

8 hot tips on attracting and retaining top tech talent from Dragon's Den investor James Caan



James Caan was part of the panel of investors of the popular business BBC TV show, [Dragons' Den](#). The founder and CEO of UK-based Hamilton, Caan began his career in recruitment and founded the people-sourcing business Alexander Mann in the mid-1980s, which was later sold in 1999. Passionate about the SME sector, he will visit South Africa later this month to speak at the [M2B \(Millionaire to Billionaire\) event](#).

Recruiting competent, high-calibre IT talent is a constant challenge for technology-oriented companies. Attracting and retaining the best talent globally is challenging and also costly.

I managed to catch James ahead of his visit to South Africa, and chatted to him about his recruitment advice for local technology companies. He has an exceptional grasp of the challenges that recruitment businesses face and provides technology companies with eight points to consider for attracting and retaining top IT talent.

Top four recruitment tactics to optimise employer-branding efforts

- 1. Create an engaging environment for your current employees to work in**

You'll be surprised at how quickly word travels within the recruitment industry – so, if your staff enjoys the working environment, then their industry peers will sit up and take notice.

2. Offer rewards or bonuses for employee referrals

This encourages your staff to network which is a key element of any good recruiter – and also means people who come into the business have a good idea of what it's like to work for you.

3. Analyse your online presence carefully and make sure that it communicates your brand the way you want it to

This includes everything from your website, to your company LinkedIn and social media pages. Recruiters spend more time online now than ever before!.

4. Focus on the journey that you offer to your employees by understanding their needs and expectations

Too many companies simply focus on what they are doing now – be sure to explain what your long-term vision is for both the business and people who you are hiring. How will you help them develop in their career and grow as an individual?

Top four retention strategies / tactics to retain top technology talent

1. IT is an extremely fast growing market and there's no doubt that quality staff is always in high demand

There are a number of ways you can retain your employees – starting of course with, financial incentives. Work with your HR department to analyse market rates, and ensure that your staff are being rewarded at a satisfactory level. I always try to link bonuses to performance.

2. However, financial incentives will only go so far!

You need to create a greater attachment between your employees and the business. Firstly, look at the culture of your company. How freely do ideas flow within the company? Create an environment where anyone can voice their ideas, no matter what their seniority level is. By doing this, you are showing that everyone's input is valued, and that they can all contribute to taking the business forward.

3. All team leaders should be able to understand the people they are managing

Make a concerted effort to understand what makes your employees tick rather than viewing them as just another number. What style of management suits them best? The better you understand them the more chance you have of holding onto them.

4. Recruiters have to be seen as experts in their sector, so managers need to make sure they are constantly up to date with the latest technology and skills

This is especially important in the IT world! If employees get the feeling that their manager genuinely wants them to develop, they are less likely to leave when approached by other companies.

Having spent over ten years in a technology environment, I speak from experience when I say that this advice is very relevant to local technology staff sourcing. Absolutely sound advice!

If you would like to attend James Caan's talk on 26 April 2014 at the Sandton Convention Square, I have 10 tickets to give away. Please e-mail me on chani@tothedots.com if you would like to attend James Caan's talk to learn invaluable business building lessons.

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About Chani Macauley

Chani Macauley is owner and consultant at ToTheDots. She has over 13 years professional senior business management experience serving on the Executive Committee of a Cape Town born technology company in a Financial Manager and Marketing Executive capacity. Chani holds a B.Comm Honours degree in Strategic Cost Management obtained at the University of Cape Town , a B.Comm degree specializing in Information Technology and Industrial Psychology at the University of the Western Cape and is certified as a Marketing Practitioner by the Marketing Association of South Africa and holds a certification from CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants).

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