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CONSTRUCTION & ENGINEERING  
SPECIALIST RECRUITERS

# WHAT DATA CENTRE CONSTRUCTION HIRING MANAGERS CARE ABOUT

A CANDID GUIDE FOR JOB  
SEEKERS



# INTRODUCTION

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**The market is desperate for talent. That doesn't mean you'll walk straight in.**

Landing a data centre construction role in 2026's hyper-competitive market requires understanding what keeps hiring managers up at night. With 82% of firms struggling to fill positions and hyperscale campuses facing schedule risk due to labour shortages, you'd think any qualified candidate would be snapped up immediately.

They're not.

Data centre construction hiring managers are more selective than ever precisely because bad hires are so costly. Replacing senior leadership costs \$50,000–\$75,000 per position, and a project running at \$1M+ per day in contractor costs cannot absorb someone who won't deliver at the speed and standard the sector demands.

This guide reveals what data centre construction hiring managers actually care about, beyond the resume buzzwords.



**82%**

of firms struggling to fill positions

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**\$50K–\$75K**

replacing senior leadership costs per position

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**90+**

days average time-to-hire for senior data centre roles



THE TOP 5 THINGS  
HIRING MANAGERS  
CARE ABOUT

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[just-constructionrec.com](http://just-constructionrec.com)

# 1. MISSION-CRITICAL EXPERIENCE (NOT JUST CONSTRUCTION EXPERIENCE)



## What They're Thinking:

"Can this person handle the unique complexity of building in a live, high-stakes data centre environment?"

**Data centre construction is fundamentally different from commercial, industrial, or even healthcare work. Hiring managers need confidence that you understand:**

- Uptime Institute Tier criteria and redundancy design principles
- Commissioning sequencing and the 5 levels of Cx
- Phased energisation and parallel construction operations
- Power infrastructure: generators, UPS, MV switchgear, ATS
- Cooling systems: CRAC, CRAH, chillers, liquid cooling
- NFPA 70E electrical safety in live-facility environments

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- **Quantify your data centre experience** on your résumé.  
Don't say "Construction Manager with 10 years experience."  
Say "Construction Manager with 6 years focused on mission-critical builds, delivering 4 hyperscale data centres and 3 colocation expansions across Northern Virginia and Phoenix."
- **Name the operators you've worked with.**  
Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Meta, Equinix, Digital Realty: these names signal credibility immediately. Reference the projects by market and scale where you can.
- **Be specific about build types.**  
Hyperscale campus, colocation, edge, build-to-suit, retrofit and expansion: each has distinct requirements and hiring managers know the difference.
- **Highlight Cx involvement, even if supporting.**  
Any documented role in pre-functional testing, functional testing, or energisation activities is worth calling out explicitly.

### Don't oversell.

If you've managed one shell-and-core commercial build near a data centre campus, don't claim mission-critical expertise. Hiring managers will expose it in the first technical question.

# 2. ABILITY TO DELIVER ON TIME AND BUDGET IN CHALLENGING CONDITIONS



## What They're Thinking:

"Will this person protect my schedule when a hyperscale operator is watching every day?"

In 2026, with the average data centre project running at \$1M+ per day in contractor costs and hyperscale operators tracking schedule slippage in hours, delivery certainty is everything. Hiring managers are obsessed with it.

## THEY CARE ABOUT:

- Track record of on-time delivery on fast-track, 24/7 construction programmes
- Experience managing labour shortages and creative workforce solutions
- Change order management without derailing momentum
- Proactive problem-solving rather than reactive crisis management
- Experience with alternative delivery: design-build, EPC, progressive procurement

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- **Lead with outcomes, not responsibilities.**  
Instead of "Managed project schedules," say "Delivered a 40MW colocation expansion 4 weeks ahead of schedule against a constrained electrical subcontractor market."
- **Prepare specific stories.**  
of how you've overcome labour shortages, equipment lead-time issues, or supply chain disruptions without slipping critical path milestones.
- **Know your numbers.**  
Total project value, budget vs actuals, schedule variance, change order percentage, TRIR. Be ready to discuss all of them without hesitation.
- **Show you understand the stakes.**  
Data centre operators calculate downtime costs in the hundreds of thousands per hour. Demonstrating awareness of what a schedule slip actually costs at programme level will set you apart immediately.

### Don't blame.

If a project went off track, own your part and explain what you learned. Hiring managers in this sector respect accountability far more than a clean story.

# 3. TECHNOLOGY FLUENCY (NOT JUST FAMILIARITY)



## What They're Thinking:

"Is this person going to slow down a team that moves faster than any other construction environment?"

**Technology adoption in data centre construction is not optional. BIM is standard. AI-driven scheduling is becoming expected. DCIM platform literacy is increasingly a baseline requirement on hyperscale programmes. Hiring managers need team members who use technology to multiply productivity.**

## THEY CARE ABOUT:

- BIM proficiency: Revit, Navisworks, Autodesk Construction Cloud
- DCIM platforms and operational monitoring tools
- AI-assisted scheduling, cost forecasting, and risk modelling
- Prefabrication coordination with factory-built MEP systems
- Commissioning management platforms and digital Cx documentation

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- **List specific platforms with honest proficiency levels.**  
"Expert in Procore and Navisworks, working knowledge of Autodesk Construction Cloud, currently developing DCIM platform experience." Specificity reads as credibility.
- **Give examples of technology driving outcomes.**  
"Used BIM clash detection to identify 34 MEP conflicts pre-installation on a 30MW build, avoiding an estimated \$180K in rework and 12 days of schedule risk."
- **Show you're actively learning.**  
Mention recent certifications, platform training, or technology adoption you've led on a project. The sector moves fast: hiring managers want people who keep up.
- **Understand AI infrastructure requirements.**  
If you've worked on GPU-dense builds, high power density deployments, or liquid cooling installations, call it out explicitly. This is the fastest-growing premium skill in the sector.

## Don't misrepresent tech skills.

Claiming Cx platform expertise you don't have will surface within days on site. Honest development gaps are always preferable to capability gaps discovered mid-project.

# 4 . CULTURAL FIT OPERATING UNDER SUSTAINED PRESSURE



## What They're Thinking:

“Will this person make my team better, or create friction on a project where there's no margin for that?”

Data centre construction runs at a pace and intensity that has no equivalent in other construction sectors. 24/7 operations, hyperscale operator oversight, and the uncompromising delivery culture of firms like Turner, Skanska, and Mortenson create an environment where cultural fit is not a soft consideration. It is a hard requirement.

## THEY CARE ABOUT:

- Emotional resilience and composure under sustained programme pressure
- Clear, direct communication across trades, operators, and owner teams
- Conflict resolution without escalation
- Humility, coachability, and a team-first mentality
- Safety culture: absolute, not aspirational

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

### ➤ Prepare pressure stories.

How did you manage a critical-path delay when the operator was on-site? How did you resolve a dispute between two trades without losing schedule? Concrete examples in this sector are worth more than any credential.

### ➤ Show you understand the stakeholder environment.

Data centre operators are not passive clients. Amazon, Microsoft, and Google embed experienced teams on-site who know construction. Demonstrating respect for that dynamic is noticed immediately.

### ➤ Ask about team culture in interviews.

It signals that you understand fit matters, and that you're evaluating them as much as they're evaluating you. That kind of mutual respect reads well.

### ➤ Be direct about your working style.

Data centre construction moves too fast for ambiguity. Hiring managers want to understand how you communicate, decide, and escalate before they put you on a live project.

### Never speak negatively about former employers, operators, or colleagues.

In a sector this interconnected, it will find its way back. It is also the fastest way to be quietly removed from consideration.

# 5. RETENTION LIKELIHOOD



## What They're Thinking:

"We're two years into a five-year campus programme. I cannot afford to replace this person at the 12-month mark."

**With hiring taking 90+ days for senior roles and replacement costing \$50K–\$75K, hiring managers in data centre construction are acutely focused on longevity. Multi-year campus programmes make mid-project turnover uniquely damaging: it's not just a vacancy, it's continuity risk on a live build.**

## THEY CARE ABOUT:

- Job stability: short stints without clear explanation are a significant flag
- Programme alignment: does this role fit where you're genuinely heading?
- Compensation realism: are your expectations calibrated to the market?
- Geographic commitment, especially for roles tied to specific campus locations
- Personal circumstances that signal long-term rootedness in the market

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

### ➤ Explain your job history honestly.

Project completion, programme wind-down, company restructure, and family relocation are all understood in this sector. Serial moves for incremental pay increases are not. The pattern matters more than any individual move.

### ➤ Show geographic commitment if relocating.

"We're settled in the area" or "My family relocated here for the long term" removes a significant subconscious concern hiring managers carry into every senior conversation.

### ➤ Articulate career alignment.

Hiring managers want to know this role is a genuine career move, not a bridge to something else. Be clear about what you're building toward and why this programme fits that trajectory.

### ➤ Be realistic on compensation.

Research market benchmarks. Coming in at 35–40% above market rate signals you'll leave the moment a better offer arrives, regardless of what you say in the interview.

### **Don't use the offer to negotiate elsewhere if you're not genuinely interested.**

The data centre construction sector is smaller than it appears. Hiring managers know each other. Using a genuine offer as leverage and then declining leaves a lasting impression.



# SECONDARY FACTORS (STILL IMPORTANT)

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## CERTIFICATIONS & CREDENTIALS

**Certifications matter but are rarely deal-breakers for experienced professionals. They signal commitment to the discipline and add measurable value to compensation.**

### HIGH VALUE:

- **RCDD (Registered Communications Distribution Designer)**
- **BICSI DCIE or DCEP**
- **CxA / CCP / BCxP (Commissioning credentials)**
- **PMP or CCM**
- **OSHA 30 + NFPA 70E**

### NICE TO HAVE:

- **LEED AP or sustainability credentials**
- **BIM / Autodesk professional certifications**
- **Six Sigma or Lean Construction**

## EDUCATION

### REALITY CHECK:

**Once you have 5+ years of mission-critical construction experience, your degree matters far less than your delivery record. A bachelor's in construction management or electrical/mechanical engineering is preferred but is never required if your project history speaks clearly.**

## REFERENCES

**Hiring managers will check references for senior roles, and in the data centre sector they often already know the people you'll name. Have 3-5 strong references ready:**

- **Former direct supervisors on data centre projects**
- **Hyperscale or colocation operator contacts you've worked with directly**
- **Peer PMs, supers, or Cx leads who can speak to how you operate under pressure**

**Brief your reference before they're contacted. Tell them the role, the programme, and what you'd like them to speak to. An unprepared reference does more damage than no reference at all.**



# COMMON MISTAKES THAT KILL YOUR CHANCES

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## RÉSUMÉ RED FLAGS

- Generic résumés with no data centre or mission-critical project specifics
- No quantifiable outcomes: just responsibilities listed without results
- Typos or formatting errors (signals the attention-to-detail standard you'll bring on site)
- Unexplained employment gaps or a pattern of short tenures without context
- Exaggerated titles or project values that won't survive a reference check
- No mention of specific operators, markets, or build types anywhere in the document

## INTERVIEW RED FLAGS

- Can't explain mission-critical specific challenges you've navigated, with detail
- Vague answers with no numbers, no project names, and no specific outcomes
- Negative language about former employers, operators, or project teams
- No questions prepared, or questions that reveal you haven't researched the programme or firm
- Compensation expectations significantly above market without a clear rationale
- Inability to discuss a project that went wrong and what you took from it

## CULTURAL RED FLAGS

- Arrogance or a "I've seen it all" attitude: data centre construction evolves faster than any other sector
- Inability to admit mistakes or demonstrate genuine accountability
- Resistance to technology, new platforms, or changing delivery methods
- Dismissive of safety culture or the absolute standards hyperscale operators enforce on-site
- "Not my job" mindset: data centre construction requires total programme ownership at every level
- Visible discomfort with the pace, ambiguity, or intensity of the sector's delivery environment



# HOW TO STAND OUT (IN A GOOD WAY)

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

BEFORE ANY INTERVIEW:

- Research the firm's recent data centre projects, the markets they operate in, and the operators they've worked with
- Understand their delivery approach: self-perform, GC, EPC, design-build
- Know the hyperscale or colocation operators active in the market you're interviewing for
- Review their safety record and any public commissioning or delivery milestones
- Connect with current employees on LinkedIn before the conversation, not after

## SHOW STRATEGIC THINKING

DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT DOING THE WORK:

- How data centre builds connect to an operator's wider infrastructure strategy and what that means for delivery priorities
- The trends shaping 2026 construction: AI density, liquid cooling, secondary markets, power constraints
- The business side: margins, risk allocation, contract structures, and long-lead procurement
- How to balance competing pressures: cost, schedule, quality, safety, and operator relationship

## PREPARE SPECIFIC STORIES

USE STAR: SITUATION, TASK, ACTION, RESULT:

- Overcoming a critical-path challenge on a fast-track data centre build
- Managing a difficult stakeholder situation with a hyperscale operator team
- Delivering measurable cost or schedule savings through innovation or proactive planning
- Preventing or resolving a safety incident in a live-facility environment
- Successfully navigating a complex commissioning or energisation milestone

## BE AUTHENTIC

THE BEST CANDIDATE, NOT THE PERFECT RÉSUMÉ:

- The best candidates are honest about where their experience is strong and where it's still developing
- Show genuine interest in the programme, not just the role. Hiring managers remember the people who asked the right questions
- Demonstrate that you'll be a reliable, direct, and collaborative presence on a project where everyone is operating under pressure
- Intellectual curiosity about AI infrastructure, new cooling technologies, and evolving delivery models signals a long-term mindset



# THE BOTTOM LINE

In 2026's data centre construction market, hiring managers need you as much as you need them. The talent shortage is real, the pipeline is enormous, and the competition for experienced professionals has never been fiercer.

But they are not looking for a warm body. They are looking for the right person to put on a programme where the stakes are absolute and the margin for error is close to zero.

**Show up prepared, be specific, demonstrate genuine value, and you will stan out from a field of candidates who are leaning on market conditions to do the work for them.**

## FOCUS ON DEMONSTRATING:

1. **Real data centre construction expertise, not adjacent experience dressed up as the real thing**
2. **A proven ability to deliver under pressure, with the numbers to back it up**
3. **Technology fluency that makes you faster and more effective, not just aware of tools**
4. **The collaborative, direct, and resilient character that this environment demands**
5. **A clear reason why you will still be on this programme in three years' time**