

# Workforce Planning Key to Tomorrow's IT

By [Allen Bernard](#)

**February 9, 2005: Despite the current job market and an abundance of help, a new report suggests IT needs to start preparing soon for a looming IT workforce shortage.**

While companies currently have an abundance of skilled IT workers to choose from, these companies must implement a workforce planning process to be prepared for an upcoming workforce shortage, according to people3, a Gartner, Inc. company.

"With future job growth being concentrated in highly skilled and knowledge-based work, and estimates of 21 million new jobs with only 17 million new entrants to the workforce by 2012, organizations will lose their status quo if they aren't prepared with a workforce strategy," said Diane Berry, managing vice president at people3.

Even though the predicted shortage is still seven years out, Berry said IT departments need to start planning today for a shortage of high-skilled talent -- those people responsible for such things as vendor and contact management -- not necessarily staff talent, which is increasingly being outsourced.

In the report, *The Incredible Shrinking Workforce: Addressing Tomorrow's Issues Today*, people3 consultants explained that workforce planning is aimed at translating business/IT objectives into the current and future human capital needs required to achieve them.

A workforce planning process typically includes four key steps:

**Set a strategic direction.** An IT organization's strategic vision, mission and objectives ultimately determine current and future human capital requirements. **Conduct a workforce analysis.** Create a supply and demand analysis, as well as a gap analysis. **Develop and implement a workforce plan.** This plan should include elements of recruiting, succession planning, training and development, and other related HR programs. **Monitor, evaluate and revise the strategy and plan.** At the very least, a strategic workforce plan should cover a three-year time frame. In the case of addressing aging workforce issues, organizations will need to have an outlook plan and plan for a longer time frame (10 years or beyond) depending on the existing demographic profiles of the workforce.

"Workforce planning helps IT leaders avoid making the same overstaffing mistakes they made during the technology boom era which consequently caused the layoffs and downsizing during the recent economic downturn," Berry said. "On the other hand, it also prevents the pitfalls of understaffing that eventually lead to employee burnout, low morale and low productivity."

Berry concedes that planning so far out can be an exercise in futility but with fewer IT graduates coming out of U.S. colleges and universities and an aging workforce, planning today will be essential for managing tomorrow's IT demands.

"Ideally you have a people strategy that aligns to an IT strategy that links to the strategy of the business," said Berry. "And we all know that we have to put plans in place, though, that are flexible and can account for internal and external changes. We encourage clients to craft these strategies to the best of their ability and continue to monitor them so that you are more proactive vs. reactive."

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