

Changing Economies and Changing Jobs

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A recent study suggests that the average IT manager has been at his or her present job for only four years and that the average staff member has been working at the same job for only three years. Of course, you may not be surprised at the turnover rate that is apparently inherent in the technology industry—after all, you may be the victor (and sometimes, victim) of this job-hopping trend.

Even though the heyday of the dotcoms is a moment recorded in the history books, IT managers and staff members still remain a hot commodity, commanding high salaries and enjoying low unemployment in their field. With companies seemingly rising and falling daily, you are wise to be aware of the job-finding resources at your disposal. You are also wise if you know how your skills stack up in today's increasingly competitive market. The Internet has a slew of resources that you can use to find job openings, get job advice, and find out how much demand is placed on your skills in the current marketplace.

WEB SITES

If you are looking for a job that specifically requires experience with Novell products, a great resource is **dice.com** (www.dice.com). Novell Users International (NUI) has teamed up with dice.com to produce a web site that specializes in Novell-centric jobs. You can search for Novell-related jobs by geographic location, experience, or compensation. In addition, dice.com lists a large number of general IT jobs.

Another job board, **monster.com** (www.monster.com), has a subsection called *Monster technology*. This section offers many benefits to those seeking a job in the IT industry. For example, you can search for technology-related jobs by geographic region or experience required. Monster.com lists hundreds of jobs available in the IT industry. Monster.com also features information, such as the latest job and market trends, that you can use to research your job options.

If you are searching for a job that is not technology related, you can also turn to Monster.com. At Monster.com, you can search more than 1,000,000 jobs. No matter whether you are looking for a technology-related job or not, you can take advantage of Monster.com's section that allows you to post your resume online so that potential employers can view your skills and experience and contact you.

One of my favorite job resource web sites is **Salary.com** (www.salary.com). Salary.com hosts the Salary Wizard, which allows you to search through various job titles to find how much people with those titles average in salary. You can base your search in the United States or in specific regions and cities. For example, according to Salary.com, the median

salary of a software programmer in Seattle is U.S. \$89,021. However, someone with the same job title in San Francisco earns a median salary of U.S. \$96,015. (Of course, before you start sending your resume to every software company in San Francisco, be sure to check out the cost of living—which is also higher.)

At Salary.com, you also get great advice. For example, you can find out how to get that raise you deserve from the Salary Talk section, or you can use the Salary advice link to make sure that your total compensation is competitive. My favorite section at Salary.com features information about employment's lighter side. Here, you can read up on dream jobs or ask Annette (a "fabulously" entertaining woman) her take on the unwritten rules in the workplace.

A popular web site for finding jobs and researching particular companies, **Vault** (www.vault.com) offers many resources that can help you in your job hunt. Vault has a specific section designed for the IT industry. Vault also features myriad discussion boards where you can peruse the different posts and glean useful information about the present market and career opportunities. You can also post your own questions and read the thoughtful—and sometimes not so thoughtful—answers others post on your thread.

After you find job listings for which you want to apply, the real work begins. You need a powerful resume, excellent interviewing skills, and job skills that allow you to excel and earn promotions at your new job. One place you can find helpful advice and commentary about getting that job and building your career is **MSN Careers** (<http://careers.msn.com>).

Of course, you can search the job listings at MSN Careers, but the real gems of this site are the "Getting Hired" and "Working Life" sections. In the "Getting Hired" section, you can learn what employers look for on cover letters and resumes. You can also read advice about how to negotiate a better starting salary or what to do and what not to do in your interviews. Even if you feel you know all there is to know about job hunting, MSN Careers provides helpful, time-tested principles that are simple to do and easy to forget. (For the *Novell Connection* staff's advice about getting hired, see "Things Not To Say in an Interview" on p. 48.)

After you've gotten that dream job, MSN Careers offers some good advice about how to make that job even better. In the "Working Life" section, you can read how to successfully change jobs or learn how to get noticed and move up the corporate ladder. In this section, you can also learn about balancing your career and family responsibilities and how to survive office politics. All of these candid articles offer great advice.

Things Not To Say in an Interview

As the economy slows, the job market tightens. As a result, you may find that employers can be a little more particular when they choose which applicants they will hire. Applicants who secure a good job based on their resume and experience alone are becoming increasingly rare. Today, you must perform well in interviews and be able to demonstrate that you will fit well into a particular corporate culture.

The first thing you should do to ensure that you perform well in an interview is research the particular company and determine what kind of employee the company usually hires. However, after you have this information in hand, you must prepare to make a good first impression on your prospective boss.

The web sites mentioned in this article are full of good advice on what to do or say in an interview. I was surprised, however, to find that few articles mentioned specific things to avoid saying or doing. Wanting to fill in that gap, I once again gathered the staff at *Novell Connection*. In our opinions, these ten statements will more than likely take you out of the running for an IT position. Here they are in no particular order:

1. My development experience has had a great impact. For example, have you heard of the "Code Red" worm?
2. I can only work Monday 1 to 5 p.m., Wednesday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., and I'll be "available" on Thursdays if necessary.
3. I have a substantial amount of networking experience. In fact, I've been selling Amway for several years. By the way, would you like to earn some extra money during your spare time?
4. Can I bring my guns to work?
5. I have a long history of programming experience—I've been programming my VCR for years.
6. Actually, getting rid of SPAM isn't too difficult. A good laxative often works for me.
7. As far as my salary requirements go, my six-week IT course instructor promised I should get at least (U.S.) \$200,000 a year.
8. I hope you're not as big of a jerk as my last boss.
9. I prefer not to work with inept people; I hate those stupid users.
10. What kind of perks come with this job? I've gotta have a company car—a Beamer would be nice. I might be able to make do with a Lexus. . . ●

Of course, what would be nice is a single guide to the thousands of job-hunting web sites. **Job-Hunt.Org** (www.job-hunt.org) is exactly that, a guide to online career and job hunting resources. This guide is compiled by a staff that reviews each of the job-hunting web sites out there. At Job-Hunt.Org, you will find features such as a list of links for resume databases where you can leave your resume. You will also find links for job openings at many companies, in specific fields, and in many locations. In addition, Job-Hunt.Org can point you to web sites that offer useful information and support in the job-search process.

Job-Hunt.Org provides links to more than 1,700 different web sites related to job hunting. In fact, you can find nearly everything you would possibly need to secure a good job at Job-Hunt.Org.

GAMES OF THE MONTH

Following in the footsteps of last month's game-of-the-month selections, September's selections are free. In case you really are in between jobs and actively searching for a new job, these free games at MSN's zone.com (www.zone.com) can help you pass the extra time you have at a cost you can afford.

Two of the most popular games at zone.com are *Atomica* and *Bejeweled*. In *Atomica*, you move the colored atoms to form 2x2 molecules that make them

disappear and earn you points. You can also form two molecules in rows to get bonus points. As you progress to higher levels, more colored atoms appear for you to move. I liked *Atomica*. The strategy is simple to understand—but not necessarily easy to master.

Bejeweled is the most popular game at zone.com. At any given time, more than 100,000 people are playing the game. In *Bejeweled*, you try to make as many three or more semi-colored gem matches as you can by swapping two gems either vertically or horizontally. The more matches you make, the higher your score. To move the gems, you click on any two adjacent gems to swap their positions. When you create a row or column of three or more of the same gem, the gems disappear, and the board is filled with more gems.

I liked *Bejeweled* but not as much as I liked *Atomica*. The strategy is not as intuitive as *Atomica*. You just make as many matches as you can, and when you don't see any matches, the computer gives you hints by flashing swappable gems. You keep going until no more matches are possible.

Although *Atomica* and *Bejeweled* are fun games, my favorite game at zone.com is its Internet version of the traditional game of chess. You can play in multiple rooms and find many different levels of competition. You can also play timed games to speed things up, or you can

play without time and be sure of each move. (The only games I ever won were not timed.)

In my first game, I won easily—of course, I later discovered that I was competing against a ten-year-old. Unfortunately, after that, I seemed always to be matched against players who are black belts in the martial art of chess torture. After every thrashing, however, my opponents always gave me encouragement and undeserved praise. For the record, in my chess matches at zone.com, I currently have three wins and five losses.

I also enjoyed playing checkers at zone.com, and for the record, I am undefeated. The format is exactly the same as chess. You choose a table, and another player can choose to join you. Like chess, you can chat while you play against your opponent. (And by the way, checkers seems to attract a younger demographic than chess, and that probably explains my winning streak.)

Checkers, chess, *Atomica*, and *Bejeweled* are not the only games at zone.com. Zone.com features everything from casino games to retail games. You'll find that zone.com really has something for everyone.

We want to hear from you. You can send your reviews of new and interesting web sites, games, or products to editors@ncmag.com. ●