

# ***CAROCP Market Watch***

*California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs*

(A Monthly Trends & Forecasting Report)  
February 2007

## **I-DEAL OR NO DEAL** *(All Sectors)*

At many businesses in the United States and Europe, 25% to 35% of all employees have bargained for special workplace arrangements called idiosyncratic deals, or “i-deals.” The i-deals can take many forms: reduced or flexible hours, working from home, travel limitations, child-care assistance and career development opportunities. They can also cover pay but there are relatively few special deals on salaries, possibly because they can create more feelings of unfairness among other employees.

I-deals should be perceived as fair by virtually everyone in the workplace. There’s a slippery slope between an i-deal and a shady deal. In a good deal, the person gets the benefit he wants, the company gets a loyal employee, and it can then signal to other employees that the company tries very hard to develop its people. The ugly deal involves unethical behavior. I-deals should never be substituted for good basic pay and benefits. No employee should have to bargain for something everybody needs.

The Orange County Register, January 8, 2007

## **WHO WILL YOU CALL WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT?** *(Energy and Utilities Sector)*

Approximately half of the power industry’s workforce is a baby boomer that is now or becoming eligible for retirement. Industry workers include those who operate the power plants and power plant equipment, and those who install and repair the lines making electricity available to homes, businesses, and society in general. The projected shortage of workers is further exacerbated by continuing demands for more power and energy brought on by growth in population, housing, and infrastructure; a spike in natural disasters; increasing use of technology; and aging power plants. Additionally, utilities hired fewer people over the past 10-20 years in the face of deregulation to increase profitability.

Utility operators are seeking a skilled workforce and are aggressively seeking out career and technical schools and colleges to offer classes in power-plant operations. Many companies are offering grants and scholarships and are helping to develop curriculum that include subjects such as algebra, calculus, environmental regulations, electrical circuits and combustion engines. One company expects to save about \$60,000 per employee in training costs if they can hire individuals who have already completed some basic training.

While working for a utility company doesn’t sound glitzy, sexy or exciting, it does have its benefits. Entry-level workers with technical training can expect to earn \$40,000 per year or more and sometimes up to \$75,000 with overtime. Additionally, job security is expected to be higher than in many other industry sectors. Look for “hot” jobs within the Energy and Utilities Sector as experts predict a need for more than 400,000 workers within the next decade. The Press Enterprise, November 12, 2006

### **THAT'S A CAPITAL IDEA** *(All Sectors)*

Chances are you're reading this sitting at your desk in an office. But if you worked at credit-card powerhouse Capital One, you'd probably be working in your car, at your kitchen table, or even in the waiting room at your dentist's office. You'd have a company laptop, BlackBerry, and iPod and when you did want to go to any Capital One office, you'd be walking into an open-plan space with no walls, where you could choose to plunk yourself down at a desk, in a booth, on a couch, or in a special quiet zone. Capital One calls this its Future of Work project.

The 4,000 i-Pods now in employees' hands can be used to download any of 10,000 different courses, many of them from Harvard and other top business schools, as well as tune in to internal company information like quarterly updates from the CFO. Since Capital One rolled out the Future of Work last October to 40% of its workforce, in-house surveys say that employee satisfaction has risen 41%. [Fortune](#), January 22, 2007

### **THE FUTURE LOOK IS FROM THE PAST** *(Engineering and Design)*

Cars at the North American International Auto Show revealed telltale cues about what tomorrow's car and truck will look like – inside and out – and the features they will offer to attract buyers in an increasingly competitive market.

Fender vents or grills are returning. They originated as hot air vents for exposed exhaust pipes in a number of early automobiles and were popularized in the late 1940s. The big news for exterior design though, seems to be that the featureless curves of the jellybean shape popular for the last 20 years have finally been melded with the angles and creases of the origami school of design that defined cars of the 1970s. The hot colors are silver, blue, purple and orange.

Interior styling trends were also a hot topic. Cheap, hard, shiny plastic surfaces have become a thing of the past as even the least-expensive economy cars have begun to offer upgraded interiors with soft, textured vinyls, nubby cloth upholstery and metallic accent pieces. Most automakers will soon be offering some kind of electronic interface in their vehicles to enable drivers and passengers to plug their digital music players, wireless cell phones and even laptop computers into onboard audio systems.

[The Los Angeles Times](#), January 23, 2007

### **MOBILE MARKETING** *(Marketing, Sales, and Service)*

According to market research, companies will spend more than \$11 billion by 2011 to advertise on mobile phones. Anomaly recently launched the first shopping platform enabling consumers to buy products via text messaging. Shop Text allows U.S. mobile-phone customers who come across a magazine ad to text-message a number to buy the product instantly usually in return for a big discount. Since Shop Text launched in September, ads placed in [Lucky](#) and [Cosmo Girl](#) have generated more than 1,000 transactions for products from Procter & Gamble and others.

[Business 2.0](#), January/February, 2007

### **IMPLANTABLE DEVICES** *(Health Science and Medical Technology)*

Dozens of devices that reprogram the brain and other parts of the nervous system to tackle everything from migraines to severe depression will be submitted to the FDA for approval. If approved these devices will do astonishing things:

**Brain stimulator:** It will control obsessive-compulsive disorder, help stroke patients regain motor function, treat migraine headaches, and treat severe drug-resistant depression.

**Remote-controlled defibrillator:** In addition to heart-pacing functions, it will transmit blood pressure data and monitor for conditions such as lung fluid buildup. Doctors will be able to view the data remotely via laptop, phone, or PDA.

**Bone-growing implant:** This protein-coated device will stimulate cells to re-grow damaged or missing bone and provide a non-surgical remedy for patients in need of spinal fusion or disk replacement.

**Remote-controlled insulin pump:** This will allow diabetes patients, especially children, to have insulin and glucose levels managed remotely via data sent to a physician or parent. [Business 2.0](#), January/February, 2007

### **SCHOOLS SEEK MORE FEMALE ENGINEERING MAJORS** *(Engineering and Design)*

The U.S. lags behind countries such as China and India in producing engineers and scientists out of college each year and women are key to improving that standing. Experts argue that if the U.S. is to remain competitive with other countries in the engineering field, it will have to find better ways to encourage women to join the profession. Nationally, women make up only about one-fifth of students in engineering programs. William Wulf, president of the National Academy of Engineering says, "One of the reasons has to do with the negative stereotype in engineering – the nerd drinking Cokes and eating Twinkies until three in the morning. The really important attribute of an engineer is creativity. Somehow that's not what high school girls are hearing about." [CNN.com](#), January 23, 2007

### **NEW MATH EQUATION = I'LL GET AROUND TO IT LATER** *(All Sectors)*

The proof is in: Almost everyone procrastinates. Piers Steel, a human resources professor at the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business, has looked at almost every procrastination study he could find and has concluded that about 95% of us procrastinate at times, with 15% to 20% being chronic offenders. Behind all the dilly-dallying is lack of confidence about finishing the job, boredom of the task, and a human tendency to go for immediate reward over long-term gain.

Steel even came up with an equation:  $Utility = \{E \times V/A \times D\}$

"Utility" stands for attraction to the task, which depends on a combination of one's expectation of finishing it (E), the value in completing it (V), the task's immediacy (A), and one's distractibility (D). "Anything that offers a distant reward for immediate effort, especially if we find the effort boring, we will put off," Steel says. A common ploy for avoiding work at the office, he says – reading each e-mail as it comes in.

[Business Week](#), January 29, 2007

## **E-CARE YOUR CUSTOMERS** *(Information Technology)*

Instead of keeping customers waiting on-hold to speak to a company representative for an inordinate length of time, many companies are opting to offer customers “e-care” services. E-care is an on-line, live-chat customer service option that operates in the same manner as instant messaging. It lets users and customer service agents communicate on the Internet in real time, eliminating long waits on the telephone and/or delays in e-mail responses. The trend is catching on and becoming more widespread. Live chat capabilities offer immediacy and instant gratification to the customer. Companies benefit too, as live chats can be more efficient than phone calls with many e-care specialists handling two chats at once. Some companies provide their e-care specialists with pre-scripted replies, but others rely on the writing capabilities of their e-care specialists. Comcast, for example, provides all e-care specialists with a two day writing training program before they conduct live chats as it is in their best interest to have their e-care specialists communicating well. The Press Enterprise, January 24, 2007

## **NAME THAT TUNE** *(Arts, Media, and Entertainment Technology)*

MySpace, iTunes and Google are all hot. Run them through the Web 2.0 blender and you get Midomi.com, a song search engine-social networking site created by Melodis. Can't remember a song's title? Just hum, sing or play a few bars into a computer mike or mobile phone. Melodis technology can name that tune – a feature it's pitching to e-tailers. Midomi.com is a kind of virtual karaoke bar. Those who sign up as members can sing any of more than 10,000 tunes into the search engine, then see a menu of versions sung by other Midomi-ites (versions they can rate). Or they can buy commercial versions for 99 cents a pop from Passalong, a music seller. The site's co-founders say the number of tunes should explode, “We're letting the world create our database, just like with Wikipedia.” As one 20 year old said after visiting the site, “It's like American Idol at home. If you build it, they will hum.” BusinessWeek, February 5, 2007

## **Trends & Economic Forecasting Committee –February 2007**

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California State Standards for Career and Technical Education (CTE)

## **Industry Sectors**

1. Agriculture and Natural Resources
2. Arts, Media, and Entertainment Technology
3. Building Trades and Construction
4. Education, Child Development and Family Services
5. Energy and Utilities
6. Engineering and Design
7. Fashion and Interior Design
8. Finance and Business
9. Health Science and Medical Technology
10. Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation
11. Information Technology
12. Manufacturing and Product Development
13. Marketing, Sales, and Service
14. Public Services
15. Transportation

## **CAROCP is Mission Driven – Market Smart!**

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