# HIGH TECH, HIGH TOUCH:
## HUMAN FACTORS ATTRACT AND KEEP TECH WORKERS



**TECH TALENT REMAINS IN HIGH DEMAND—AND SKILLED WORKERS KNOW IT.** The unemployment rate for technology professionals is significantly lower than the national average—just 2.4 percent in March 2016, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. And the number of technology professionals voluntarily leaving their jobs is above the 10-year average, according to tech-hiring website Dice.

Naturally, salary remains the top draw for tech workers, but a survey of tech employees by South Florida IT search and staffing firm ProTech found that work-life balance was the second biggest reason for leaving a job after salary—the first time it came up as a top reason for switching jobs in the company's annual survey.

*Florida ranks fourth in the nation for high-tech employment.*

**HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN TECH TALENT:**

**Make work-life balance a priority.** Development sprints and deadlines are a fact of life in the tech world, and employees understand there will be times they need to work late. "But when it happens regularly day in and day out, that's when employees get burned out," says Elizabeth Becker, a ProTech client partner. "They see it as a breakdown in management."

Tech talent, especially younger workers, also have high expectations for flexibility and the ability to work from home or from remote locations. Offering a spectrum of flex time and telecommuting options both widens appeal to prospects and helps retain talent you are counting on.

**Stress career growth.** If your company doesn't offer clearly outlined routes to professional advancement, staff may not see why they should stay. While not every position offers an upward trajectory, especially at the time of hire, companies can send a strong message about the company's culture by promoting employees from within into senior roles. "Emphasize that and put it into practice," Becker advises.

**Get creative with benefits.** Tech companies like Netflix made headlines when they announced unlimited vacation time, but in practice these kinds of policies often prompt employees to take less—not more—vacation. Pioneering companies are requiring employees to take a minimum of two weeks of vacation or more, Becker says. Some even chip in spending money to ensure time off is spent on something fun or relaxing.

**Look where the talent is.** Florida, which ranks fourth in the nation for high-tech employment, has regional clusters of technology firms in sectors spanning biotechnology, aerospace and aviation, advanced manufacturing, modeling, simulation and training, and others. "Our strengths are in defined clusters of technology that new companies or employees can easily integrate into," says Ed Schons, president of the Florida High Tech Corridor Council, a regional economic initiative encompassing 23 Florida counties.

**Embrace diversity and inclusion.** A 2016 study of 18 blue-chip tech employers conducted by PayScale found that most had fewer than 30 percent female employees; none had 50 percent or more. Finding ways to broaden the talent pipeline, such as recruiting student interns and bringing together diverse tech talent, can help ensure a larger pool of prospective employees into the future.

**Collaborate.** Companies within a sector can collaborate to increase a region's profile as a tech hub. Schons points to Florida ventures such as Medical City in Central Florida, the Space Coast, and international projects near ports across the state as examples of partnerships that are "helping feed the growth of the clusters." Schons says, "Any one business is never alone in expanding, strengthening the industry, and having a positive impact in the community."