

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Not Without You

By Douglas E. Welch

The high-tech career market is a rough place to be right now. There is no denying it. Jobs are scarce, and those that are available are mainly entry level or low-paying contract jobs. Tech workers who were making six-figure salaries are now scraping by, trying to pull together enough clients and projects to stay afloat.

It may seem that the bottom has dropped out of the high-tech market, but there is hope. Regardless of how much money is spent on flashy technology, it is worthless without you. Technology does nothing but sit in a corner until you and your skills make it do something amazing. Don't let the hard times get you down.

Cycles

Live long enough and you will begin to understand that everything in life is cyclical. The economy goes up and down, fashions rise and fall, and everything old is new again. It can be hard to remember this when you are at the down point of any cycle, but it is important to try.

Technology has insinuated itself into every part of our lives, and the simple truth is, it is not going to disappear. People are not going to return to using pencils, typewriters, or paper spreadsheets anytime soon. There will always be a need to have high-tech workers, of all experience levels and talent, in the future. Just because the economy has slowed down, it doesn't mean your career is going to disappear. You may have to work harder to find work today, as does everyone, but there is little fear of computer technology going the way of the buggy whip.

That said, it might be a while before the current cycle comes to an end. This means that you will need to not only sell your current talents, but also continue to develop new talents. You cannot rest on your laurels—not that you ever could. If you find that your graphic design or Web design business is slowing down, you may need to try your hand at computer training or personal computer coaching. If you haven't used Macromedia Flash in the past, maybe now is the time to consider learning about it.

I have always believed that the more you know, the

better off you will be. Knowing a little about a lot can allow you to move from project to project easily, regardless of your specializations. In fact, this can be the way to become an expert in something that you knew only casually in the past.

Don't Be Bullied

On the personal side of your career equation, I find it important to remind you once again not to be bullied by those who might take advantage of you. In my travels, I have come across discussions and articles where it seems that those in power take a certain delight in offering entry-level jobs to experienced high-tech careerists. They do this almost as a test to see how desperate you are. They seem to take joy in seeing high-flying tech people fight over the most meaningless of projects.

Ignore these employers. They are just out to prove their superiority. They offer no help in building your high-tech career. In fact, they could even damage it.

Don't allow yourself to be baited by these people. Unless your finances are in dire straits and you are about to be thrown out of your home, consider these types of jobs carefully. You are liable to find that the work environment at these jobs is even worse than you can imagine. Worse still, you may find yourself trapped in these lower-paying positions as your clients realize you are working for reduced rates. If you are truly desperate, you might want to consider working a lower-level job in a non-technology environment to make money without damaging your high-tech reputation.

Trust in yourself. Trust in the cycle. Trust in the future. You have the skills necessary to provide for yourself and your family. You have the ability to learn, grow and succeed. While others might be gloating over the fall of some high-flying, high-tech workers, you should be confident in your abilities. Do everything in your power to increase your marketability, but don't despair. You *can* have a successful high-tech career. □

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