

JOBS: Growing firms find an edge in crisis

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People who lost jobs often become part-time "consultants," and their new companies show up as startups, although they are just one-person firms, Vitner said.

Some sectors took a much harder hit than others. The number of manufacturing workers dropped nearly 40 percent between 2000 and 2010, and the annual total payroll in that sector fell by 22 percent. The number of manufacturing establishments was down 19 percent.

At the same time, health care and educational services grew. Between 2000 and 2010, there was an increase of 50 percent in educational services establishments — defined by the Census Bureau as a single physical location at which a business is conducted. The number of health care establishments was up 27 percent, while the number of paid workers in health care was up 31 percent, and the annual payroll for the health care sector ballooned by 83 percent.

'SENIOR TSUNAMI' PROMPTS GROWTH

Home health care saw some of the biggest gains, especially between 2008 and 2010, when the number of paid workers increased 7 percent, payroll jumped 8.3 percent and the number of establishments grew 21 percent in the metro area.

An oncoming "senior tsunami" raised awareness of private duty home care, or providing companionship, meal preparation and other assistance with daily living, said Jonathan Bowman, CEO of Harmony Home Health in Largo, founded in 2004. Barriers to entry in the industry are low and a push to cut costs by discharging hospital patients more quickly contributes to growth.

"We have 175 companies in Pinellas County alone that do what we do, so the competition is very fierce, but I think there's enough opportunity out there to support all the companies," Bowman said.



Bowman

DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY

The professional, scientific and technical sector shed workers, but total payroll and number of business establishments held steady from 2008 to 2010. There was a 2.5 percent increase in law offices, and a 9 percent jump in paid employees in those offices.

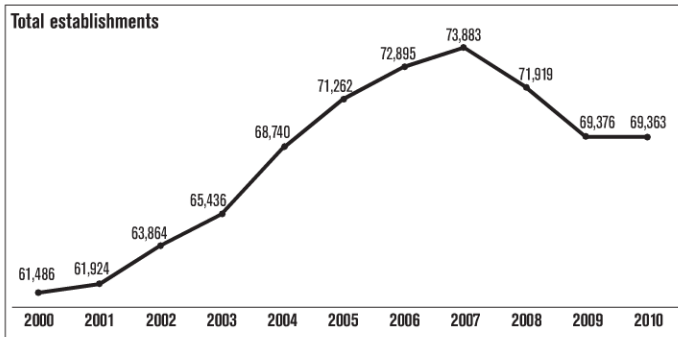
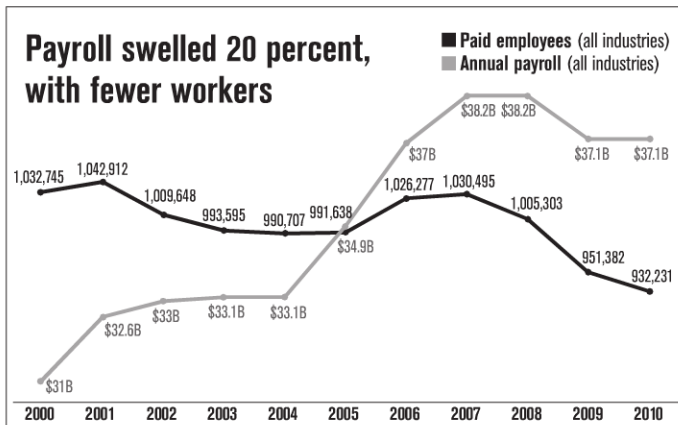
Attorney Richard McIntyre, who left a large law firm to found McIntyre Panzarella Thanasides Hoffman Bringgold & Todd PL in Tampa in 2006, entered the market at a time when there was "a crazy amount of litigation ... the housing market was going crazy." With a specialty in insolvency work, his practice stayed healthy as bankruptcies ticked up amid the credit crisis. He later added real estate and transactional practices.

"We wanted to be diversified so we would be stable when the economy picks up," McIntyre said.

The economic downturn allowed him to add "quality people," he said. "As a small firm you have access to people you would never have access to in a hot market."



McIntyre



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Franklin Street, a full-service Tampa commercial real estate firm also founded in 2006, had a similar experience. While number of workers, payroll and total establishments were down across the board for the local real estate industry from 2008 to 2010, Franklin Street was able to attract high-level talent from other companies that were downsizing, said Darron Kattan, managing director.

Franklin Street additionally seized opportunities to add services to help beleaguered lenders, and now has lines of business that include insurance, capital management, real estate investment sales, leasing and property management.

Mercury New Media is among the tech firms in the area that can't find enough talent to hire, said Christopher Karlo, a partner at the Tampa software developer. His company didn't downsize or lay off anyone even in the worst of the economic downturn, so he was surprised by Census data showing the information sector has shrunk locally.

The sector also includes newspaper publishers, where paid staff fell by 33 percent between 2008 and 2010.

MARGIN SQUEEZE

The number of accommodations establishments — hotels, restaurants and bars — dipped from 2008 to 2009, then rebounded in 2010, even while the number of workers dropped by 5 percent.

"The profit margin has compressed so much in the hospitality sector that owners and management companies like ourselves are looking for ways to squeeze our margins as much as possible," said Punit



Kattan



Karlo

Convenience wins

Retail businesses, such as supermarkets, department and discount stores, and auto dealers, shrunk sharply from 2008 to 2010, although convenience stores were among those that bucked the trend, gaining 28 percent more workers and posting similar increases in total payroll and number of business establishments. That may explain the entrance to the market of new chains such as Wawa Inc. and Thorntons.

— Margie Manning

Shah, president and chief operating officer of Clearwater-based Liberty Group of Companies, which owns and operates hotels in several states.

That often means consolidating job functions and outsourcing. Instead of having a salesperson on staff at a property, for instance, the company may outsource to an outside sales consultant.

Banks also reduced staff to survive, with the most draconian cuts at the biggest banks, said Monty Weigel, president and CEO of NorthStar Bank in Tampa. Overall, the local financial sector lost 7.4 percent of its workforce and 8 percent of its business establishments from 2008 to 2010. Employment is picking up now, Weigel said, although he doesn't think compensation will return to pre-2008 levels.

About 20 percent of Florida's banks have disappeared, a typical number for any in-



Shah



Weigel

NOTE: annual payroll numbers are in billions

Accommodations

(includes hotels, restaurants, bars)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	101,334	97,973	96,122
Annual payroll	\$1.51	\$1.53	\$1.55
Total establishments	4,954	4,857	4,974

Finance

(includes banks and credit unions, insurance carriers and brokerages)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	76,014	72,374	70,362
Annual payroll	\$4.42	\$4.12	\$4.18
Total establishments	5,448	5,122	5,003

Health care

(includes doctors offices, clinics, hospitals, nursing facilities)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	151,903	162,195	157,270
Annual payroll	\$6.55	\$7.4	\$7
Total establishments	7,914	7,935	8,129

Information

(includes newspaper publishers, software publishers, telecommunications carriers, data processing)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	32,502	30,434	32,599
Annual payroll	\$1.89	\$1.9	\$1.83
Total establishments	1,314	1,202	1,170

Professional, scientific, technical

(includes attorney, accountants, engineers, computer system design, advertising)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	79,743	75,734	73,941
Annual payroll	\$4.58	\$4.37	\$4.48
Total establishments	10,092	10,059	10,179

Real estate & construction

(includes real estate agents and brokers, residential and commercial contractors, highway and bridge construction)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	80,067	69,046	62,451
Annual payroll	\$3.07	\$2.65	\$2.44
Total establishments	11,043	10,116	9,823

Retail

(includes automobile dealers, furniture and home stores, electronics and appliance stores, supermarkets and specialty food stores, gasoline stations, clothing and shoe stores)

Metric	2008	2009	2010
Paid employees	143,260	133,905	132,466
Annual payroll	\$3.46	\$3.31	\$3.38
Total establishments	9,866	9,601	9,614

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

GRAPHICS BY JULIE SCHAFER

dustry during a recession, Weigel said. "That's what strengthens the economy. You find the bottom. The really good operators, efficient and effective companies, survive and do well and can compete rationally," he said. "The companies that are out there now, bidding projects as they should, they have an opportunity to do well for themselves, although it's painful for those that don't make it."

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