

# Nokia engineers hope for best as job cuts loom

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The logo of mobile phone manufacturer Nokia is seen close to a set of traffic lights. There is intense speculation that up to 6,000 people could be laid off as the Finland firm plans major restructuring.

Sami Sallmen likes to say he saw the birth of Symbian -- as a young developer he joined the world's largest mobile phone company Nokia to help a vibrant group of engineers create what they were told was the best and boldest future for the industry.

Now he will see his project buried as he and thousands of other developers in Finland wonder whether they will still have jobs after [Nokia](#) closes the page on [Symbian](#) for good, opting instead for a tie-up with Microsoft.

"I've walked its whole life span ... I really don't want to see it buried but

the decision has been made, so you just have to get used to it," the 36-year-old engineer said at a development site in Espoo in southern Finland, where hundreds of people are still working on a technology whose days are numbered.

Earlier this month, [chief executive](#) Stephen Elop said Nokia, so far unable to fight off competition from [iPhone](#), [Blackberry](#) and [Google](#), would abandon its own mobile operating system and start using one designed by Microsoft instead.

With thousands of Nokia's 12,000 Finnish employees dedicated to Symbian development, Elop's announcement was a huge blow.

"I haven't really thought about what I'd do if I lost my job. I don't know. I'm hoping I will still have a job in Nokia," Sallmen says.

The worst, he says, is not knowing how many jobs will go, or when, amid speculation that up to 6,000 could be at risk, with hundreds or thousands more lost among subcontractors.

"It's hard to say whether this is exaggeration because Nokia isn't saying anything at all," says the chairman of the Union of Professional Engineers in Finland, Pertti Porokari.

It would be a "catastrophe" for Finland's IT sector if Microsoft does not share its [mobile platform](#) coding jobs with Nokia, he said.

The news did not go down well at Nokia's largest Symbian development site in the western city of Tampere, where thousands of employees watched Elop speaking at a Nokia strategy conference in London via webcast.

"We heard the strategy and then ... we realised that the media knew

much more than we did and the government knew more than we did and that just wasn't right," says Kalle Kiili, a senior Symbian engineer and shop steward for the developer site in Tampere.

And so in a protest which Kiili says was spontaneous but calm, one by one the engineers turned off their computers and stepped out into the -20 degree Celsius (-4 degree Fahrenheit) chill until around 1,000 people had left the building.

For many Nokia workers in Finland, this was the last straw in a string of corporate re-organisations and job cuts over the past few years as the company floundered to find a viable competitive formula.

"We haven't been given the space to work in peace, there's been a constant cycle of upheaval ... and now the organisation is being changed around again and in the end it will still be the same people in charge," Kiili says, adding that if it had been managed better, Symbian would have been far more competitive than it is now.

"We have the world's best people, the best equipment, the best brains and high motivation. So who screwed this up? You have to ask who screwed up the potential that was here?"

Kiili nonetheless remains optimistic that Nokia will not slash as many jobs as some fear, insisting that engineers will be needed to develop Microsoft's platform while competitors like Android will likely snap up out-of-work developers.

"It's all just speculation at this point. It's too early to start saying, oh, we're all going to lose our jobs and no one will hire us."

Some employees are at the latest twist in fortunes as a chance for a new start.

Juha Hara, a 34-year-old test engineer in Espoo, has been working for Nokia for 12 years.

"We all knew Symbian wasn't selling and development was slow. I think we kind of suspected on some level this might happen," Hara says.

Although he thinks it would have been smarter to try out Microsoft Phone first before dumping Symbian, he says he is confident that Finland's IT sector can absorb most of the impact from the job cuts.

Some colleagues, he says, are already talking about setting up their own start-ups, but "personally, I could be interested in seeing how things are done in Silicon Valley for a change."

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