

Jobless recovery? Not for these Austin startups

It's hard to fill slots, some tech firms say

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Austin startups responded in force this week to a request for current hiring plans — a trend seen nationally in a recent early-stage company survey.

The recent Startup Outlook report from [Silicon Valley Bank](#) said 83 percent of young companies nationwide have plans to hire this year — up from 73 percent in 2009. The [SVB Financial Group](#) subsidiary surveyed 375 startup executives and received an overwhelmingly positive response. When asked by the *Austin Business Journal* via a social media blast recently, Austin companies expressed similar optimism, with some even reporting having trouble finding talent for technology jobs.

Local tech startup Mutual Mobile Inc., for example, hires an average of four “nice geniuses” per week, executives said. The company, founded in 2008, now employs more than 130 workers globally, and is still chasing talent in mobile development, creative design and programming, among other departments. Hiring was particularly swift in the past two months with the launch of a subsidiary and new offices in San Francisco and India, a spokesman said.

TabbedOut, another Austin firm cashing in on the increasingly mobile world, is up to 17 workers after hiring three in the past several months. ATX Innovation Inc., the company that created the TabbedOut smartphone payment platform last year, needs to fill another five positions in sales and engineering, executives said.

Data aggregator and file platform producer InfoChimps Inc. is similarly racing to fill four openings after hiring two about a week ago. The company founded two years ago is now up to 17, but needs many more to take work in the pipeline. InfoChimps founder and CEO **Nick Ducoff** said it feels like a competition to “lock in talent” in a city where “everyone is hiring.”

San Francisco-based social media consultant Main Street Hub will move here in June with plans to hire 45 **Austinites**, CEO and co-founder **Andrew Allison** said.

“We looked at cities all over the country, and Austin was the clear winner. It had everything we needed: a low cost of doing business; a talented, educated workforce; and a thriving technology and design community,” Allison said.

Another transplant — Charfen Institute, previously known as the Distressed Property Institute — moved to Austin in 2009 with four people and has grown to 72. The company has 20 openings and expects to make *Inc.* magazine’s fastest-growing companies list this year. CEO and President **Alex Charfen** said he’s experienced a similar “drought in talent,” particularly for programmers and developers.

“For every five qualified developers, there are 40 to 50 jobs out there,” he said.

Austin-based AcademicWorks Inc. has even started looking outside Austin for talent. The company recently hired a software developer from Portland, Ore., and is interviewing someone from Minnesota for another programmer spot. The scholarship system manager is also hiring an account manager and customer support staffer.

Other startups reporting openings in Austin this week included PetRelocation.com, which has hired six since February and needs three more; Australia-based BigCommerce, hired 25 people in Austin since last year and needs more in technical support, sales and marketing; Schaaf-PartnerCentric, hiring two to three people; Dachis Group, with 10 openings in social business, consulting services, product development and operations; and [CSIdentity Corp.](#), hiring a CEO, chief financial officer, senior-level sales executives, information technology operations manager, and customer support and client services personnel.

U.S. startup outlook

- 23 percent exceeded 2010 revenue targets, up from 15 percent in 2009
- 64 percent expect business conditions to improve this year
- 83 percent plan to hire, up from 73 percent in 2009
- 89 percent of software startups plan to hire this year, up from 77 percent in 2009

Source: Silicon Valley Bank

Courtesy of JB Goodwin