



CareerSource  
CAPITAL REGION



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## Industry Sector Focus Group

### SUMMARY REPORT Spring 2017



## EVENT DETAILS

February 9, 2017  
11:45am - 12:45pm  
TekSystems

*Thank you to TekSystems for sponsoring this event. To learn about opportunities for your business to sponsor future events please call (850) 617-4605.*

## PARTICIPANTS

**Coaxis International:** Jim Hunt, EVP, COO

**Diverse Computing:** Lester Hutt, Sales and Marketing Manager

**Information Systems of Florida (ISF):** Preston Yutzey, Talent Acquisition Manager

**SayaRose:** Syanthiyana Sadagopal, Chief Executive Officer

**SynTech Systems: Colene Rogers,** Talent Acquisition Manger

**TekSystems:** Heath Blackburn, Account Manager

**Florida Technology Council:** James Taylor

**TalTech Alliance:** Christy Mantzanas, Board Member

### Florida A&M University:

Terral Brown, Technology Career Coordinator

Sharmini Pitter, PhD, Florida IT Career Alliance, Project Manager

Arlisha McQueen, Visiting Professor

### Florida State University:

Ebe Randeree, Associate Dean, College of Communication & Information

Faye Jones, Assistant Project Director, Florida IT Career Alliance

Kate Herron, Assistant Director of Experiential Learning, College of Communication & Information

### Tallahassee Community College:

Dave DelRossi, Associate Dean for Business, Industry, and Technology

Christy Mantzanas, Career Placement Coordinator

**Office of Economic Vitality:** Cristina Paredes, Deputy Director

**CareerSource Florida:** Debbie McMullian, Director of Business and Workforce Development

### CareerSource Capital Region:

Kara Palmer Smith, Senior Director

Krystal Alexander, HR Business Partner

Lee Collier, Manager, Business Employer Solutions

Carol Hill, IT Account Executive



## OBJECTIVES

***A forum for business, education, workforce and economic development partners to discuss workforce needs, challenges and solutions.***

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Florida Technology Council's Executive Director, James Taylor, spoke about working with the Florida Legislature mainly to inform elected officials about the Information Technology Industry and the ever-changing and fast-paced cycles. James went on to mention how important it is to partner with employers as well as educational institutions to paint a vivid picture of how important it is to get legislation passed quickly as the timeliness to affect the curriculum which in turn may impact the skill levels of the individuals that are employed is paramount. James offered his contact information to the group for further comments. James can be contacted at: james.taylor@fltechcouncil.com.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

***Each entity (business, education, workforce and economic development) represented in the audience was asked a different question and the following feedback was collected:***

**BUSINESS: WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE WHEN HIRING LOCAL TALENT? WHAT WOULD INTEREST/DRIVE YOU TO HIRE GRADUATING STUDENTS? APPRENTICESHIP? INTERNSHIP TRAINING?**

**Management of Millenials:** Talent from this generation typically need to be managed differently. This group often desires to be involved in strategic planning and projects though they do not have the necessary experience to contribute. Millenials may also need additional training to develop critical thinking and interpersonal skills.

**Talent Leaving the Area:** Talent tends to leave our region to work at big companies in larger metropolitan areas. It is important to showcase local companies and to inform students and other candidates about the work being done right here in Tallahassee. These companies are viable options for them.

**Degrees and Certifications vs. Experience:** Experience is vital and is more valuable than certifications. It is impressive to see the resume of a student who hasgained hands-on experience above what's offered in the classroom. A college degree is now required, whereas years ago a college degree may not have been necessary.

**IT Group Types:** There are two very different IT group types which are State-level public sector and Private company sector, and they both look for very different styles and skills in the candidates they recruit. 85% of the students graduating today are accepting positions with private companies because the pay is better and these companies do a great job showcasing the fringe benefits they offer.



**EDUCATION: DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF LOCAL BUSINESS? WOULD WORKING DIRECTLY WITH MORE EMPLOYERS HELP? WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED WITH TRAINING/CURRICULUM?**

**Alignment Between Business and Education:** Alignment across the board from K-12 through college. Efforts are not being taken by any entity to truly cover what is necessary to ensure the skills that should be taught and developed throughout the education life cycle.

**Qualified Teachers:** Some teachers are lacking certifications and are teaching technology that is no longer relevant. Gaps also exist between what is being taught and what is required after college. By the time legislators approve new curriculum for the classroom many times the technology has changed already so students are always behind the learning curve.

**Businesses in the Classroom:** A few business partners are currently visiting classrooms to talk about what skills are needed and what they are looking for in an employee. Overall, however, businesses need to connect more frequently with the students. The number of businesses that visit the classroom to recruit or help prepare students to be a viable labor pipeline needs to increase.

**ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS AVAILABLE WITHIN PRIVATE, PUBLIC, EDUCATION, WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS?**

**Knowledge of Programs:** Information about our **Florida Flex Programs** needs to be shared with employers and educators so they can take full advantage of these financial programs.

**Showing Our Talent Pipeline:** As the Office of Economic Vitality recruits companies to move into the area, they have to demonstrate that there is a great talent pipeline that flows from K-12, to our colleges and universities and ultimately experienced talent that is ready and available. Working with all partners to ensure that all resources are utilized to grow the talent pipeline is imperative.

**CareerSource Capital Region Resources:** The local regional workforce board has several business solutions to assist with recruitment, training, and retention. Visit [www.careersourcecapitalregion.com/employers](http://www.careersourcecapitalregion.com/employers) for more details.



## BIG TAKEAWAY

***All partners are willing to work more closely to begin to solve the identified workforce and talent pipeline challenges in order to secure a better economic future in the Information Technology industry sector, locally and statewide.***

## NEXT STEPS

- Next steps will include getting business partners and education partners together to create a plan to inform students about the opportunities to start a career with local IT companies in Tallahassee and to educate them regarding what is required to obtain a job with these companies.
- Next steps also include partnering with regional economic development partners to develop a worthwhile program that will bring educators, career seekers, and employers together to showcase each of their resources to one another.
- Employers are also encouraged to participate in the industry sector hiring fairs sponsored by CareerSource Capital Region. Next event is June 21 at the Turnbull Conference Center.
- In addition to the items listed above, CareerSource Capital Region will discuss possibly of partnering with the Talech Tech Expo.
- Look to hear from CareerSource Capital Region regarding future meetings and collaborations to move the needle on IT talent in our region.
- Complete Survey for IT Industry Sector Focus Group

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOCUS GROUP SURVEY ANALYSIS

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

- **100%** of attendees learned new, helpful information
- **83%** of attendees were very satisfied with the focus group
- Reasons for attending the focus group were equally split among a chance **to network**, a chance to keep **current with industry trends and news** and general interest in the topic
- **50%** of respondents were very satisfied with the types of questions asked, the moderator, and the dialogue between the attendees
- **50%** of the attendees were very dissatisfied with the format of the focus group due to the allotted time and **83%** felt the duration was too short
- **50%** recommend hosting the event quarterly



## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The majority of attendees heard about the focus group through email. The second most popular method was through CareerSource Capital Region team members.

The reasons for attending the focus group were evenly split. Some attendees saw the focus group as a networking opportunity. Another 33% attended in order to keep current with industry trends and news. The other 33% attended the focus group because they were interested in the topic.

An overwhelming majority of attendees were very satisfied with the focus group. Comments in praise of the event centered upon the vast amount of useful information disseminated. Opinions on specific aspects of the focus group varied. When asked about the moderator, dialogue between attendees, and the types of questions asked, only 50% of attendees were very satisfied. Half of the respondents were very dissatisfied with the format of the focus group. An overwhelming 83% of respondents felt the event was short. One attendee felt the scope of the focus group was too complex to be tackled in the short meeting. The attendee went on to say that the purpose of the meeting was unclear.

100% of the attendees learned new information that will be helpful in their businesses. According to the respondents, some of the most valuable pieces of information included gaining and renewing contact information with local IT leaders, and learning about current challenges and trends in the IT industry.

Half of the attendees recommended hosting the industry sector focus group quarterly. One-third suggested semi-annual industry sector focus groups. According to one attendee, “The frequency of these meetings really [depends] on what you’re trying to accomplish. If it’s to discuss serious problems that we’re all facing, then this needs to be a more regular meeting where we do deeper dives into the problems.”





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Solutions please contact**



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