

## President's Message...



Allison P. Smith, CPC  
President

“Through the darkness comes the dawn.” This describes how I am feeling about the current employment market in Central New York. The job landscape is beginning to gracefully grow, especially in the area of direct employment. With more opportunities available, positions are closing faster and top candidates are not staying on the market long.

Both IT and Engineering candidates are in greater demand than in past years and this gives all technology professionals hope. We are looking forward to upcoming quarters with renewed confidence and excitement.

In this issue, our book review, *Impending Crisis* supports the growth trend we are experiencing.

As always, your comments and feedback are encouraged. Here's to enjoying the bright sunshine, and an even brighter employment picture.

## Breakthrough: Employment Picking Up

As we completed the election campaigns in the United States, the economy showed signs of improvement. Those indicators, combined with relief that the campaigns would be over and corporate expansion could resume, stimulated job growth. Our forecasts are becoming reality.

An early sign was the drop in unemployment benefit claims in late October. Initial claims were down 19,000 during the week before elections, a larger decline than was anticipated by economists. According to the US Department of Labor, the number of former workers receiving state unemployment checks fell by 20,000 to 2.8 million during the previous week.

People are returning to work. Companies are hiring. The economic cycle is gaining strength in the United States, and will flow over to other countries soon. Non-farm payroll employment increased by 337,000 in October, while the unemployment rate was about unchanged at 5.5 percent. We expect to see this trend continue: more people employed, but not much impact on the unemployment rate. More people are coming back into

the workforce, so the statistics will show them as unemployed until they actually find a job.

Employers are gaining courage and optimism to make decisions necessary to grow their businesses. We will see significantly more activity in employment. At the same time, many businesses will grow quietly, recruiting and hiring highly talented people without their competitors discovering their strategy. Their only way to measure this stealth growth is anecdotally. We hear many stories from employers confirming this silent strategy of capacity building.

There is a problem, however. Workers needed to fill the available jobs may not have what it takes to deliver expected performance. Fewer than half of the over-age-26 group seekers report excellent skills at solving large complex problems and handling stress. Even fewer believe they understand how a business operates and makes money, according to a survey of job fair participants in Pennsylvania.

Less than 39 percent of respondents rated computer skills as above average or

higher, and approximately 44 percent of respondents gave a weak rating for ability to use the Internet and e-mail.

Employers will discover that truly qualified applicants are in short supply.



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## Impending Crisis

Elaine R. Stewart



Elaine R. Stewart, CPC  
CEO

*Never trust a  
computer you  
can't throw out  
a window.*

*Steve Wozniak*

According to Impending Crisis, by co-authors Roger Herman, Tom Olivo and Joyce Gioia, the US will face a labor shortage of 10,033,000 people by 2010. This is based on projections from the US Department of Labor.

Why do they think this will happen? First, the demand will be created because our peak rate of spending is between ages 45-54, and Boomers will hit this age between 2004 and 2009. Secondly, there will be a shortage of people available to work due to retirement and a shortage of workers in the 30-45 age range as fewer were born in those years. Many of the available people are not qualified to perform the duties of the jobs available today, let alone jobs in the future.

If we look back in comparison, in 1994 a trend started where there were more jobs than people. By 2000 (remember those hiring days?) there were 4,731,000 more jobs than people available and unemployment of 4%. The future situation may be helped some by productivity gains over the next ten years, but not enough.

How are workers responding? They are changing jobs every two to four years. They are not loyal to employers, but to supervisors, co-workers, customers and to the work they are doing. They feel that work should be meaningful, fun, and intrinsically rewarding. Employers must re-

spond to employee needs and desires by aligning worker preferences with employer needs.

High employee turnover can affect the bottom line by causing bond ratings to drop and stock prices to tumble. Employers faced with a recruiting war see a stable work force as a strategic advantage in the marketplace. It is cheaper to keep trained employees than to find replacements. Also, the Generation Xers at the newer end of the labor force don't value work for its own sake as older workers do. Permissiveness learned growing up carries over into the work environment, as does self-sufficiency and personal accountability. The concept of retirement will undergo significant change also, challenging employers to build new flexibilities into their relationships with older workers.

The relationship between employee and immediate supervisor is the single most influential factor in determining how long an employee will stay. Have your employees been trained in skills and techniques of working with Gen X workers? They expect the relationship to be more collaborative. They want to agree on the results, have the tools to get the job done and then "get out of my face". They believe that employers can't be trusted as they saw their parents' trust be misplaced when cutbacks occurred.

There has been a values shift: Gen Xers are happy to work hard, but want meaningful work. They want to do good things, be measured effectively and rewarded appropriately. They want more time for their families and themselves and their community, to volunteer, to make a difference.

Immigration is not the answer to the coming shortage either:

- It has become more restrictive since 9/11
- Many immigrants do not bring their families but send the money home; they have strong ties to return home
- The economic health of their home countries may improve and jobs will be available there.

These authors predict that the "corporation of the future will be relatively small, comprised of a highly focused core team. It will be mission-driven, agile, and nimble. It will accomplish its work with an ever-changing body of contingent workers (professional and functional), insourced and outsourced suppliers, vertical and horizontal partnerships and strategic alliances." The authors ask if you have employed the use of "talent scouts" to lookout for good employees who leave your competitors? Recommendation: Take some time to answer these questions now.

## Voice is Here — And Getting Louder

One of the fastest growing technologies today is voice technology. We see this everyday when using the phone. Company answering systems no longer insist we push buttons to communicate, they offer us the option to "say or press 1" to input the desired response. They even ask "to whom would you like to speak," instead of directing us to press the first three letters of the person's last name. This technology is quickly moving to computers, moving us to the place where we can simply ask for "last week's sales figures" rather than keying in the query.

Voice technology starts with voice recognition, which is a program that recognizes spoken words. These systems translate analog voice signals to digital and maintain a digital database, or vocabulary, of words or syllables, and a speedy means of comparing the newly translated audio to the database. Therefore, users can verbally create a Word document, or dictate an email, state the address of the recipient, and have it sent – all through speech. This is just the beginning. We're moving toward voice query programs and interfaces – applications where business users can verbalize complex queries such as "show me a list of potential mortgage applicants." The answer to the query can be sent to the terminal screen, to paper, or even verbalized itself! This, of course, gives us new technologies, new buzz words, and new products.

One of the most dominant technologies is using XML to create voice interfaces with Web sites. The technology is VoiceXML (or vXML, or VoxML – slight variations).

VoiceXML is a development tool, specifically an XML vocabulary (eXtensible Markup Language) that is the standard scripting language for accessing Web pages over the phone. Developers use VoiceXML to create a script of the conversation a user can have with an application program. The user calling in is connected to a program called a voice browser which translates the analog voice input to digital data. The voice browser in turn passes requests to the Web server, which executes the script. It allows developers to add speech interfaces to their Web applications by creating audio dialogs that feature synthesized speech, digitized audio, and recognition of spoken input. Now, vXML is shorthand for VoiceXML, so they're synonyms. VoxML is slightly different. It's technology developed by Motorola that really has become VoiceXML. – which many vendors participate in through the VoiceXML Forum. While it's often also used as a synonym, it's really not – it's a fore-runner.

The next technology that's jumped into the hot zone is VoIP, (Voice over IP), the standard for using voice over Internet, or IP (Internet Protocol) connections. Developers use VoiceXML to create the applications, and use VoIP to define the development of services to transmit the information. With VoIP, voice information is sent in digital form in discrete packets rather than in the traditional circuit-committed protocols of standard phone systems.

VoIP is the technology behind Internet phones and there is a strong push to put all

phone communication on IP (Internet) networks. In fact, predictions state that 75% of all phone usage will be either straight VoIP or a hybrid using



VoIP by 2007 (Taylor Reach Group). This will have a great effect on, e.g. call centers, who can combine communication channels on phone input.

It's not just phone service over the Internet. A new report by independent market analyst, Datamonitor, is predicting a seven-fold rise in global spending on voice-enabled self-service interfaces that allow users to conduct commercial transactions. The most popular transactional voice solutions currently in use include account management, order processing, and reservations. We're all going to be hearing more and more about voice technologies and these buzz words. Keep your ears open!

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*Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.*

*Thomas A. Edison*

## News @ ISSI

### *In our community*

ISSI prides itself on giving back to our community through charitable contributions. A percentage of our quarterly net profits are donated to many local organizations, including:

The Syracuse Symphony Orchestra  
 On Point for College  
 INROADS  
 Rescue Mission  
 Hospice & Palliative Care Associates  
 Leadership Greater Syracuse  
 Cicero Little League  
 The Women's Fund  
 Vera House



### *Our Proud Graduate*

Sally Chapman, ISSI Client/Contract Relations Manager, is a recent member of the 2004 graduating class of Leadership Greater Syracuse. Sally, along with 45 other representatives from business, industry, education, non-profit and government sectors, participated in LGS classes aimed at training individuals to become better leaders in the Syracuse community. Congratulations to Sally on this well-deserved accomplishment!

### *New Faces*

ISSI would like to welcome Rae Michelle Bocchino (formerly Dwyer), who joined ISSI in December as our Administrative Assistant. Rae Michelle comes to us from Syracuse University where she was Assistant to the Dean in the College of Engineering and Computer Science. Glad to have you on board Rae Michelle!

### *ISSI Celebrates an Anniversary*

Happy 15th Anniversary to ISSI Technology Professionals! Look for our next newsletter with articles celebrating the past 15 years of success, and looking forward to our strong future.

### *Upcoming Conferences & Events*

Look for ISSI at the following upcoming events:

Event Sponsor of Tech 2005  
 Wednesday, May 4  
 Holiday Inn, Liverpool

Event Sponsor of Greater Syracuse Area Women in Business 2005  
 Thursday, June 9  
 Holiday Inn, Liverpool

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