IT hiring increasing in the United States

September 6 2005

Information-technology employment is increasing, and the greatest expansion appears to be coming from computer-network design and related services, with Internet companies, software developers and even consumer-product firms hiring the skilled talent, experts tell UPI's Networking.

According to the monthly employment report of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a unit of the U.S. Department of Labor, employment in the computer field rose by 7,400 during the month of August to 1.34 million. Computer networking accounted for 5,200 of those jobs.

"Jobs appear to be the result of an increase in small software companies that are able to create jobs and a great deal of revenue with little overhead," Darrell Forte, president and chief executive officer of The Millennium Group, an IT consulting company based in Plantation, Fla., told Wireless World. "Job tasks and occupational titles used to describe these workers evolve rapidly, reflecting new areas of specialization or changes in technology, as well as the practices and preferences of employers."

Another factor attributing to growth in network-design jobs is federal regulation, experts said. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which increased regulation on public companies to better control accounting, is driving companies to hire new network engineers and programmers. "Much of the IT growth, both now and continuing through the end of 2005, is attributable to the next phase of Sarbanes-Oxley implementation," said Steve McMahan, group president of Kforce Professional Staffing, which

has 80 offices in 45 North American markets and is based in Tampa, Fla. "Last year the most dramatic impact of the act was felt in the finance and accounting field. But this year, with testing complete, the emphasis has moved to the systems and technical applications side of the house."

The increasing hiring of computer professionals is an "unintended consequence" of the act not foreseen by the legislators, requiring additional employees to be added to code software, upgrade systems and implement enterprise resource planning systems, McMahan said.

The IT positions, thus, are a mix of temporary and permanent employees, he added. Technical auditors and technical writers are also needed to complete these networking projects.

"These high-demand positions will continue to be important through the balance of the year, at an even higher rate than earlier this year, as companies strive to meet annual requirements to close out the fiscal year," said McMahan.

Research from Menlo Park, Calif.-based Robert Half Technology, a staffing firm for the IT industry, said that 81 percent of chief information officers expect to maintain current staffing levels but that a net of 11 percent continue to plan to hire for the rest of the quarter. The national poll queried 1,400 CIOs from companies with 100 or more employees. "Businesses are showing increased optimism in their hiring plans," said Katherine Spencer Lee, executive director of Robert Half Technology.

CIOs in New England are "most optimistic" about the future, followed by those in the West South Central region of the U.S., the survey said, and said they would be seeking employees with skills in Microsoft Windows NT, Microsoft Windows 2000, Microsoft Windows XP, as

well as wireless network management and SQL server management.

According to the staffing firm, those experienced in the industry already are most likely to be hired. An MBA does not necessarily increase one's ability to be hired in IT these days, with only 1 percent of CIOs saying the degree was a factor in their decision-making on a new hire. "While the job market is picking up, many companies remain selective," said Spencer Lee.

Overall, 169,000 new jobs were created last month, according to a statement from the chairman of the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress, and July's job gains were revised up to 242,000. "The unemployment rate (4.9 percent) is the lowest since September 11, 2001, and remains below the averages of each of the past three decades," said Sen. Robert F. Bennett, R-Utah, vice chairman of the committee, in a statement.

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