Professional recruiters know that being strategic about recruiting requires consideration of several elements, including making decisions that are aligned with your staffing or enrollment goals. A clearly defined recruitment strategy sets up a framework for focusing your efforts and planning beyond individual events or campaigns. The strategy defines what activities to concentrate on and what activities are unimportant.

Developing a strategic recruiting plan means going beyond specific tactics—like website development or a visit to a local university—to setting goals, finding partners, developing an evaluation plan, and developing and delivering materials.

Create a specific and quantifiable goal. Who do you want to reach? Is there a particular quality of student or employee? How many? Is there more than one target group? Once you have a goal in mind, it will be easier to implement a plan and develop a plan for tracking your progress.

Leverage existing efforts and relationships. Establish partnerships with people who already interact with your target audience and who are more likely to understand the audience's needs. For example, research shows that family and teachers have significant influence on children's academic and career choices. Training or informing teachers might get more “bang for their buck” than trying to interact with every child. Leveraging existing relationships, like friendships or trusted authorities, can bring an important personal touch.

Message content should be based on research about your audience. What do they believe about IT careers or academic programs now? What are their current goals? Messages can preemptively overcome misconceptions while appealing to existing desires. For example, the Information and Computing Sciences School at UC-Irvine is planning an introductory programming course on biological applications of computing to take advantage of female students' interest in biology. The course content will include information on computing careers within health and other biology-intensive settings. Craft a message that emphasizes content aimed specifically at the goals and interests of your target group, but remember to be truthful from the onset.

Use more than one way of getting the message across. The more times someone hears a message, and the more believable it is, the more likely they are to act on it. Take advantage of the media your audience pays attention to, but target the media of those who might influence them, too. And consider incentives and recognition for the influencers, like “teacher of the year.”

Keep in mind that a contact situation, the environment in which you meet with your target audience, will influence how your audience members interact with you. People have multiple identities and the priority each is given changes by age group. For example, middle school kids might feel strong pressure to conform in a group, but might be more persuadable in another context. Contact should be made by a credible person and information source.

National Center for Women & Information Technology

What are the Important Components of Targeted Recruiting?

RECRUITING QUICK LIST

- **Audience**
  - Target audience
  - Opinion leaders
  - Influencers

- **Message**
  - Needs, goals, interests of target sector
  - Challenging wisdom of typical choices
  - Truth in advertising

- **Method of Delivery**
  - Medium, multiple media
  - Contact situation
  - Deliverer

- **Leveraging & Building Relationships**
  - Existing efforts, contacts

- **Problems & Opposition**
  - Costs, resources
  - Opposing viewpoints
  - Misconceptions
  - Competing pressures
  - Beliefs about whether they can belong

- **Time Frame, Timing, & Repetition**
  - Typical planning, decision making
  - Multiple times
  - Imminent entry v. long-term influence

RESOURCES


NCWIT Investment Partners: National Science Foundation, Avaya, Microsoft, Pfizer, and Bank of America

NCWIT offers practices for increasing and benefiting from gender diversity in IT at the K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and career levels. Visit www.ncwit.org/practices to find out more.

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NCWIT Investment Partners: National Science Foundation, Avaya, Microsoft, Pfizer, and Bank of America
The Rocky Mountain Section of the Society of Women Engineers, Lockheed Martin, Junior Achievement of the Rocky Mountains, Inc., and the Women’s Foundation of Colorado collaborate each year to produce the Girls Exploring Science, Engineering, and Technology (GESET) event for hundreds of girls. In 2006, over 1,200 Denver metropolitan area girls, and more than 200 volunteers, teachers, and chaperones participated in the event. The purpose of GESET is to engage middle-school girls in science, engineering, and technology activities, orient them toward the high school courses they need to take to enter related career fields, and interest them in pursuing these avenues as careers. Girls attend three workshops that are interactive, hands-on experiences, demonstrating real-world aspects of science, engineering, and technology. In addition, workshop presenters are asked to emphasize the importance of studying science and mathematics in high school, including which essential courses girls need to take. Girls are also encouraged to look at various exhibits by local STEM organizations, including booths run by Denver Public Schools technology advancement program and several industry participants. Students fill out a survey at the end of their last workshop, after which they attended a lunch with drawings for raffle prizes. In 2006, the Colorado Coalition for Gender & IT (an NCWIT Hub) also provided a workshop for the adults, where they discussed myths and effective practices related to girls in IT. This workshop provided a valuable environment for like-minded organizations to begin collaborative efforts to improve girls’ and women’s participation in information technology.

New survey items are added or refined every year to better understand girls’ attitudes and behaviors; for example, in 2006 a new question was asked relating to girls’ willingness to take a class dominated by boys. Observation of the GESET event has supported the collection of good (and bad) ideas. For example, one engineer asked girls how many wanted to be auto mechanics; the girls looked at each other and rolled their eyes. She then asked them if they thought it would be useful to be able to repair a car; to this, they could agree. Now that the engineer had their attention, she told the girls that like knowing how to fix a car, knowing math and science would help them to achieve other goals, including having cool careers.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS
The University of Colorado’s ATLAS Evaluation & Research Group, led by NCWIT Senior Research Scientist Lecia Barker, has both observed the event and administered surveys for students and adults for the past three years. Although it is not possible for a one-time survey to determine the long-range effectiveness of such an event, the observations and surveys help organizers to ensure that their immediate goals are being met. The surveys also discover more about girls and the people who influence them. For example, each year the survey asks the open-ended question, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Obviously, there will be some elements of fantasy in the girls’ answers (this decreases with age, according to research), but the question can inform recruiters choosing application areas within which IT instruction can be embedded.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS
The most important elements for reaching girls of this age group are to:

- Ensure that the girls are with their friends or can otherwise feel a sense of belonging in the group to which they are assigned
- Keep the talk to a minimum and the action to a maximum (get advice from middle school teachers, who are experts at this)
- Connect what they are doing to things they already know or care about
High school computer science teachers who actively recruit girls and minority students report more students overall and more female students in their courses. The following examples are from reports submitted in 2009 and 2010 by teachers who participated in a 2-day summer workshop on attracting and engaging students.

ACTIVE RECRUITING WORKS
A department head in a large high school where several CS courses are offered described the following results:

- We have enough students for the first time in four years to run an AP level Computer Science course.
- The numbers of female students who are enrolling in our [computing] courses [for next year] have increased by 50% from this current year.

GO WHERE THE GIRLS ARE
Seth Reichelson is a highly effective teacher at Ocoee High School, which enrolls 65% free- and reduced-lunch students. By actively recruiting girls, he raised Advanced Placement Computer Science enrollment to its highest level ever — 65 students total over two classes. The class grew so large that he was forced to turn away several students due to classroom limitations. At the same time that overall enrollment increased, the gender composition of the classes improved from their typical 12% girls to 33% girls. Next year, Ocoee High School expects 96 students in AP Computer Science and hopes to increase the percentage of females even further.

Reichelson targeted girls in predominantly female-run school clubs such as student government, yearbook, and the National Honor Society. These extracurricular activities are populated with many high-achieving young women. Reichelson drew these girls to the class by connecting their existing interests with computer programming through two student-run projects described here.

CONNECT COMPUTING WITH GIRLS’ EXISTING INTERESTS
Reichelson and his AP Computer Science students applied skills learned in his course to the yearbook. Using Picture Objects in the Java programming language, they blended and color-matched pictures. The project was directed by the yearbook staff, with pictures provided by the yearbook class. The pictures they created with Java were later used as title pages for the yearbook.

In a project done with the National Honor Society (NHS), Reichelson’s AP Computer Science students created a program to scan student identification numbers using a card scanner and then match student numbers with their names. This program decreased by 90% the time it took to record attendance at NHS meetings of more than 200 students.

COMMUNICATE THE VALUE AND ASSURE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS THEY CAN SUCCEED
Reichelson told the girls he was recruiting that taking his CS AP course would make them stand out among college applicants. They would stand out, he said, because although large numbers of girls take other AP exams, few take the CS exam. He then overcame their objections that they don't know anything about computers by explaining that he prefers “a blank slate” and guarantees students in his classes an A if they work hard. Finally, Reichelson predicted that if they took his course, they would pass the AP test, because history shows that hard work in his class pays off — 70% of his students typically pass the CS AP test, in contrast to the school’s average AP pass rate of 15%.

RESOURCES
Case Study Contributor: Seth Reichelson

NCWIT Strategic Partners: National Science Foundation and Microsoft | NCWIT Investment Partners: Avaya, Pfizer, and Bank of America