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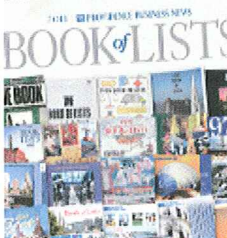
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TECHNOLOGY MONTHLY

IT hot job market in Rhode Island; demand not seen easing up soon

By Kimberley Donoghue
PBN Web Editor
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Hiring in information technology has fared well in recent years, despite the economic downturn, but has perked up even more this year, local tech-industry leaders say.

"I don't think [hiring] has been weak in tech for while, but it definitely seems much more intense right now," said Jack Templin, co-founder of Providence Geeks, RI Nexus and ThoughtCap, his own small consulting firm.

Echoing this thought is James Wright, partner of Bridge Technical Solutions, a West Greenwich-based IT-recruiting firm.

"We've seen a noticeable increase [in IT hiring] and it really started in the spring of this year," he said, noting that the increase is in "pockets" and not across the board.



PBN PHOTO/DAVID LEVESQUE

RIGHT FIT? Bridge Technical Solutions partner James Wright interviews software developer Nick Calapa for a job.

Wright estimates that he has seen placements in his own business grow 50 percent from the spring.

Wright, who spent 13 years in the IT-staffing industry in Silicon Valley before moving to Rhode Island, says he's most cheered by the return of quality-assurance jobs.

"QA is oftentimes, unfortunately, the first thing to go in a bad economy and is often the last thing to come back," he said, adding: "We've

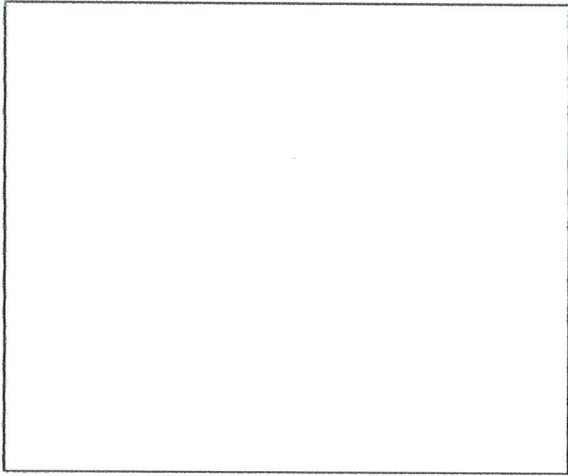
seen a big pick-up in quality-assurance activity; going from an 18-month period where you practically never heard of it to a constant state of having QA jobs open. Let me tell you it is very encouraging, having gone through these kinds of cycles before, to see these kinds of jobs coming back."

According to analysis of local and federal data by the R.I. Economic Development Corporation, the information technology and digital media sector is slated to grow 68 percent by 2012, making it the fastest-growing sector in the United States.

In Rhode Island, the sector accounts for just under 16,000 jobs and more than \$1 billion in wages, the EDC said.

Avid Technical Resources, a Boston-based firm, felt so encouraged by the IT possibilities in Providence they recently announced the opening of a branch at Weybosset Street.

Scott Hardy, business-development manager, has been "tackling" the Providence market for the past five years, working to fill developer needs at companies like Hasbro Inc. and Gilbane Construction Co. Avid already has sales in excess of \$2 million in Rhode Island and expects to grow to between \$3 million to \$5 million within three years.



1 2 3 Next page >



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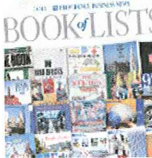
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(Page 2 of 3)

"We actually grew in 2008 and 2009, so that was kind of surprising as a whole," said Hardy. "We've had to hire six or seven recruiters over the past three months and it's probably still not enough to keep up with the amount of business that we have."

Hardy said that during the economic downturn more positions became temporary contracts; now, he has "more permanent positions on the board then we have space to write them," he said.

Reflecting a nationwide trend, the hottest local jobs in IT are in open-source technology such as PHP and Ruby On Rails, extremely popular in smaller startups.

"Some of the smaller, open-source technology is perceived to not have the security and support to go in the big companies, which is why we find the dynamic with the smaller companies," said Wright.

Robert Vitek, senior PHP developer at a local startup, moved to Rhode Island for personal reasons but found his dream job in July 2009 in just one interview. Vitek said his company, which he asked not to be named, has expanded by five developers in the past year and is also looking to hire three or four more next year.

"The [IT candidate] pool is probably thinner than what we'd want but we have found very qualified developers that already live in Providence," he said. "But we've also reached out to Boston and Connecticut."

"You can still make a lot more money in Boston if you are willing to commute, or you like the lifestyle up there," he added, noting: "That's hard to compete with."

Vitek noted that most of the PHP candidates that he has been seeing are currently employed, which "leads me to believe that the market is fairly hot;" he also observed candidates that rejected his startup's offer had "two or three" other offers on the table.

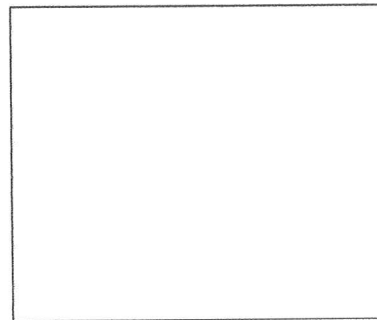
Vitek praised the EDC's role in bringing Curt Schilling's 38 Studios to Providence; "in one quick move, that company is going to bring 50 or 70 programmers and then you start to develop a community down here ... [which makes it] easier to recruit people."

Hardy said some local organizations "do not pay the market rate for the skill. That's something that has hurt people in Rhode Island because they have taken large pay cuts ... it makes them look more junior than they actually



PBN PHOTO/DAVID LEVESQUE

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