

Secure Funding Despite Lean Times

It's never easy to get the green light for a new tech project and today's economic environment has made justifying an IT initiative even more challenging. To win support and budget for new projects you need to focus on the issues most important to senior management: increasing /creating revenue and 2) reducing business costs.

Executive committees are extremely aware of both the risks and the opportunities of innovation and smart technology usage. By clearly demonstrating the revenue and/or cost-saving benefits of your initiative, you greatly increase your chances of gaining support. Here are additional tips for building a smart business case:

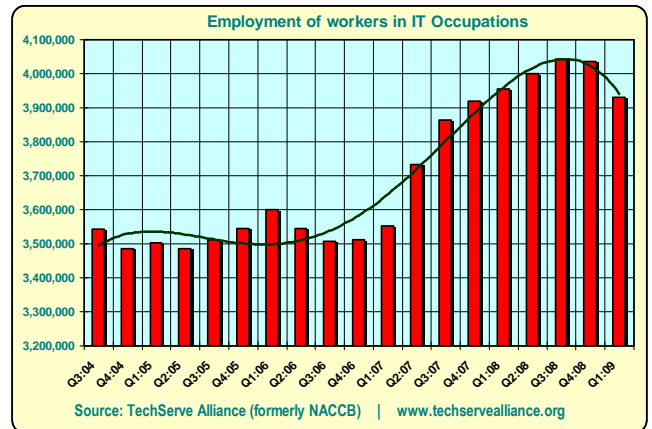
- ⇒ The main resource any new project needs is money and it's one that your peers are trying to obtain as well. Know what other projects—tech or non-tech—decision makers have on the table.
- ⇒ Know your competition (often colleagues in the organization). Knowing what they do well and their history of delivering on promises can go a long way in promoting your project.
- ⇒ Consider pooling projects and combining forces with others competing for limited resources.
- ⇒ Negotiate. Do your competitors or the decision makers want something that you are willing to trade away? Watch for opportunities and make smart deals.

Datacenters, Growth Centers

A survey of 300 IT decision makers found that data-center operations, on average, increase datacenter space by 16%. The research was conducted for Digital Realty Trust by Campos Research & Analysis. Other survey highlights include:

- ⇒ More than 80% of respondents "are planning datacenter expansions in the next 12-24 months."
- ⇒ Datacenter spending is expected to increase on average by almost 7% in 2009.
- ⇒ 64% of respondents are planning to expand in two or more locations in 2009.

The survey also found that datacenters are not very green. A staggering 80% have poor PUE (power usage effectiveness) ratings. Decision makers may be receptive to datacenter improvement projects to lower their PUE scores, which can be seen as a further commitment to energy efficiency.



Looking Ahead: Developer Skills

With many companies challenged to maintain current staffing levels, it may seem premature to identify what developer skills will be needed most in the next five years. However, this partial list of essential skills can be helpful for IT professionals looking to remain relevant and employed through the years and economic cycles ahead.

- **One of the big three languages:** Barring a radical shift in the world of development, most, if not all, developers will need to know at least one of the 'big three' systems: .NET, .PHP, and/or Java. But, it may not be enough to know just the core languages. Developers should learn related libraries and frameworks as projects often involve functionality from unrelated sources.
- **People/soft skills:** The time when an IT professional could be successful while locked away in a closet writing code is no more. With IT reaching into every function of an organization, it's important to be able to successfully interact with a wide variety of people in and outside the organization. IT professionals with strong communication, teamwork and analytical skills will be in high demand.
- **Web development and services:** Developers should be able to work with the underlying technology used to develop Web services. Why? The more a developer can work with CSS, JavaScript, and even HTML, the more valuable the developer will be to employers.
- **RIA (Rich Internet Applications):** Flash, along with competitors like Silverlight, AJAX, and JavaFX, is being used for more than games and animations. An accomplished developer will need solid experience with at least one RIA.
- **Mobile:** Applications developed and designed for mobile devices are becoming increasingly important and a high-value opportunity area for ambitious developers.

IT Unemployment Remains Low

IT workers continued to experience lower unemployment rates than the general labor force in Q1 of 2009. While the overall unemployment rate was 8.4%, it was less for most IT occupations. And the unemployment rate was significantly lower—about half the national rate—for several skilled IT and computer jobs, such as computer and information systems managers, computer software engineers, and database administrators.

Occupation	1Q:09 Unemployment Rate
Computer and information systems managers	4.0%
Computer support specialists	5.3%
Computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers	5.1%
Computer programmers	7.7%
Computer scientists and systems analysts	5.7%
Computer software engineers	4.2%
Database administrators	6.1%
Network and computer systems administrators	4.3%
Network systems and data communications analysts	5.4%

Source: Unpublished Tabulations of Current Population Survey Data Furnished by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hourly wage raises in most IT/high-tech sectors continued to be higher than the national average, which was up 3.3% in the past year. National weekly paychecks rose only 1.4% on average because hours have been reduced. However, hourly wage increases for IT professionals were often lower than the national average probably because they start from a higher wage base.

For example, workers in custom computer programming services experienced an essentially flat change in their hourly wages at a meager 0.3% increase in the past year. Offshore, low-cost programming centers may be suppressing domestic pricing of these services and related wages.

However, at least two IT/high-tech sectors experienced hourly and weekly hourly wage increases at rates higher than the national average. Workers at Internet publishing and broadcasting and Web search portals saw their hourly wages increase 4.3% and their weekly paychecks grow by 6.6% because they were putting in more hours. And although IT professionals in computer systems design services benefited from a 3.7% hourly raise, their weekly paychecks only grew by 1.1% because their hours were cut by 2.5%, which is one hour less from a 40-hour workweek.

Ideas for Earning Extra Cash

Extra money is always a welcome addition to the family finances. For many, today's tough times have meant the loss of a significant portion of household income. IT professionals are lucky in that they are often able to supplement their income through various means. While it may require stepping outside of your current or normal area of professional IT activity, here are some opportunities that can boost income while also expanding your IT and business skills:

- \$ Help local business owners (perhaps at businesses you frequent) optimize and/ or set up their software and/or platforms.
- \$ Provide basic application training to community-based organizations. Even if it's volunteer work, organizations often have board members who may run their own businesses and could use similar training.
- \$ Local IT staffing and consultancies are often looking for skilled IT professionals for project work (and full-time gigs as well). To locate one, try the member directory at TechServe Alliance (www.techservealliance.org), which is a collaboration of IT services firms, clients, consultants and suppliers dedicated to advancing excellence and ethics within the IT services industry.

Tips & Tricks

Managing Printing Can Yield Pages of Benefits

With corporate costs coming under increased scrutiny, every piece of paper not printed or more efficiently printed is money saved. And what can be greener than saving paper and energy costs? Here are ways to print green:

- ☞ Convert documents and reports (especially large ones) to PDF before printing. Formatting errors will often show up before committing the document to hardcopy.
- ☞ Consider outsourcing large jobs to a local print shop or an office supply store. The per-page-cost, especially for high-resolution color copies, may be less than your in-house cost.
- ☞ If using inkjet printers, consider adding a humidifier. Low humidity is often the cause of clogged nozzles.
- ☞ Check printer and paper settings for proper location and quality.
- ☞ Remember that "draft" document quality is likely sufficient for in-house review, distribution and communications.