Silicon Beach:
A Look into LA’s Tech Hub

Finding Tech Talent: Hiring International Students from US Universities

By CHAD BLOCKER and EMILY ALLEN

It’s no secret that Silicon Beach is among the most thriving start-up communities in the US. It’s also no secret that the US labor market is in short supply of candidates with the technical and engineering skills needed to drive the success of many Silicon Beach companies. Hiring a foreign worker may seem like a convoluted and expensive process, but it doesn’t have to be. This article explains how employers can hire recent international graduates of US universities at no expense and with relatively little investment of time. It also summarizes the process of making a longer-term commitment to the employee by sponsoring the individual for an H-1B visa, the most common work visa.

A recent study by the National Science Foundation found that 76% of US graduate programs in Computer Science are comprised mainly of international students. The Brookings Institute reports that two-thirds of foreign students in the US are pursuing a degree in a technical field (science, technology, engineering or math) or a business, management or marketing field. Only 48% of US students are doing the same. Finally, and most notable for the Silicon Beach community, the Institute of International Education reports that California is the state with the largest percentage of foreign students overall at 13.9%. All of these statistics testify to one fact: much of the tech talent graduating from US universities is foreign born.

WANT TO HIRE AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT?

Many employers don’t realize that visa sponsorship is not required to hire a recent foreign graduate of a US university. On the contrary, most foreign students are eligible to work for 12 months after graduation under something known as Optional Practical Training (OPT). In addition, for international students who graduate with a degree in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM), the government allows them to work in the US for three years after graduation – formerly 29 months, but extended to 36 months under a new rule that took effect on May 10, 2016. There are a few requirements to qualify for 36 months of STEM OPT:

- The position must relate to their field of study;
- The employer must be enrolled in the government’s E-Verify program;
- The employer must provide the student employee with training objectives; and,
- The student employee must work at least 20 hours per week.

At the outset, students typically work with their prospective employer and their school’s international student office to ensure that eligibility requirements are met. On an ongoing basis, there are a few minor reporting requirements designed to ensure that the recent graduate has an opportunity to develop his or her skills and fulfill learning objectives. Also, STEM OPT may be available even to individuals who are part of a small startup, as long as they can demonstrate a genuine employee relationship to the business.

As an employer, there are some attestations that you will need to make, but none of them should cause any heartburn. For example, the employer must attest that it will notify the employer’s school if there are any material changes to the job or the learning objectives, and must state that the company has sufficient resources to provide the training outlined in the training plan. The employer must also notify the employee’s school within five days should the employment be terminated for any reason. Of note is the requirement that the student employee “will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker” and that “the terms and conditions of the STEM practical training opportunity—including duties, hours, and compensation—are commensurate with the terms and conditions applicable to the employee’s similarly situated US workers.” At present, that component may reasonably be read to prohibit a direct one-to-one replacement of a US worker by a STEM OPT employee and to require that the STEM OPT employee be treated like everyone else with respect to compensation, work schedule, and other conditions of employment.

There are a few things to keep in mind. First, the three-year time limit runs with the student employee, and not with the job. So if your candidate has been working for another employer on STEM OPT for 10 months, there are only 26 months left for your company. Second, you need to have a plan for what you’ll do after the 36 months end, so it is generally recommended that you put your student employees in the H-1B lottery as early as possible to increase the likelihood that they will be selected for a longer-term work visa option before the three years are up. New H-1B visa petitions must be submitted within the first five business days of April each year. Third, if you are not already participating in the E-Verify program, you must enroll. E-Verify is a free and simple-to-use government database that checks your new hires’ employment eligibility against Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security databases. While the program is currently optional for employers, it is a prerequisite for hiring a STEM OPT employee.

STEM OPT is a relatively straightforward, medium-term work authorization that will allow you to tap the talent pool of international students coming out of almost every technology undergraduate and graduate program in the country. While it is not a forever solution, it will likely provide you with the time needed to transition the employee to a longer-term work visa category, should that be the objective.

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Silicon Beach: a Hub for Media and Entertainment

By ANANT PATEL

Entrepreneur hasn’t built a case for how it can be a business perspective. Sometimes the initial up’s “big idea” or concept must be scalable from distributing content that consumers want to watch. It’s a huge growth platform for producing and distributing new content and different forms of distribution. Media and technology companies and a drive for disrupting existing businesses.

First, there are a lot of innovative concepts on the go everywhere — it’s not just startups, it’s about new ideas and processes that disrupt existing businesses. Second, there is a significant convergence of media and technology companies and a drive for new content and different forms of distribution. There are often misconceptions about what it takes to succeed in the entrepreneurial world of media and technology startups. Many Silicon Beach entrepreneurs think they need to invent a completely new channel or technology, but there are two main ways for these companies to succeed utilizing the tools currently at their disposal.

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Ahead of the Competition: Privacy as a Competitive Differentiator

By TIMOTHY J. TOOHEY

F ort technology companies there are few subjects as perplexing as privacy. A few years ago some prominent technologists held the view that “privacy is dead so you should just get over it.” Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg remarked that privacy is no longer a “social norm.” More famously, Reid Hoffman of LinkedIn proclaimed that “all these concerns about privacy tend to be old people issues.”

Jeff Jarvis, who believed private and public spheres were merging through technology, wrote in Public Parts that privacy is “a confused web of worries, changing norms, varying cultural mores, complicated relationships, conflicting motives, vague feelings of danger with sporadic specific evidence of harm, and unclear laws and regulations made all the more complex by context.”

Edward Snowden’s 2013 revelations of wide-scale government surveillance fundamentally changed privacy discourse. Privacy was no longer a quaint artifact, but a fundamental constitutional value. For example, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which has emerged as the nation’s privacy and security enforcer, has also taken numerous actions in recent years against companies under its broad consumer protection authority. For example, the FTC charged a company selling home security cameras with software defects which exposed footage of sleeping babies on the Internet. Similarly, the FTC also went after a router manufacturer as perceived privacy and security practices and slapped them with class action lawsuits. Litigation is not only expensive to defend, but can potentially cripple a technology company along with the further loss of business and adverse publicity.

Security and privacy breaches produce significant adverse publicity, lead to loss of customers, and can lead to imposition of onerous regulatory consequences. For example, the FTC required the aforementioned companies to undertake third-party audits of their privacy and security practices for 20 years. Furthermore, companies can face significant financial losses and make themselves vulnerable to attorneys who are increasingly targeting companies with allegedly poor privacy and security practices and filing them with class action lawsuits. Litigation is not only expensive to defend, but can potentially cripple a technology company along with the further loss of business and adverse publicity.

Given that privacy concerns are not going away any time soon, technology companies can pursue several strategies to build privacy into their products and applications now.

Building privacy into the design of products and applications may also help differentiate companies not only with consumers, but with potential venture capitalists and strategic partners. In choosing future investment targets or partners, it makes sense that investors would be attracted to companies whose products are built on a stable and lasting foundation.

The bottom line is that privacy is alive and well. In the coming years, technology companies should expect to see greater attention paid to privacy as innovations promote further use of personal data for predictive and advertising purposes. As the use of personal data grows, so will pressures from regulatory authorities—particularly in privacy-friendly jurisdictions, such as the EU—to place conditions, such as consent, on collecting and processing of such data. Technology companies should prepare themselves for these developments by taking action to build privacy into their products and applications now.

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WE'VE BEEN ON THIS BLUFF FOR A CENTURY

We've had neighbors come and go. We cheered when Howard Hughes launched the Spruce Goose, waved to the first boats sailing into the Marina harbor, and supervised construction of the 405 and 90 freeways. We brought over a pie when LAX showed up. Now, the cool kids have moved in across the street and the neighborhood is jumping. Friends and collaborators abound, there's chatter on every corner with big ideas taking shape in the open streets. Together, we are cementing LA's reputation as the world’s capital of creativity and tech innovation. The epicenter of diverse thought, culture, religion, and language interconnect here. Welcome to the block, Silicon Beach. We've been waiting for a partner just like you.

LMU|LA
Loyola Marymount University

www.lmu.edu
Loyola Marymount University – Higher Learning on Silicon Beach

Loyola Marymount University is the only university located in the heart of Silicon Beach and promotes itself as “The University of Silicon Beach.” While the real estate adage “location, location, location” applies, the relationship between LMU and Silicon Beach is much deeper than their shared geography: they are programmatically and strategically symbiotic and they are intricately woven into the fabric of Los Angeles. LMU’s internationally ranked film, television, marketing, business, and engineering programs have developed industry partnerships and internship opportunities. Silicon Beach is where tech innovation thrives, and it is the launching pad for “global imagination,” a vision LMU’s president, Timothy Law Snyder, thematically articulated during his inaugural address in October 2015. LMU is an incubator of entrepreneurialism, where world-changing ideas are imagined and formed. Those ideas are then brought to life with LMU’s Silicon Beach neighbors. LMU is ranked No. 3 in the West while its entrepreneurship program is ranked No. 7 by U.S. News & World Report. LMU’s entrepreneurship program, one of the largest in the country, has about 300 undergraduate students. Its graduates work as founders or early employees of many Silicon Beach companies, including: The Honest Company, Allscreen.tv, OneStop Internet, and many others. LMU is Silicon Beach’s talent pool where companies such as Activision Blizzard, Method Studios, Belkin, Snapchat, Rubicon Project, Atom Factory, Chow Now, Fulfill Inc., Tesla, Sony, LionsGate, IMAX, Universal Music are hiring LMU students as interns and employees at record rates.

The university highlights the success of its students by tracking and reporting the career pathways of its students in Silicon Beach and beyond at http://outcomes.lmu.edu.

Silicon Beach is ranked the second- or third-largest tech and startup ecosystems in the world according to USA Today. LMU President Timothy Law Snyder in an interview about Silicon Beach with Bloomberg News: “While Silicon Valley has a lot of chip-level activity, Silicon Beach is bursting with digital media, creativity, and content creation.”

For example, LMU’s mSchool, a progressive center for marketing education and practice, actively partners with leading Silicon Beach marketing firms to create immersive learning experiences and mentorship projects where students apply real-world digital marketing strategies in a fast-changing marketplace. LMU mSchool students collaborate with executives and teams with Silicon Beach companies like Deutsch LA, TBWA/Chiat/Day, Electronic Arts, Google, Facebook, Ignited, Team One, 72 and Sunny, RPA, RadicalMedia and many others. Outside the classroom, the university is working with Silicon Beach partners to share the LMU story more broadly. Partnering with Google and YouTube Studios L.A. in Playa Vista, LMU is a “content partner” of Google Expeditions, a virtual reality platform that is reshaping how students experience college campuses through captivating 3D, 360-degree encounters.

LMU hosts the annual Silicon Beach Expo, the community’s largest event that brings together companies and organizations of all sizes to meet, share ideas, and spur innovation.

The packed event draws crowds of attendees and exhibitors, a reminder that the ever-expanding business enterprises of Silicon Beach are eager to capitalize on the unique students LMU produces: global citizens, thought leaders, professionals, and women and men for others. The university differentiates itself from other nearby universities because of its Jesuit education, more than 500 years in the making. LMU’s symbiosis with the City of Angels goes back to its founding in 1911 and is present throughout its history. LMU’s economic impact measures one aspect of this relationship: the university adds nearly $1 billion annually to California’s economy, of which $808 million and over 5,300 jobs are concentrated in Los Angeles County.

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For more facts about LMU, visit http://www.lmu.edu/facts.