

Tech jobs show signs of rebound

BY ED DUGGAN

Some tech companies continue to cut jobs in the wake of the tech bubble's burst, but others are ramping up staffing.

"It seems to be competing trends," said Alex Funkhouser, CEO of North Miami Beach-based Computer Careers International, a recruiting and placement company for technical workers, engineers and executives. "Some large companies that have seen their earnings explode are downsizing locally and outsourcing overseas, while the smaller and mid-size firms that severely cut back during the tech wreck are scrambling for new workers."

Banking giant Citigroup (NYSE: C) has outsourced hundreds of jobs from Fort Lauderdale to Argentina and India during the last two years.

"The remaining employees are nervous," Funkhouser said. "They feel additional layoffs are inevitable."

Siemens Building Technologies Security Systems Division in Sunrise, part of Germany's Siemens AG (NYSE: SI), is relocating to Illinois by the end of September, according to an employee. Many are being laid off by Aug. 31.

"Most employees and independent

COMPUTER CAREERS INTERNATIONAL

CEO: Alex Funkhouser

Web site:

www.computer-careers.com

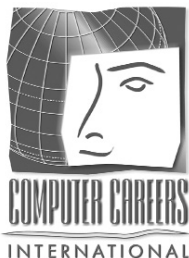
Address: 1721 N.E. 164th St.,

Miami 33162

Phone: (305) 944-3294

E-mail:

alex@computer-careers.com



FILE PHOTO

Tech pay is up 10 percent, says Alex Funkhouser of Computer Careers International.

contractors will be out of a job there," Funkhouser said. "However, some employees told me they were offered up to \$20,000 in stay-on bonuses, plus generous severance packages."

Royal Caribbean made deep personnel cuts after Sept. 11, dropping from 400 to 200 tech jobs. Now the firm is rebuilding its tech backbone.

Wild Card System in Sunrise is also in the hunt for specialist techs after terminating an offshore contract.

Fire sale on salaries over

"Tech salaries are up a good 10 percent virtually across the board. The fire sale is over," Funkhouser said. "Many companies have been disappointed with application development outsourcing overseas, although the outsourcing trend for system maintenance is as strong as ever, especially with mainframe technologies."

Deborah Vazquez, president of

Miami-based Protech, an IT placement and recruiting specialist firm, sees a strong current tech job market. It's reflected in Protech's net income, which was up 53 percent in 2002, up 186 percent in 2003 and is projected to be up 60 percent this year.

Vazquez said her business is consistent with the results of Protech's February survey of 102 South Florida CIOs: 91 percent of the respondents said their tech budgets had increased for 2004 and the overall average was up 15 percent.

Her firm will be opening a Fort Lauderdale office in September, she said.

The tech recruiting business seems to be good.

"We are looking at both Tampa and London to set up recruiting and placement offices," Funkhouser said. "The IT market is back."

E-MAIL TECHNOLOGY WRITER Ed Duggan
at eduggan@bizjournals.com.