Technology

Column: Big tech layoffs may open the door for Tampa IT talent recruitment

Tampa Bay area employers are not only facing challenges in terms of the number of local candidates available to them but also finding individuals with the appropriate skill set.

HEATH KORVOLA

By Paul Toomey – Contributing writer
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Tampa has become the top technology market in Florida and one of the top tech cities in the United States.

In addition to great weather and no state income tax, many qualified information technology professionals are drawn to the greater Tampa Bay area for a better quality of life compared to many larger tech-heavy markets such as Silicon Valley, Boston, New York and Austin, Texas.

For companies based in the Tampa region, particularly those working in the unique space of providing services to the community, being local to this area has enabled many to retain and attract IT talent. However, our company was not immune to the effects of the work-from-home phenomenon brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic — which also increased the competition for skilled software developers.

After many companies overhired during the pandemic, Big Tech has laid off tens of thousands of employees over the past year. And, while local tech companies (and those businesses with software and web application development and cybersecurity departments)

were previously losing engineers and developers to Big Tech, these significant layoffs have also resulted in additional talent recruitment opportunities.

Developers and programmers are among the specialties that are most needed at the moment. The current demand is so high that even with industry layoffs, the competition is still tight.

When we look at the Tampa IT jobs market year-over-year trends in early 2022 as compared to now, the candidates are more flexible. While previous salaries were high and non-negotiable, now IT candidates are more open to reasonable offers, remote work and a better quality of life. In our case, they also like working for an established, decades-old technology company, giving them stability versus working for a startup.

The Tampa Bay labor market, however, remains tight. Currently, Employ Florida indicates that in February, there were 129,274 job openings posted in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metropolitan area and 42,855 unemployed people looking for a job in the same month. That is three local jobs for every unemployed Tampa Bay area resident.

The labor market, however, is not quite as strong in some of the state's more rural areas. Four counties (Lafayette, Dixie, Holmes and Gilchrist) have more people looking for jobs than they have openings.

Tampa Bay area employers are not only facing challenges in terms of the number of local candidates available to them but also finding individuals with the appropriate skill set. In March, the most significant demand for technology qualifications in the Tampa Bay area was information and cybersecurity certifications. There were 2,111 jobs requesting these credentials. To put this in perspective, 37,651 job postings asked for nursing qualifications ranging from a CPR credential to a license as a registered nurse; 3,220 jobs requested a transportation certification such as a commercial driver's license.

It may be a while before Tampa-based tech companies can truly feel the results of the Big Tech layoffs. However, this does give local tech companies hope that the talent pool will deepen sooner rather than later. The flow of candidates is getting better, but we must be diligent and act fast when we find qualified individuals, as they are still in high demand.

Paul Toomey is the president of Geographic Solutions, which has been headquartered in the Tampa Bay area for more than 31 years.