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### Staffing Data Centers Into Recovery

By David Geer

Data centers are grossly understaffed according to Symantec's year-on-year State of the Data Center Reports covering 2007 through 2009. The Reports surveyed 800 data center leaders globally for 2007 and 1,600 for 2008 and 2009.

In 2007, 47 percent of data center leaders surveyed indicated that their data center staffed too few professionals. In 2008, 33 percent reported they were still understaffed. In 2009, more than 50 percent reported they had not met their staffing needs.

The reports demonstrated that staffing difficulties both prior to and throughout the recession were related to challenges around finding qualified candidates and finding the budget to pay them. As the economy improves and budgets increase, the limited number of qualified IT professionals will likely seek the most rewarding jobs, making data center hiring and retention more trying.

Meeting data center staffing needs in such an environment requires a multi-faceted approach. At Gartner's 2010 Data Center Conference, David Cappuccio, managing vice-president, Gartner Research, stressed the need to address staff training to increase the qualifications of existing staff with various approaches including rewarding staff for achieving education, adopting multiple skill sets and applying both across varying job functions. This line of thinking also suggests that staff would be better able to compensate for their fewer numbers by broadening their skills and their responsibilities.

Additional recourse for data center managers seeking to offset staffing shortages now and into the future includes consolidation, automation and outsourcing. "Data center managers need to consolidate and automate data center functions as much as possible;" says Dr. Mickey Zandi, managing principal, consulting services, SunGard Availability Services. He believes that, "For instance, if you have multiple mainframe and UNIX systems, look to consolidate to as few as possible, and for Windows environments, utilize virtualization. Taking these steps will decrease the exposure of your staff and reduce budgets."

Greater consolidation and automation not only decrease the workload for existing staff and the budget due to fewer systems but also raise the potential for a budget surplus, which might be used to reward faithful staff members.

"Additionally, data center managers need to assess which core competencies they want to keep inside the organization and use 'smart out-tasking' to address the other data center

functions. Smart out-tasking options include collocation and fully managed services with third-party expertise. Ways to leverage cloud computing also need to be part of any staffing discussion because of the cloud's ability to let you operate from anywhere," says Dr. Zandi.

Through training, consolidation, automation and clever outsourcing, data center managers can raise staff competencies, while lightening staff members' burdens and making do when necessary. The time to start was yesterday.