

Facebook blames US immigration policy for Silicon Valley talent war

November 8, 2011 12:15 am by April Dembosky

Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer for Facebook, said US education and immigration policy were to blame for the fierce battle Silicon Valley technology companies were fighting over engineers.

American universities should be “stapling a visa to every high-tech diploma” it issues to non-US students, Ms Sandberg said, rather than send foreign students back to their home countries to build companies that will compete with US ones.

“Those people, not only do they not take jobs from other Americans, they create jobs for other Americans if we could keep them here,” she told PBS’ Charlie Rose, in a joint interview with Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s chief executive, that will air Monday night.

Mr Zuckerberg said the problem was education and that US universities were not graduating enough engineers to meet demand. He visited Harvard University on Monday, the same school he dropped out of to start Facebook in 2004, to recruit new engineers.

He said engineering salaries have as much as doubled since then, though he and Ms Sandberg rejected the suggestion that Facebook was meeting its own demand by “stealing” engineers from competitors, most notably Google.

“Attract. Attract,” Ms Sandberg corrected Mr Rose.

The hour-long interview touched on all the main issues currently impacting Facebook – privacy, China, its eventual IPO – but continued to reference the issue of talent.

Mr Zuckerberg said equity was one of the main ways to attract the best engineers and designers, and that Facebook planned to make that equity “worth something publicly” and “in a liquid way,” though of course evaded questions of an IPO, implying only that the company was focused on the long term.

“Honestly, it’s not something I spend a lot of time on a day-to-day basis thinking about,” he said.

In discussing his relationship with Steve Jobs – who said he admired Mr Zuckerberg for taking the long view, according to a recent biography – Mr Zuckerberg referenced conversations with

the Apple founder about “How to build a team around you, right, that’s focused on building as high quality and good things as you are.”

<http://blogs.ft.com/fttechhub/2011/11/facebook-blames-us-immigration-policy-for-silicon-valley-talent-war/>