

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE STATE OF THE INFORMATION-TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY IN PUGET SOUND

The Evans/McDonough Company and the Worker Center, AFL-CIO, on behalf of WashTech, conducted two separate surveys of Seattle-area Information-Technology workers and employers. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the current state of IT worker training from the perspectives of both groups, and probe into some of the issues workers and employers face in the industry. Specific interest was paid to future industry demand, requirements and expectations for training, and the experiences of both groups in the industry.

EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS AGREE THAT DEMAND FOR IT WORKERS WILL INCREASE OVERALL BUT NOT AT THEIR COMPANY

Employers and workers were asked about demand for IT workers in a series of questions.

- Both groups say that demand for “IT workers in general” will increase in the future (67% Employers / 60% Workers).
- But when employers and workers are asked whether there will be an increase in demand at their own company, the two groups see less increase in demand (32% Employers / 39% Workers).

The employer survey was conducted by telephone, and interviewed 100 managers of IT workers. The worker survey was conducted via the Web, and interviewed 280 workers in the Puget Sound. The surveys were conducted from March to May of 2002.

THE TOP IT OCCUPATIONS

Workers and employers were asked to name specific job titles where there will be an increase in demand.

- Both groups mentioned network administrators and Web/software developers as the top job titles for future increase.
- Third on both lists are programmers, and fourth are database administrators.

“ROUGH SEAS” FOR IT EMPLOYMENT

There has been significant flux in worker employment in the last six months in all categories; the currently employed and the unemployed. More than a third (37%) of workers in the survey have been out of work at some time in the last six months.

- More specifically, a third (31%) report that they are currently unemployed. Of this third, almost half (45%) were laid off in the past six months, further evidence of the severity of the recent downturn in the industry.
- The additional 6% comes from workers who are currently employed full- or part-time; nearly one in ten (7%) of those who are employed full-time and almost a quarter (22%) of those who are employed part-time were out of work in the last six months.

THE TOP ISSUES FOR WORKERS

Workers were asked to rank a set of issues on a scale of one to seven, where one means that issue is the least important to them, and seven means it is the most important. The chart below shows the top three issues.

Item	Mean Ranking
The importance of the pay you receive for your work	5.96
The importance of health benefits paid for by your employer	5.84
The importance of having a secure job	5.81

The top three issues approach a “6” on the mean ratings scale, showing that workers put a great deal of importance on these issues.

AGENCY WORKERS WHO DON'T WANT TO BE

In the worker survey, agency workers were identified and were asked questions unique to their working status.

- Despite some reports to the contrary, more than two-thirds (68%) of agency contract workers say they would prefer to have a permanent position if they could get one.
- The desire for full-time employment is echoed in the experience of full- and part-time workers; almost half (43%) of these workers say they worked for an agency at one time. This is another signal about agency work; these workers got a taste of agency work and chose not to stay.

THE TRAINING DILEMMA

Employers and workers are not in agreement as to where the responsibility for training should be. Workers say they don't have access to the training they need.

- Employers strongly agree (77% Agree; 25% Strongly / 48% Somewhat) and workers somewhat agree (51% Agree; 9% Strongly / 42% Somewhat) that the responsibility for training should be on the worker.

- Workers understand that training is important. Almost three-quarters (72%) of workers agree that the certificates, degrees, and training they have give them greater freedom to choose their career path. Yet, half (55%) of workers also agree that they do not have the training or certificates they need to move into a different position. This is especially true for workers making less than \$45,000 per year; three-quarters (78%) of these workers agree that they don't have the training or certifications they need to move to a different position.
- However, a strong majority of workers can't count on their employer to provide this training. Three-quarters of workers (74%) say that employers are not offering adequate training on the latest technologies.
- Finally, when asked if they have the time, money, and resources they need to learn and get training on new technologies, an overwhelming 89% say they only sometimes or definitely do not have the time, money, or resources to get the training they need. Even though two-thirds (66%) of employers say they offer a tuition reimbursement program, only a third (37%) of workers report having used it.

Three helpful job finding tips:

Employers see an increase in the future for employees with certificates.

Managers have the opinion that an IT worker becomes more valuable through multiple projects. An IT manager, not an HR manager, is more likely to look at demonstrable experience when making hiring decisions.

It seems clear that many workers are looking for training to advance their careers, but just don't feel they can get it. This disconnect has huge implications for the future of IT. The results give us a strong sense that workers need more and different opportunities and access to training to meet both the needs of employers and their own careers. While workers as a group will probably find a way to "get by," the danger for the future of IT is if workers aren't able to keep up with new technologies many IT workers and our economy could get left behind.

A COLLEGE DEGREE IS NOT THE ONLY WAY INTO IT; DEMONSTRATED EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE CAN BE A BIG HELP

Workers in the IT industry do not all have to have a college degree to be hired.

- A third of employers (29%) say they require a four-year college degree in hiring, while a quarter (24%) say they require a certification exam or some other type of certification.
- Demonstrated expertise is key to employers, particularly for IT managers. An overwhelming 85% of IT managers say that "as long as an IT worker can demonstrate expertise in an application or job setting, I am willing to hire that worker regardless of their educational or training background."

This is also good news for workers that do not have a degree. Demonstrated expertise can open doors, particularly if that worker can get their resume in front of an IT manager as opposed to an HR manager. To see the full survey results go to www.washtech.org.