

## Commentary:

# Laid off from Silicon Valley? Try public service.

The last few months have not been good for tech workers. Groupon laid off 500 employees, Spotify axed 600, Yahoo nixed 1,600, Paypal cut 2,000, Salesforce let go of 7,000, Microsoft fired 10,000, and Alphabet — Google's parent company — parted ways with 12,000. Meta, the company behind Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, just pink-slipped 10,000 workers — after it had Zuckerberged 11,000 in November. And that's just the household names. Swiggy, Fandom, Sophos and GoMechanic announced double- and triple-digit workforce cuts.

At the same time, vacancies in federal, state, and local governments totaled 1,080,000 positions at the end of 2022. I'm no mathematical genius, but is it possible there might be some way to move at least some of those laid off tech workers into jobs in public service?

Sure, most government workers don't enjoy ping pong tables, catered meals, beer bashes, concerts, massage specialists and ten grand to customize their work spaces. But the fact is, such perks were already beginning to disappear at some tech workplaces, a decent number of tech workers never had them, and now, none of the newly unemployed have them either.

Yet even those who are accustomed to fancy Santa Clara or palatial Palo Alto workplaces in California might find themselves at home in public service jobs. After all, the mission statements for many of tech startups at least pay lip service to lofty goals like improving the quality of life on the planet:

"We ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion," says one.

"Be Earth's most customer-centric company," says another.

And then there's, "Our mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more."

Another myth is that the private sector — particularly when it comes to tech — is especially innovative, while the public sector is not. Learning why the public sector operates as it does could be an important education for these former tech workers. It might make them better citizens — or at least better-informed citizens.

Firefighters run into buildings from which people are running out. Teachers reach kids despite all the obstacles of inequity,

poverty and mental-health issues. Social workers provide lifelines to the dispossessed, disenfranchised and disregarded. Public service is the home of everyday heroics.

Those are just the more public examples of public service. Government workers keep space stations and weather satellites aloft. Entire regional systems are created and maintained by people with wide-ranging expertise that not only includes specific knowledge of a particular field — such as mental health, water quality control, waste management, transportation equipment — but also an understanding of important demographic information and trends.

Services must be delivered when and where they need them, sometimes anticipating needs years in the future. That takes the kind of problem-solving tech workers are likely to embrace and at which they are likely to excel. And governments at all levels need websites, developers, programmers and tech support.

Some may decide they'd like to ditch the digital world and go full-on analog. You can walk miles a day, and in the footsteps of two future [sic] presidents — plus John Prine, John Brown, and Walt Disney — as a U.S. Postal Service employee.

Our parks offer workers time in nature or in solitude (fire lookout seems like an introvert's dream). and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish posted a conservation officer job whose duties include cuddling baby bears. A lot of people would prefer that to ping pong at lunchtime.

Government service isn't for everyone, and it does no one any good for someone not very public-spirited to take such a job. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees even launched a campaign to recruit for a half-a-million positions waiting to be filled.

Why not give it a try?

Until then, be sure to access your Unemployment Insurance benefits. It can be a little complicated, but luckily public service workers are available to walk you through the process.

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

Region	April 2022	March 2023	April 2023	Percentage Point Change	
				1 month	12 months
San José–Sunnyvale MSA	2.5%	3.3%	3.0%	- 0.3	+ 0.5
San Francisco MD	2.3%	2.9%	2.6%	- 0.3	+ 0.3
California	4.0%	4.8%	4.3%	- 0.5	+ 0.3
United States	3.3%	3.6%	3.1%	- 0.5	- 0.2

**INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT**

Sector — April 2023	San Jose MSA	San Francisco MD	Combined Region	Percentage Change (Combined Region)	
				1 month	12 months
<b>Total Nonfarm</b>	<b>1,177,500</b>	<b>1,204,900</b>	<b>2,382,400</b>	<b>+ 0.3%</b>	<b>+ 2.8%</b>
Construction	53,500	40,300	93,800	- 0.7%	- 0.7%
Manufacturing	1800,000	38,800	218,800	- 0.3%	+ 2.1%
Retail Trade	72,600	65,700	138,300	- 0.6%	- 0.4%
Information	104,400	123,700	228,100	- 1.1%	- 0.04%
Professional & Business Services	256,700	312,600	569,300	+ 0.7%	+ 2.0%
Educational Services	95,300	86,700	182,000	+ 0.3%	+ 3.2%
Health Care & Social Assistance	146,700	127,500	274,200	+ 1.1%	+ 5.3%
Leisure & Hospitality	103,100	126,500	229,600	+ 1.1%	+ 11.7%
Government	98,400	138,500	236,900	+ 0.4%	+ 0.6%

Note: San José MSA (San José–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara Metropolitan Statistical Area) = Santa Clara and San Benito Counties  
 San Francisco MD (San Francisco–Redwood City–South San Francisco Metropolitan Division) = San Mateo and San Francisco Counties

Source: California Employment Development Department, LMIID

**LABOR FORCE & ANNUAL CHANGE**

Labor Force by Metropolitan Statistical Area (U.S. High-Tech Regions)

	LABOR FORCE			UNEMPLOYMENT			UNEMPLOYMENT RATE		
	April 2022	April 2023	Change	April 2022	April 2023	Change	April 2022	April 2023	Change
<b>United States</b>	<b>163,449,000</b>	<b>166,221,000</b>	<b>+ 1.7%</b>	<b>5,458,000</b>	<b>5,146,000</b>	<b>- 5.7%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>- 0.2</b>
Austin, TX	1,385,440	1,437,852	+ 3.8%	35,669	44,091	+ 23.6%	2.6%	3.1%	+ 0.5
Boston, MA	2,770,202	2,776,304	+ 0.2%	86,189	64,810	- 24.8%	3.1%	2.3%	- 0.8
New York City, NY	3,072,200	4,133,800	+ 34.6%	231,700	218,600	- 5.7%	5.7%	5.3%	- 0.4
Seattle, WA	1,761,490	1,802,823	+ 2.3%	40,173	47,499	+ 18.2%	2.3%	2.6%	+ 0.3
California	19,119,800	19,307,900	+ 1.0%	763,600	826,100	+ 7.6%	4.0%	4.3%	+ 0.3
San Diego	1,573,800	1,599,200	+ 1.6%	49,700	52,700	+ 5.7%	3.2%	3.3%	+ 0.1
San Francisco	1,012,000	1,029,600	+ 1.7%	23,300	27,000	+ 13.7%	2.3%	2.6%	+ 0.3
San José	1,056,100	1,077,100	+ 2.0%	26,800	32,600	+ 17.8%	2.5%	3.0%	+ 0.5
NOVAworks Region	773,900	788,300	+ 1.9%	16,800	20,400	+ 21.4%	2.2%	2.6%	+ 0.4

Note: Totals may not add correctly due to rounding

Source: California Employment Development Department, LMIID

**REGIONAL LAYOFF ACTIVITY**

April 2023 Layoff Events

Company	Location	# Affected
<i>Due to an abnormally high number of WARNs for the month of April, the individual WARN details cannot be listed here.</i>		
<b>Companies filing WARNs:</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>Individuals affected:</b>		<b>1,701</b>

**WARN SUMMARY**

Events YTD<sup>†</sup>: 139

Individuals Affected YTD<sup>†</sup>: 7,652

Individuals Previous YTD<sup>‡</sup>: 784

\* **WARN: Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification** (notice of mass layoff or closure)

† **YTD: Year to Date** (Calendar year: January 1–Present)

‡ **Previous YTD:** (Same date range as YTD, one year prior)

Note: Layoff data are preliminary and should be considered an estimate of monthly regional activity

Source: California EDD, CalJOBS: WARN data