

## IT WORKFORCE SHIFTING TOWARDS SELF-EMPLOYMENT



In a new report from Emergent Research, close to 18 percent of the IT workforce is self-employed. And, to add to those numbers, the workforce of IT self-employed professionals increases by seven-percent each year. That is a larger increase than the 5.5 percent for independent workers on a general basis each year. Independent workers are defined as those who work at least 15 hours per week.

One of the partners at Emergent, Steve King, said the following in an interview with Computer World: "In today's world, change is happening so quickly that everyone is trying to figure out how to be more flexible and agile, cut fixed costs and move to variable costs. Unfortunately, people are viewed as a fixed cost."

King and MBO Partners worked together to tabulate the amount of independent workers in the United States. That number falls at 17.7 million. Both parties estimate that one million of them are in the IT field. A study performed by Computer Economics has found pretty much the same thing with their data.

The vice president of research at Computer Economics, John Longwell, said that large IT firms have begun using contract IT workers. The firms that have been doing this typically have more than \$20 million in operational budgets.

"The difference now is that use of contract or temporary workers is not being driven by a boom, but rather by a reluctance to hire permanent workers as the economy improves," Longwell said. "There are a lot of different variables that go into the decision to use temporary, rather than permanent, employees, and one of them is the outlook for sustained growth."

Recent reports in the news have noted that hiring in the IT field has slowed a bit, but many executives believe that demand for independent employees will continue to increase. One of those is Jeffrey Leventhal, the CEO of Work Market. Work Market connects independent workers with contract work. Leventhal said that there are roughly 15,000 people working on assignments right now through their system. He estimates that 60 percent of the 15,000 are working on IT assignments.

King thinks that the news is very good for people who work in IT and have the skills.

"There is a lot more opportunity to find part-time employment and set up your own shop and work as a consultant and contractor than there has been in the past."

King did say that younger workers have back-up plans, but those who are in the middle of their careers might not. He recommends that they should create a back-up plan for independent work.