

3 WAYS TO ATTRACT & KEEP YOUR TECH WORKERS

Credit unions, which are faced with a smaller tech talent pool, should look to current trends to win candidates over

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Since mid-2022, the talent trend has swung nationwide from a shortage of tech talent to layoffs at major technology companies. The U.S. tech sector has cut more than 136,500 workers through April this year on top of more than 93,000 in 2022. These cuts are from major companies, including Meta and Amazon, and startups such as Shift and Roofstock.

It's a different story for credit unions. No matter the credit union size or location, tech employees are still difficult to find and retain. Why? Anecdotal evidence suggests many laid-off tech workers have severance packages and aren't looking for work right away. Meanwhile, many still employed trade happiness for stability given the unknowns of switching jobs in a tough economy. The result is a smaller tech talent pool for credit unions.

There are three ways you can take advantage of current trends to attract and retain valuable tech team members.

1. Look to the cloud

Secure, compliant technology systems are a must regardless of credit union size. Big problems can occur if you're short on workers with the right skills to do the work. Budget constraints, particularly in an uncertain economic climate, mean tech teams of two to three do the majority of day-to-day IT work, even at mid-to-large credit unions. To remain effective and engaged, tech workers need to stay on top of new cyber threats and technology and have time to look for ways to make IT more efficient. They can't do that if there is little time available to venture away from daily IT maintenance. Losing even one dissatisfied person from a small team can leave a credit union in crisis.

If your credit union is in a similar situation, consider a move to the cloud. Fast-paced technology changes compounded with economic and workforce ups and downs drive more credit unions to outsource IT functions. Good outsourcers become an extension of your team. Look for an outsourcer that knows credit unions and can provide a ready-made environment and customized services to meet your compliance and operating requirements.

Operating in a public cloud environment won't eliminate your IT responsibilities. It only changes the skills you need to carry them out. But credit unions that move to tailored private or community cloud environments mitigate the challenges associated with retaining and upskilling tech team members by shifting a majority of this burden to their outsourcer. More importantly, it allows them to focus their valuable tech workers on more strategic and engaging priorities tied to their core business rather than routine maintenance.

Recognizing that they are not located in a tech hub where they can readily find tech resources to manage their own environment, the leaders of University of Hawaii Federal Credit Union (\$807 million, Honolulu), for example, partnered with our CUSO to get access to cloud technology and world class data centers, as well as specialized technology that protects against ransomware. They have since been able to re-focus their tech employees on more rewarding work like mobile and self-service banking, making it easier to retain the team they have.

2. Make your tech roles more attractive

The news is full of stories about companies' back-to-the-office mandates. Many are the same companies also laying off tech talent. Those left employed say goodbye to work-life balance. Increased workloads and 10-hour days are the new norm for many of these tech workers. It is no surprise more than 37% of workers say they are "very likely to look for a new job in the next 12 months, and they will look for higher pay, flexible working hours and remote work options," according to a 2023 Bankrate survey.

Consider bucking the back-to-office trend to make your tech positions more attractive for current employees and new tech talent from companies scaling back on flexible working options. According to a Labor Department survey conducted in August and September 2022, about 33% of financial establishments had some or all employees working remotely. If you're in the 67% that do not offer flexible work models, transforming operations to support hybrid environments for your tech roles can boost morale and help recruiting efforts.

We continue to offer the hybrid work model we perfected through the pandemic, asking employees to come into the office for team building events and as needed to support our business. Giving our tech teams the flexibility they desire contributes to keeping our turnover at 4%, well below the double-digit technology industry average. It also allows us to hire tech employees to work remotely from other cities or states.

Here are a few more tips to make your tech roles more attractive:

- Use well-defined goals to attract talent. Tech workers prefer to have their performance assessed on specific outcomes, not subjective measures.
- Commit to growing skills. Reinforce career path for new and tenured employees. Budget for entry level positions and grow their skills through individual development plans.
- Leverage your credit union's positive impact on the community. Include these and other messages about your culture in job postings.
- Recruit from tech hubs to your city, highlighting benefits such as lower cost of living, good schools, or other quality of life advantages.
- Offer competitive wages and value the skills. Employees want fair compensation as well as a positive culture.

3. Improve morale

Quiet quitting is real, and it often happens when employee morale is low from overwork, frustration or outside circumstances. Build trusting relationships with your employees to give them reason to remain loyal and engaged.



Showing empathy for all employees helps maintain and improve morale. We encourage leaders to meet one-on-one and hold team meetings in person rather than virtually. Even though many tech team members don't report directly to me, I check in with them regularly to see how they are doing. I enjoy building relationships with them, and the personal interaction lets them know I care and helps me understand how to make their experience better. We also schedule team building and community service events each quarter. These events build camaraderie and help sustain morale and contribute to the positive company culture tech employees seek.

These suggestions require thoughtful analysis of your credit union's goals and culture, and your decisions can have a lasting impact on your tech workers. Credit unions that create and retain lasting relationships with their employees can thrive and better prepare for what might come next.

About the Author

Ron Parker is a seasoned leader who builds strong relationships and customer-focused organizations. Ron has a proven track record as a strategic business partner who delivers bottom line results. His past roles span the Pharmaceutical, Defense & Financial sectors and include serving as the Head of Infrastructure Engineering and Operations, Chief Information Security Officer, Senior Director of Information Technology and Director of Network Engineering. Areas of expertise include private and public cloud management; cyber security; risk management; and enterprise architecture, engineering and operations.

About Us

SwitchThink Solutions is an IT Services CUSO formed in partnership with Corelation. As credit union professionals dedicated to optimizing & expanding **KeyStone's** capabilities for our clients, we've developed deep domain expertise in the areas of conversion, development, hosting, & operational best practices. Leverage our knowledge to unlock new strategic possibilities through performance improvement & rapid innovation.

Services include managed & infrastructure cloud solutions; disaster recovery as a service; development & consulting services; & conversion support services specifically designed for credit unions. Whether you're an existing user or preparing for implementation, let our experts help you rapidly apply the transformational powers of **KeyStone** & Cloud Computing. Rethink what's possible with SwitchThink. www.switchthink.com.