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IT pros see lot of major cons to their chosen field

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Information technology is supposed to be fun, but don't tell that to people working in the sector.

In a survey of 150 tech professionals in South Florida, 62 percent said their employment experience in the last four years has been negative. The words most frequently used to describe that experience were frustrating, stressful, disappointing, stagnant, unfulfilling, impersonal, overworked and underappreciated.

In the survey, conducted by Protech, an IT job placement firm with offices in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, 28 percent viewed their work as positive. Ten percent said they felt neutral.

Ninety-one percent said they are willing to make a job change. After all, you can't spell I QUIT without IT.

To be sure, plenty of people in all fields hate their jobs. But the survey results reflect the tech sector's volatility.

The findings also support the long-held notion that tech professionals feel less loyalty to their employers than other workers do. Considering that thousands of techies have been fired since the sector began to slump in 2000-01, it is no wonder workers are quick to look for new opportunities.

The culture of stock options -- the lure that attracted many techies in the late 1990s -- also undermined loyalty. A lot of people's careers were shaped by the idea that they should grab riches while they were available. When so many stock options ended up worthless, workers felt burned.

The Protech survey also asked which criteria professionals consider when evaluating job options. Thirty-five percent cited a company's culture, including career development and work/life balance; 32 percent said compensation; and 22 percent said the company's strength. Eleven percent listed other factors, including the commute and the job title.

When asked what a prospective employer could offer that would make them accept a job, the workers said: a sound business plan, opportunity to grow and interesting work.

Because many techies have worked for companies that no longer exist, they are far more likely than others to scrutinize a company's business model before taking a job. It might sound odd if a candidate



for a newspaper reporting or auto mechanic position questioned the prospective employer about the business model. Newspapers and car repair shops have been around as long as anyone can remember. But there's nothing strange about a candidate asking a software developer or Web design studio about the nature of their business, since so many have sunk in recent years.

The South Florida Interactive Marketing Association will host a presentation called "Google: Demystifying Search," 6:30-8:30 p.m. Feb. 10 at the Riverside Hotel in Fort Lauderdale. Ron Carpinella, a regional manager for Google, will be the speaker. For more information, www.sfima.com.

The South Florida Technology Alliance named Joel Ledlow, CEO of Boca Raton-based Acarra, president. Other officers include: Deborah Vasquezof Protech, vice president; Elizabeth Bates of Consultrex, secretary; Bill McGloin of KPMG, treasurer; Brian Nelson of Edwards & Angell, legal counsel.

Tech stat of the week: Even as the Internet has become almost essential for gathering information on health care, only 31 percent of Americans age 65 and over have ever gone online, according to a study by the Washington-based Kaiser Family Foundation. However, 70 percent of the next generation of seniors (ages 50-64) have been online.

Only 21 percent of those 65 and older have surfed the Internet to look for health information, compared to 53 percent in the 50-64 age group.

Ian Katz can be heard talking about tech every Monday at 8:10 a.m. on WFTL (850-AM). He can be reached at ikatz@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4664.

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