figure bonuses, outsize equity stakes and the flexibility to work from just about anywhere: These are some of the perks companies are offering information-technology workers as they compete for talent in a tight labor market, job seekers and recruiters say.

"Recruiters are feeling the pressure, from the chief executive officer down to the hiring manager, and are working extremely hard to find that tech talent," said James Atkinson, vice president of quantitative analytics and data science at research and advisory firm Gartner Inc.

Gartner estimates that most large U.S. companies are competing to fill many of the same technology roles, including computer and information research scientists, systems managers, analysts, engineers and software architects. "Nearly a third of the most critical roles, like tech talent, are left unfilled after five months, costing millions in lost productivity on the table for each company every year," Mr. Atkinson said.

Demand for these workers is growing as companies world-wide seek an edge over competitors by using technology such as cloud computing, data analytics and artificial intelligence. Global spending on these and other enterprise IT tools is expected to reach \$3.79 trillion this year, up 1.1 percent from 2018, Gartner said.

In the first half of 2019, tech job postings in the U.S. rose 32 percent from a year earlier, according to federal employment data analyzed by IT trade group CompTIA. In the past three months, U.S. employers had about 918,000 unfilled IT jobs, CompTIA said.

While some companies are racing to train existing staff in high-demand skills, others are buying smaller tech ventures to acquire IT workers.

Some of the biggest companies are adding to their arsenal of tools to secure the right employees, said Michael Solomon, co-founder and managing partner at 10x Ascend, an advisory firm for senior technology job seekers.

Negotiating on behalf of a candidate for a senior tech post, Mr. Solomon's firm was recently able to triple an initial equity grant offered by the subsidiary of a large technology company, he said. Another IT client secured a remote-work deal with a large U.S. bank, allowing him to spend more time at home with his family, Mr. Solomon said. He declined to name the companies.

Martha Heller, CEO of technology-executive recruiting firm Heller Search Associates, said a client was recently offered a \$250,000 signing bonus by a large online business looking to fill a chief information security officer post. Ms. Heller declined to name the company or whether the candidate accepted the offer.

She said the bonus came on top of an above-market compensation plan and the flexibility to work remotely from the client's home in the Bay Area instead of relocating to the Chicago office.

Sought-after IT workers, such as developers and engineers with experience in AI, who take new jobs this year are fetching average annual salaries of \$200,000, up from \$150,000 a year ago, according to staffing firm Mondo, a subsidiary of Chicago-based Addison Group LLC.

Despite the lure of high wages, more than 80 percent of roughly 2,800 employers at U.S. companies surveyed this year by staffing company Robert Half International Inc. identified recruiting for tech talent as a top business challenge.

Compensation isn't always the most important consideration when evaluating job offers, especially among younger applicants, said Kathryn Minschew, CEO of the Muse, a career-development website. "Candidates are interested in subsidized tuition for advanced education, as well as support to attend industry conferences where they can continue to network and learn from their peers," among other benefits, she said.

Chicago-based commercial real-estate giant Jones Lang LaSalle Inc. has filled 140 tech positions this year in its U.S. offices and aims to hire 100 more tech workers in the months ahead, said Angela Geffre, JLL's global head of talent.

Sanjay Rishi, CEO of corporate solutions at JLL Americas, said he joined the company late last year from International Business Machines Corp. because the chance to apply his skills outside the tech sector "was too interesting a proposition to pass up." For instance, he said, the real-estate industry is only now starting to explore the use of internet-connected sensors, AI and other emerging technologies to drive insights and optimize commercial tenant occupancies.

"The choice for me personally was an easy one," Mr. Rishi said.