

Technology Sector Remains Upbeat About Job Growth



by Wendy Kaufman

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Mark Segal/Getty Images

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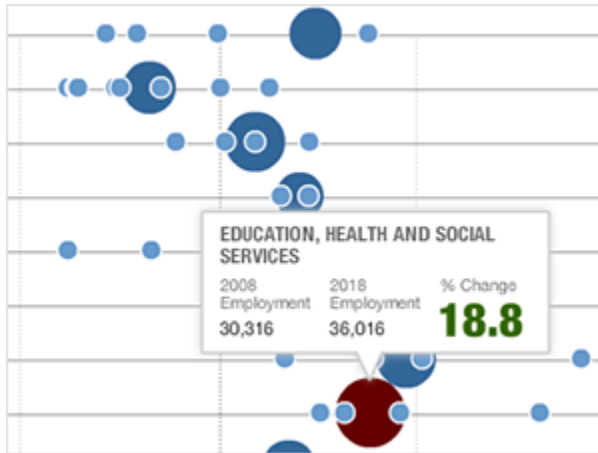
Technology-related jobs have grown rapidly in the past 25 years. But the past two years have been tough on everyone, including technology workers. Not many new tech jobs are likely to emerge in 2010, but analysts expect to see a rebound by the middle of the decade.

Google and Microsoft aren't the only companies with technology jobs. Any company that manages lots of data, including hospitals, banks, insurance firms and retailers, needs technology workers.

"What this nation should be investing in is jobs that create other jobs and that's what technology jobs do," says Ed Lazowska, who holds the Bill and Melinda Gates chair in computer science at the University of Washington.

Driving Innovation

Many technology jobs drive innovation. Some create new industries or different approaches to old ones. Novel drugs will emerge because of the Human Genome Project. Music and movies are in our hands because of mobile technology.



Interactive: [The Decade Ahead In Jobs](#)

Technology is also changing education. Employees at a Seattle-based startup called [SynapticMash](#) are creating software that helps educators see where kids are struggling in the classroom and which teaching strategies make a difference.

Ryan Vanderpol, a senior software engineer, loves his job. He says it's not often that you get to do something useful and have fun doing it.

"It's enjoyable. I work with really cool people all the time and get to do a lot of different things and that's why I'm here," Vanderpol says.

SynapticMash has 30 employees and hopes to expand to 150 over the next few years.

A Million New Jobs

The research and consulting firm IDC estimates that 1 million new technology-related jobs will be created over the next four or five years — an increase of about 10 percent.

Pamela Passman, a corporate vice president at Microsoft, says some of those numbers may seem small, but you have to look at the big picture — and the resetting of the economy.

"Across most sectors of the economy we see the number of jobs shrinking," she says. "We see jobs in the IT sector growing — not as much as in past years — but there still is growth."

Changing Public Policy

But Passman and many others believe that for technology-based industries to really blossom, some public policies need to change. They're in favor of more generous tax credits for firms doing research and development, and they want to see more emphasis on science and math education.

Robert Atkinson, president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, says he'd like to see the U.S. return to a "virtuous cycle" model from the 1990s — where investment was tied to innovation and innovation was tied to more investment. That, he suggests, could mean more jobs.

Atkinson worries that if that doesn't happen, the U.S. won't create enough new technology jobs or companies. The end result could mean that the U.S. economy doesn't get the burst of innovation and growth it needs.