

Women in Tech Seeing Big Paychecks, Opportunities

by Rebecca Vesely, WEnews correspondent

SANTA CLARA, California—Sally Crawford was familiar with word processors, but she didn't know the first thing about operating a personal computer when she decided to change her fate as an out-of-work secretary by launching her own business in the midst of a recession.

But Crawford's first contract was to train students in PC computing. So she rented a friend's computer for US\$10 a day and learned enough to teach the class.

Twenty years later, Crawford is chief executive officer of Crawford and Associates International, a custom training company in Palo Alto, California, whose clients include Hewlett-Packard, IBM, PepsiCo and Citibank.

"I had no idea how hard it would be to start my own company, and I think that's good," Crawford told members of Women in Technology International (WITI) at the group's seventh annual Silicon Valley conference here last week. "The most important thing is deciding what your priorities are and how to get there."

Getting ahead in the technology sector is possible, women industry leaders agreed, but it takes confidence, hard work and a certain degree of fearlessness, especially during the current economic slump.

Research backs up their attitude. Today, women have more career opportunities in technology than ever before, and technology jobs can lead women up the corporate ladder, according to a new survey.

"This is the best time to get into the business," says Mariana Danilovic, chief executive officer of WITI, which developed the survey in conjunction with Key3Media research. "Opportunities are expanding in many areas."

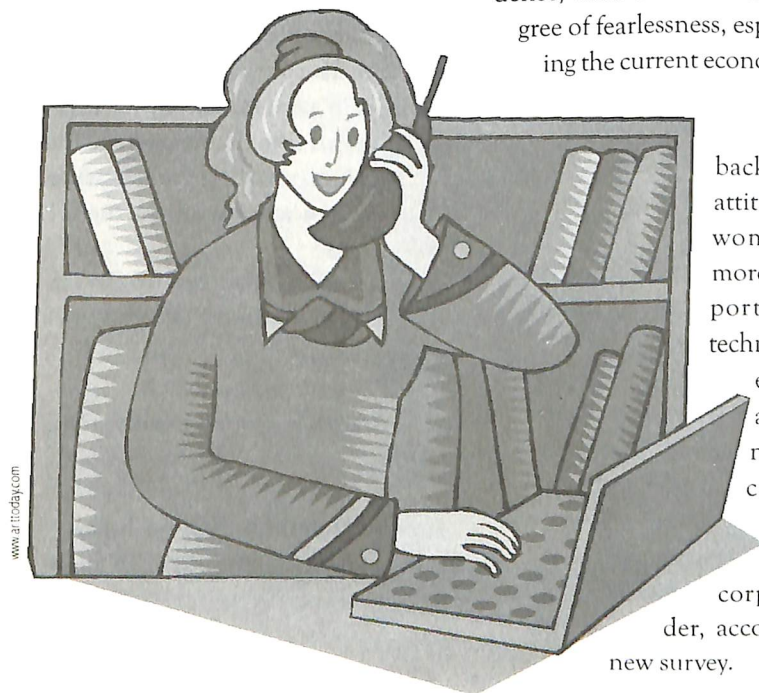
Women IT Managers' Salaries

The survey of 288 female information-technology professionals found about half of the women at the managerial level, controlling annual budgets as large as US\$1 million, a huge increase over a decade ago when few women worked in the field. Women information technology managers have annual salaries averaging nearly US\$100,000, according to the survey. The average respondent to the survey was 43 years old.

Danilovic points to the few women who are chief executive officers of Fortune 500 companies as examples of how careers in technology can take women up the corporate ladder.

"Nearly all those women either run technology companies or have come up through the technology departments of companies," Danilovic says.

In large companies with 500 or more employees, 64 percent of survey respondents said women made up less than a quarter of all information tech-



nology managers. Like Crawford, women tend to earn more and rise up the ranks more quickly when they own their own business or work for small firms, according to the study.

Technology job growth is expected to outpace other white-collar positions over the next decade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Job growth for computer software engineers is projected at a whopping 95 percent, while careers in computer science and database administration are expected to grow by 92 percent.

Biotech: An Attractive Field for Women

A career in technology need not translate into working as a computer programmer, however. Ruth Taylor, senior programme director of venture capital and strategy at IBM's Life Sciences group, says she is seeing more women physicians, chemists and other scientists taking on key roles in biotechnology companies, an area of potential double-digit job growth. Career opportunities for biomedical engineers overall are expected to increase by 31 percent over the next decade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"It's really encouraging," Taylor says. "Firms that have been into information technology are starting to diversify and more women in life sciences are getting into the field."

Biotech jobs are attractive to women because of enormous growth opportunities, potentially high

salaries and the ability to work on cutting-edge technology. The risk, Taylor says, is that the biotech sector could go through the same boom-and-bust cycle as the dot-coms.

Despite all the good news, this year's WITI conference, where professional women around the U.S. discussed the nuts-and-bolts of preparing a capital-raising presentation and building enterprise software services, among other topics, had a decidedly subdued tone.

Conference organisers have shifted the focus from that of years past, replacing sessions on how to use technology with seminars on building partnerships and crafting a successful career in the technology era, Danilovic says.

For many women, the new tack reflected their views on the industry. Being an equal player is no longer the issue. Instead, the issue is networking—with men and women—and using the technology to get to where they want to go.

"I don't think of myself as a woman in the business; I think of myself as an entrepreneur," said Charlene Vaughn, partner at LaunchPointe, a venture capital firm. "You have to be confident and know your business and the rest will follow."

Linda Hargrove, vice president of worldwide marketing and product management for Dell Computer, agreed. "I'm very flattered to think

that I can have an impact on other women and on girls, but I would suggest that women focus on results, not accolades," Hargrove said at a keynote luncheon to enthusiastic applause. "We have to remember that not everyone has to like us; they just have to respect us."

Possessing a strong vision and going for it, despite the economy, is the message. Michael Terpin, chairman and chief executive officer of the Terpin Group, a public relations firm, pointed out that the most successful high-tech companies today, such as Cisco Systems, CNET Networks and Oracle, all started during down times. Women receive only about 4 percent of all venture capital funds and only about 10 percent of equity capital, according to WITI, but experts in the field said that times are changing.

"There's no competition and no rush to market today," Terpin told participants in a session on raising capital. "You can take the time to make a great business and find the financing that's right for you. It's still out there."

For more information, visit *Women in Technology International* <<http://www.witi.com>>.

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