

As fast as technology stocks evaporated, so did many jobs when dot-coms fell by the wayside ...

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As fast as technology stocks evaporated, so did many jobs when dot-coms fell by the wayside months ago.

Now that trend appears to be turning around as the tech sector makes a slow recovery and brings a new wave of demand for specialized workers.

A survey of 130 tech firms across Canada by [The Wynford Group](#) shows companies have some lofty expectations for 2002 despite the uncertainty of today's economy.

[The Information and Advanced Technology \(IAT\) Survey](#) found 40 per cent of tech companies expect growth in 2002, while 87 per cent are increasing salaries and 35 per cent hiring new workers.

"There is a problem finding very specialized or high-level skills," says Wynford. While general technology workers are not in heavy demand, it is the specialized workers in areas such as data warehousing and security that are being sought out.

So-called "defence-based communications" technology is another area where Evans says workers will be sought after in the New Year as companies like Computing Devices Canada work to fulfill recent contracts.

Other top emerging technical skills include Linux system operators and Multimedia workers, as reported in the IAT survey at the Palliser Hotel in Calgary during the recent Economic and Compensation Update 2001.

"It's almost like the rationalizing that took place in the oil and gas sector . . . where they have focused more on their core talents," says Evans.

Ron Caputo of management consulting firm Towers Perrin says the tech sector is also following in the footsteps of the oilpatch when it comes to incentives such as stock options.

"It's ironic because the oilpatch is saying that we went too far (with giving out stock options) and now all the other industries are still trying to catch up to the point of the oil industry in regard to stock options," says Caputo.

Continuing on last year's trends, tech firms are also using other incentives to lure talent such as student loan subsidies, recreation facilities, and retention bonuses.

Adds Evans on the tech sector recovery: "We've seen a lot of mergers, divestitures . . . and streamlining of organizations. I think it's stabilizing and my expectation is that we'll see more growth in 2002."

That's good news for tech workers who, like many employees, have been facing uncertain futures.

More than 80 per cent of companies that took part in the IAT survey stated they would increase or maintain their training budgets.

One area that may burden Calgary's technology recovery is the city's concentration of wireless technology firms. With large amounts of people already laid off by companies such as Nortel, job seekers in that market will continue to have a more difficult search ahead of them.

A recent economic forecast by TD Bank reinforced the reality of a slow recovery, stating it could take until late next year before workers in all fields will be at a premium.

It hasn't been easy for the industry to get to the brink of recovery, though.

Sue Kallis of DMR Consulting, a national IT consulting firm, says the growth "hit hard" when the company's Calgary office went from a staff of 90 to more than 600.

"We're effectively re-organizing to meet (our goals) and become bigger and better," says Kallis. "We started re-grouping and taking a look at what . . . was value-added and what wasn't."

However, demand for workers isn't even close to the days of skyrocketing technology stocks, according to Mark Roberts, a financial executive in Calgary's tech sector.

"You suddenly had a big glut (of workers) on the market" after the economy took a dive, says Roberts.

The biggest obstacle to hiring new workers and growing tech companies will continue to be the ability to raise capital, he says.

While the cash crisis appears to be over for many companies, "I don't think it's all behind us yet," says Roberts.