

Press release
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Hong Kong IT leaders welcome government's support in easing skills shortage

- 52% of Hong Kong CIOs believe the government's 'Talent List' initiative proposed in 2018-19 Budget will ease the IT skills shortage, while 40% think it will encourage a greater influx of foreign IT candidates into the city.
- 53% say they are willing to hire foreign talent because of business expansion, 46% refer to their need to access diverse skillsets brought by international talent and 26% refer to the local skills shortage.
- The top incentives Hong Kong CIOs are using to attract foreign talent: lifestyle benefits (46%), family benefits (37%) and relocation packages (33%).

Hong Kong, 3 September 2018 – The ongoing skills shortage in Hong Kong's IT sector continues to challenge many companies as they seek to innovate and grow. Government initiatives such as the first 'Talent List' released on August 28¹, and the recently launched Technology Talent Admission Scheme² (TechTAS)³, are aimed at easing this burden. In fact, a survey of Hong Kong IT leaders, independently commissioned by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#), found more than nine in 10 (93%) believe the Talent List initiative proposed in the 2018-19 Budget⁴ will have a positive impact on Hong Kong's IT employment market.

How the Talent List initiative will impact the IT employment market

The Talent List initiative, designed to attract foreign labour and ease the city's talent shortage, is being welcomed by Hong Kong CIOs as over half (52%) say it will relieve the IT skills shortage, while 40% are expecting a greater influx of foreign IT candidates and 35% say the demand for international IT professionals will increase. Other expected benefits include increased productivity (36%) and a stronger image for Hong Kong as an attractive place to work (17%). Only 7% of CIOs believe the Talent List initiative will not impact the IT employment market.

The survey of 75 Hong Kong CIOs reveals many companies are facing increasing pressure to hire IT talent on the pathway to growth. More than nine in 10 (92%) CIOs say it is challenging to *source* qualified IT professionals, while 88% say it is also challenging to *attract* them once found.

Adam Johnston, Managing Director of Robert Half Hong Kong said: *"While the Hong Kong government is dedicated to cultivating high-calibre IT professionals and providing support to the technology sector, new and evolving innovations are outpacing the current local talent pool. As a result, companies are struggling to implement and develop these new technologies, putting Hong Kong at risk of being left behind in the global technology race."*

"With companies expanding into international markets, many of Hong Kong's IT employers are looking for diverse skillsets, which – combined with a local talent shortage – increases demand for skilled international candidates."

¹ Designed to attract foreign labour and ease Hong Kong's talent shortage
<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201808/28/P2018082800360.htm?fontSize=1>

² <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201805/08/P2018050800532.htm>

³ The TechTAS enables tenants and incubatees based in the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and Cyberport to fast track immigration applications of overseas and Mainland talent with experience in key technology areas.

⁴ <https://www.budget.gov.hk/2018/eng/budget05.html>

“The government’s recent launches of the Technology Talent Admission Scheme and Talent List are timely solutions to enable companies to hire talented individuals from overseas more easily. While further growing and developing local talent is and should be the primary solution to filling crucial skills gaps, international talent can provide a solution for companies who can’t find the talent they need locally.”

Majority of IT leaders willing to recruit foreign talent

IT employers are already receptive to the concept of hiring international talent, with over three-quarters (76%) willing to hire foreign talent. The top reasons for hiring foreign talent include expansion into international markets (53%), access to diverse skillsets of international candidates (46%), a local talent pool not keeping pace with demand (26%), a need for more candidates with language skills (14%) and international employees being less likely to leave the organisation (11%).

With attracting IT professionals identified as a key challenge for Hong Kong employers, the vast majority (98%) of CIOs are already offering or planning to offer incentives in order to entice foreign talent. The top incentives are: lifestyle benefits (46%), family benefits (37%), financial relocation packages (33%), higher salaries and bonuses (26%), as well as housing subsidies (21%).

“While the government’s Technology Talent Admission Scheme and Talent List will help to expand the talent pool, success in securing the best international candidates will only be enjoyed by companies that offer attractive incentives. This means keeping incentives up-to-date and relevant, making sure they are in line with competitor offerings and benchmarking salaries against industry standards,” concluded **Adam Johnston**.

Incentives CIOs offer or are planning to offer to attract international IT talent

Lifestyle benefits e.g. option to work from home, flexible work hours, on-site amenities (such as gym, laundry services, etc.)	46%
Family benefits e.g. education, healthcare	37%
Relocation packages e.g. paying for international professionals to relocate to Hong Kong	33%
Increased salaries/bonuses	26%
Housing subsidies	21%
Company share portfolio	18%
Professional development/training specific to their job duties	11%
Language courses	7%
None	2%

Source: Independent survey among 75 CIOs in Hong Kong – multiple answers allowed.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The annual study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted in June 2018 by an independent research firm, surveying 75 CIOs/CTOs in Hong Kong. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world’s first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy. Founded in 1948, the company has over 300 offices worldwide providing interim management, temporary and permanent

recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services and technology professionals in Hong Kong. More information on roberthalf.com.hk.

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