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## IT Employment Staging a Comeback In San Diego, Silicon Valley

Bruce V. Bigelow 3/30/11

Statewide employment data released last week suggest that California's jobless rate is finally subsiding, as every major industry in the private sector added workers last month for the first time since the Great Recession began in 2007. Employers added a total of 96,500 jobs in February, reducing the statewide jobless rate to 12.2 percent from 12.4 percent in January, according to the [California Employment Development Department](#).

Even so, California's 12.2 percent jobless rate is second-highest in the nation, after Michigan's, and employment officials say it will likely take another two years to get the jobless rate below 10 percent again. (The U.S. unemployment rate in February was 8.9 percent.) Nevertheless, analysts cited by [The San Diego Union-Tribune](#) say the latest state report shows that California's technology sector, along with other leading economic sectors, have begun to expand again.

Randy Franks, who is on the front lines in San Diego as the local managing director for the human resources firm Modis, says he's been seeing a release in the pent-up demand for information technology workers in recent months. Companies that had put software development projects on hold are now hiring to get those projects started.

About 80 percent of the contract hiring that Modis arranges in San Diego is focused on software development, Franks says. "The core of our business is in health care, medical devices, financial services, and education."

In San Diego County, where the jobless rate declined to 10.1 percent in February from 10.4 percent in January, Franks says most of the programming is done for software embedded in medical devices, wireless devices, and other electronic equipment. As I [reported earlier this week](#), the Connect Innovation Report for the fourth quarter of 2010 estimates that overall tech employment decreased about 2 percent in San Diego County over the past three years. In Santa Clara County, at the heart of Silicon Valley, Franks says IT employment has rebounded strongly from the downturn. Nevertheless, the jobless rate in Santa Clara County remains high, at 10.3 percent in February. It was 9.1 percent in San Francisco and 10.7 percent across the Bay in Alameda County.

Most of the positions that Modis fills in San Diego are for mid- to senior-level programmers and quality assurance testing and validation engineers. Franks says he's also seeing a slight uptick in IT infrastructure among PC technicians and network administrators, who took the hardest fall when job cuts began in late 2008. Modis, a subsidiary of the Swiss human resources company Adecco SA, doesn't do much executive-level recruiting in San Diego.

"We're seeing individuals that we send out for interviews, or present positions to, are now entertaining multiple offers," Franks says. That would be a nice problem to have.

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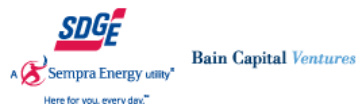
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