



Government Employees Begin to Bridge the Skills Gap

It should come as no surprise to any IT manager that the level of available in-house IT skills differs greatly between government and private sector organizations. For years, talented professionals have shunned public sector employment in favor of higher pay (and higher risk) in the commercial environment. Now the playing field is changing. Government agencies are taking action to reach out to IT talent, and many in the private sector are making the switch to federal employment.

In October, Brainbench released its most recent report on the subject “Closing the Gap: Government and Private Sector IT Skills.” The report analyzes more than 11,000 online skills assessment results, comparing the skills levels of 7,096 private sector professionals against 4,110 of their counterparts in the public sector. The results reveal a significant but closing skills gap. The data begins to paint a picture that, with subsequent reports, should provide decision-makers with valuable information for focusing IT skills development efforts.

Government Skills—More Catching Up to Do

A quick look at the data provided in the Brainbench report reveals three areas of relative strength for government employees—Microsoft Applications, Microsoft Technology Administration, and Unix/Linux. For government decision-makers, there is still much work to be done. The average government employee scored more than 10% lower than his or her private sector counterpart in the majority of skills categories examined.

For government IT decision-makers, the good news is that the IT skills challenge has been recognized and steps are being taken to bridge the skills gap. A recent Skills Measurement Report (Vol. 1, Issue 4 October 16, 2002) covered federal efforts to bridge the skills gap. Among other measures, government managers have redefined job roles, implemented common skills requirements, and adjusted pay structures to better compete with the private employer marketplace.

Private Sector Skills—Fundamentals Demand Continued Attention

In the commercial environment, the need to evolve skills remains critical, but as the report reveals, private sector employees still outpace government employees in the majority of IT skills. The government lead in the Unix/Linux category reveals that, while commercial organizations may take a leading role in many innovative technologies, that lead can't be taken for granted.

Will government eventually catch up to the private sector in the use of innovative skills? Time will tell. Meanwhile, companies can expect government agencies to draw from the existing pool of talent in the IT sector to help close the skills gap that still separates most government and commercial talent. This report is available at www.brainbench.com/business.

