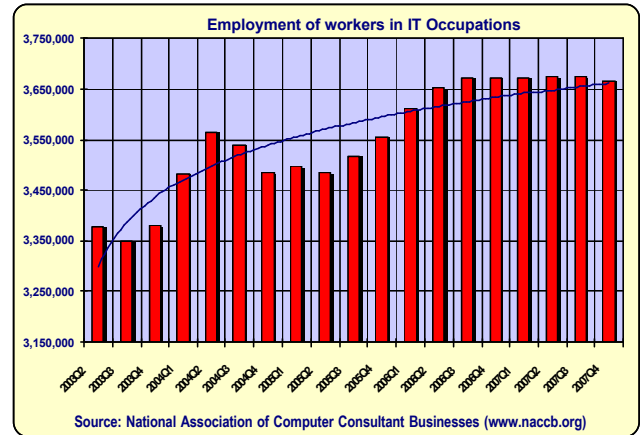


Tech Talent Hunt Continues Skills Companies Want In 2008

Although some experts anticipate that IT spending will wane in 2008, high demand is still expected in several technology categories over the coming year. There is a multitude of reasons driving the growing demand for IT talent. For example, the increasing prevalence of business intelligence software for tracking customers and their spending patterns is driving a need for technical experts in this area. In slow economic times, it becomes more and more important to be able to identify buying patterns.

Below is a list of several IT skill sets businesses will continue to seek out in the year ahead:

- ◆ **Application development/programming.** In addition to the increased reliance on business intelligence software, the continuing migration of applications to the Web (which lowers costs, a ubiquitous need in times of economic tightness) will also increase the demand for Web 2.0 development.
- ◆ **Business expertise.** CIOs are under increasing pressure to align IT groups with their organization's business goals. This demand will increase the need for IT professionals who can bring these visions to fruition.
- ◆ **Data center.** As more applications and associated data become prevalent, the need for staff to manage data centers grows.
- ◆ **Networking (including telecommunications).** As all types of communications—VoIP, wireless and other mobile applications—continue to migrate to computer networks, the demand for IT staff to ensure it all works “as advertised” increases.
- ◆ **Project management and quality assurance.** In high or low economic times, successful applications cannot be developed without first-rate project management and quality assurance.
- ◆ **Security.** As more personal and corporate information moves to the Web and is accessed via wireless technologies, the demand grows for IT professionals with the ability to harden applications and data against outside intruders.
- ◆ **Technical support/help desk.** No matter how perfect an application (commercial or consumer), there will always be the need for technical support. Only a fraction of this kind of work is being shifted to offshore call centers.



Demand for IT Jobs Remains High Salaries Expected to Rise

Although the debate as to whether the U.S. economy has or will slip into a recession continues, there is widespread agreement that the economy is struggling due to slowing housing and credit sectors. So here's the question: How will a slowdown impact IT jobs? Apparently, very little.

The general consensus is that IT spending for hardware and software will slow in 2008, but not stop. If the slowdown is brief, which many expect, it won't be long enough or deep enough to push IT spending down dramatically.

“IT spending will slow, but not go into the negative,” says Andrew Bartels, an analyst with Forrester Research who shared the research company's predictions in the December *eWEEK.com* story titled “Economic Slowdown Should Not Hurt IT Jobs, Salaries.”

And with demand for IT professionals high, as evidenced by the low unemployment rate for most IT occupations, CIOs are not expected to lessen their headcounts for fear those IT professionals may not be available when the pace of activity starts to grow again. Actually, some CIOs may see this lull as a prime opportunity to pick up talented IT professionals.

In a survey for *CIO Insight*, half of the respondents at mid-market firms (revenues of less than \$500 million) said it was “likely or very likely” that entry-level IT salaries will rise by 25% or more in 2008 because of the shortage of graduates with computer science and IS degrees. IT staffing levels are expected to remain the same or increase.

More Skills, More Work

People working in IT and computer-related occupations continued to be in high demand as evidenced by low unemployment rates. The unemployment rate was significantly lower for managerial IT and technology occupations requiring high levels of skills, such as network/computer systems administrators and analysts as well as computer and information systems managers.

Occupation	4Q2007 Unemployment rate
Computer and information systems managers	1.6
Computer hardware engineers	1.5
Computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers	3.1
Computer programmers	1.4
Computer scientists and systems analysts	3.1
Computer software engineers	2.0
Network and computer systems administrators	3.9
Network systems and data communications analysts	1.0
<i>Source: unpublished tabulations of Current Population Survey data furnished by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.</i>	

Some interesting developments emerged for workers in the manufacturing side of the IT/high-tech industry. Although workers in the computer and peripheral equipment sector saw their *hourly* wages decline slightly (down 0.2%) in November 2007 from a year earlier, their weekly wages actually grew (up 11.7%) Why? Because their employers increased their hours by 11.9%. If this is a sign of increased demand for equipment, then there could be an increased demand for related IT services to come.

That increase in hours was actually a reverse of the trend for all private sector employees who—although they saw their *hourly* wages grow by 3.8%—their weekly wages grew at a slower pace of 3.5%. This is the result of a decrease in the total number of hours worked per week.

Ostensibly because of the law of high demand and low supply, wage increases in most IT and high-tech related service sectors were greater than for all workers in private. Workers in computer systems design services were receiving 8.7% higher weekly earnings, while those in custom computer programming services were up 7.9%.

Tips & Tricks Corner

PrtSc Really Does Something

Years ago the PrtSc key (print screen) did something quite useful: it copied the contents of the screen and sent it to the default printer port. Then that function went away. Well, with most modern versions of Windows, the PrtSc key does something useful again.

When you press the PrtSc key (maybe labeled as PrtSc, or Prnt Scrn), it copies what is displayed on the screen to the clipboard. You can then open any appropriate program (word processing, e-mail, graphics, etc.) and "paste" (Ctrl-V). What was on your screen when you hit the PrtSc is now in whatever program you are working in. If you have several windows opened and only want to copy one of them, make it active, then press Alt-PrtSc, and only the active window will be copied.

Be careful when pressing other combinations. The Alt-Shift-PrtSc combination (with the left Shift key only) will change the screen to display in high contrast, which can be useful for visually impaired users. If you do that accidentally, just repeat to return to the original display mode.

Add RAM to Your Career

It's always a good idea to dedicate yourself to increasing your professional value, regardless of the economic environment. In addition to keeping your IT skills up-to-date, there are other non-technical approaches to professional development you can take to help ensure you remain a valuable employee.

Fix the process, even if it's not broken. The more efficiency you can offer the company, the more valuable you become.

Be versatile. You may have been brought into a company because you possess a specific skill set. However, the more you have to offer in skills and knowledge, the more reasons the company has to utilize you.

Supplement your business knowledge. The more you understand about your company's industry and its business model, the more valuable you become.