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Finance Suite Lending Center

Posted date: 7/21/2008

Consulting the Numbers

Management Consulting Companies' Hiring Was Flat; Few Big Jumps Carried the Group

By Sarah Tolkoﬀ
ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF

Just a few of Orange County's management consulting companies still were hiring this year while most stayed flat, according to this week's Business Journal list.

The number of local workers at management consultants grew a bit less than 5% in the past 12 months to 1,354 workers, up from 1,295 a year earlier.

Among the list's 20 companies, six said they were hiring, three cut jobs and seven were flat. Four were Business Journal estimates.

The Costa Mesa office of No. 1 BearingPoint Inc., based in McLean, Va., stayed at the top of the list with an estimated 285 workers.

But this year BearingPoint is tied at No. 1 with Irvine-based Resources Connection Inc., an accounting services company also with 285 local workers.

Longtime Resources Connection leader Donald Murray recently stepped down as chief executive to become executive chairman and to make way for the second boss the company's seen in nine years. Director Thomas Christophoul took over as chief executive last month as part of the company's succession plan.

The company that did the most hiring was No. 3 Hitachi Consulting Corp., a technology consulting arm of Japan's Hitachi Ltd. It moved up one spot on the list.

Hitachi more than doubled its OC workers to 130, up from 60 a year earlier.

It recently moved its workers from a small office in Orange to a larger one in Irvine, according to Liem Vu, managing vice president for the Pacific Southwest region.

The company has been growing on long-term contracts for technology work, Vu said.

"Our technology practice has seen an uptick," he said. "We are seeing companies invest in their infrastructure as the market goes on a downward trend."

Hitachi's clients are looking to grab market share from competitors during slower times, Vu said.

"We have a couple of big wins where we are developing new applications to help our clients globalize and help them be more efficient," he said.

A recent example: Hitachi helped a client revamp its Web site to make it easier for their customers to make purchases online.

"We upgraded their customer portal to enable a broader reach across the globe, to more effectively sell and market to their customers and to drive revenue through a lower cost channel," Vu said.

Change in Focus

Jefferson Wells International Inc., an accounting services company that's part of Milwaukee-based Manpower Inc., cut some 20 jobs at its Irvine office and fell to No. 7, down from the No. 3 spot a year earlier.

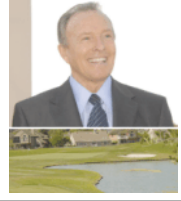
The company saw a big drop off in demand from clients needing help with Sarbanes-Oxley compliance. Jefferson Wells provides companies with internal auditors that oversee finances. (Jefferson Wells and Resources Connection aren't officially accounting firms like those on our list on page 34.)



"In a down market we work with companies in pain and those that want to capitalize on the opportunities left by others." —John Moores, SIXO Advisors

WEEKLY EDITION

Aug. 4-10, 2008



Billionaire's Club
A summary of OC's Billionaire Club

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This past week's news from www.ocbj.com and other sources

Western Digital Consolidates Disk Drive Operations
Western Digital bought the controller chip division of Switzerland's STMicroelectronics, in the Technology column

Table of Contents:
this week's business news stories

WEEKLY EDITION

CABLE BUSINESS JOURNAL Videocast with Richard Reiffman

OC Insider Audiocast by Rick Reiff



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"The primary reason for the contraction in the industry is an overall reduction in client companies' need for outside resources for SOX," said David Hess, director of internal controls. "Companies are now internalizing governance and no longer require as much assistance from outside firms."

No. 12 Irvine's 3Six0 Advisors Inc. upped its local workers by 19% to 37 and quadrupled its space in a move to an office in Irvine from Newport Beach.

The company's expansion stems from the nature of its business, according to Chief Executive John Mooers.

"In a down market we work with companies in pain and those that want to capitalize on the opportunities left by others," he said. "It's a business model designed to weather the economic peaks and valleys."

3Six0 provides consulting services to three types of companies.

"We do three things very well," Mooers said. "We help companies in pain; we help companies looking to grow; and we help companies preparing for sale."

Its growing clients are looking to make headway into markets or make acquisitions while economic growth is slower.

"For a company that's positioned properly, there's a significant opportunity for growth in a down market," Mooers said.

The company plans to keep up its hiring.

"We want to go to 100 workers in the next three years," he said.

In these sluggish economic times some management consulting companies are seeing clients asking for them on a contract basis, according to Jeanne Malmo, director of business development at the Irvine office No. 14 RoseRyan of Silicon Valley.

"My experience has shown that in downturns, customers using consultants might put them on hold," Malmo said. "The next step is that they start getting rid of full-time employees within their internal departments, and then they will come back and use us on an incremental, as-needed basis."

RoseRyan was flat this year at 30 workers.



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The advertisement features a photograph of a man in a light-colored shirt sitting at a desk with a laptop. The background is a dark blue gradient. The text is white and red, with a red arrow pointing right.