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Technology jobs thrive

Demand remains high despite tough economy

By Katherine Timpf THE WASHINGTON TIMES | Monday, July 6, 2009

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Despite the unemployment and uncertainty plaguing the job market, ePlus Technology Inc. project manager James Gallina said he's not worried.

"It took me two months to find the perfect job, and I got about 9 or 10 interviews very quickly when I was looking for jobs, and that was when I wasn't looking very hard," Mr. Gallina said.

"Just the array of offers that came my way makes me confident that even if I lost my job in an emergency I could find a lesser job."

The market for jobs in technology, particularly in Washington, affirms Mr. Gallina's confidence. According to TechAmerica's annual report, employment in the technological field dropped only 0.6 percent, while overall private-sector employment dropped 1.3 percent, in the fourth quarter of 2008. The U.S. tech industry has added 382,900 jobs during the last four years — 77,000 in 2008 alone.

The report designated the D.C. area (including the District, Maryland and Virginia) as having a particularly high, fast-growing concentration of technology jobs. Virginia has the highest percentage of technology workers in the United States (9.2 percent), Maryland comes in fifth (8.0 percent,) and the District right behind in sixth (7.3 percent.)

Vimal Shyamji, general manager at Winter, Wyman Cos.' national technology contracting division, which helped Mr. Gallina land his job, said there are actually more technology jobs available in the D.C. area than there are people to fill them.

"We consistently have candidates we are talking to where we are not the only position they are in play for," Mr. Shyamji said. "It's a weird situation that one of our candidates doesn't also get other offers."

An example? Mr. Gallina getting 10 interviews without much effort.

Other area firms are experiencing similar success. MicroServe Consulting Inc., a firm that provides IT services, equipment and security, located in Gaithersburg, plans to double in size by the end of July and triple by November. Executive Vice President Rick Albert said MicroServe plans to reach 30 people by the end of the year — a threefold increase from its current 10. He expects the company will reach the \$3 million mark this year and "\$6 million or better" by the end of 2010.

Mr. Albert said the reason technology firms such as his own are seeing such success is because of new management methods.

"A lot of what I see is companies doing ... preventative maintenance where clients can budget their cost," he said.

Not only are there a lot of tech jobs available in the D.C. area, but these jobs are also better paying than many others. The Cyberstates report shows that Virginia's average annual high-tech wage (\$89,700) is 97 percent more than the state's average private sector wage, the District's (\$89,300) is 29 percent more and Maryland's (\$84,400) is 82 percent more.

Indeed, Mr. Gallina, who has worked in the technology field since 1994, said employers are willing to pay for people with technological skills "at premium." He called people with the required skills "rare," and said organizations need them to compete — especially in the District.

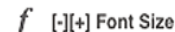
"I think it's the mix of government and large private companies in the area with a relatively small but educated population that all kind of create the perfect mix for it," he said.

This, Mr. Gallina said, is why he feels so good about the future.

"I feel as if the entire company would have to fail for me to lose my job in this economic environment," he said. "That's possible for any employer, but I also feel that if I were to lose my job, I wouldn't be out of work for very long at all ... my skills could take me somewhere else very quickly."



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