THE BRIGHTWATER
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SURVEY 2014

Brightwater
RECRUITMENT SPECIALISTS

CONTENTS

THE BRIGHTWATER

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SURVEY 2014

INTRODUCTION

Following the success of last year's survey, Brightwater are delighted to present our new Information Technology Survey for 2014.

The world of Information Technology continues to move at a rapid pace and this presents many challenges to businesses trying to attract candidates with the right skills and attitude needed to help drive their business forward. Unfortunately, the IT market continues to suffer from an imbalance of supply and demand, with many employers struggling to attract candidates with the skills required for certain key roles.

Ireland is likely to face an average increase in demand for high-level ICT skills of around 5% a year out to 2018, with the employment of IT professionals anticipated to rise to just over 91,000. In order to attract and retain staff against this background, it is imperative for managers to have a solid understanding of the key motivators involved in informing people's decisions. One of the principle objectives of this survey was to provide an insight into the attitudes and motivations of a cross section of professionals working in Information Technology in Ireland, across the full range of IT specialisms.

As this is now our second IT Survey, we have the opportunity to contrast findings against those reported last year and to try to identify and explain existing or emerging trends. It is our intention to continue to produce this survey on an annual basis, and hopefully this will allow us to report on key trends over time and keep you updated and informed.

We would like to express our genuine gratitude to those who took the time to complete the survey this year, and we hope that the results are both instructive and practical. Your feedback as always is very important to us and we welcome your questions and comments on the survey.

Hugh McCarthy
Manager, IT Division

SURVEY OBJECTIVES

THE PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVES OF THIS SURVEY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

To gain an understanding of trends and developments, particularly in relation to employment, in the Irish technology sector.

To assess whether respondents feel our education system aligns with the current needs of the technology sector.

To gain an understanding of perceived issues and challenges affecting the technology sector.

To gain an understanding of what motivates IT professionals.

To benchmark perceptions of salaries among IT professionals.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

This report is drawn from a recent survey (April 2014) issued to a wide spectrum of technology leaders and practitioners across Ireland. It was managed using the Survey Monkey application. Any specific questions regarding the report should be directed to Hugh McCarthy, Manager, Brightwater IT Division.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The data in this report is based on the survey responses of a representative cross-section of the local IT community consisting of Senior Management, Software Engineers (all levels), Project Managers, Systems Analysts, Business Intelligence specialists, Creative/Design professionals, IT Audit specialists, ERP specialists, QA Engineers and Network and Systems Administrators.

TOP

SURVEY FINDINGS

CONTRACT ROLES

The contracting market has been growing steadily since 2009 with increasing volume of roles available and rising pay rates. In this year's survey, respondents have reflected increasing optimism towards contracting with a majority of respondents either interested or potentially interested in looking at contracting opportunities (See Fig 1).

Of those respondents who were currently employed in a permanent role, the majority (58%) were either interested or potentially interested in looking at contracting opportunities over the next 12 months, as detailed below.
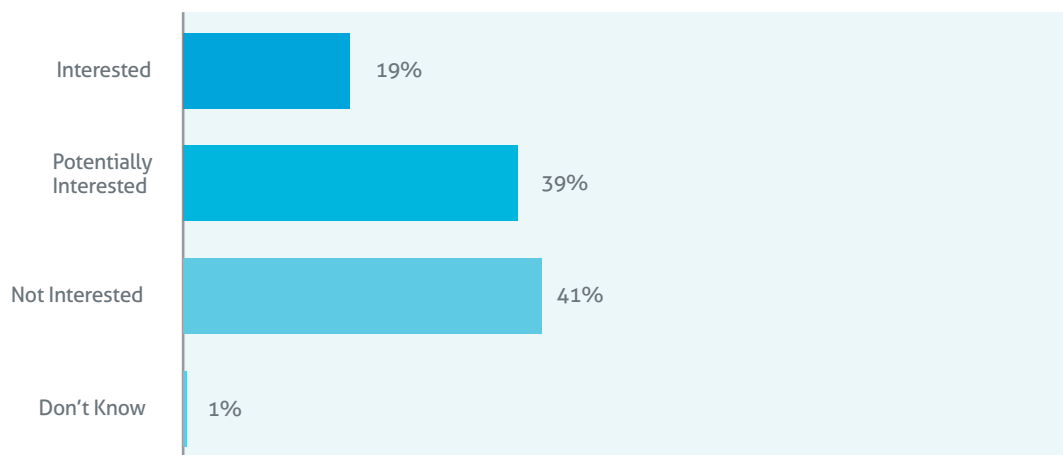
This is a positive development and is an increase over our findings last year where 48% of respondents expressed an interest or a potential interest in

contracting. We attribute this increase to rising confidence in the market, with very competitive rates on offer for candidates with key skill sets and many opportunities available, meaning there is more chance of finding further employment at the end of the contract period.

Respondents most interested in contracting primarily came from those with between 2 and 4 years' experience (40%) followed by those with between 4 and 7 years' experience (28%). 67% of Software Developers were either interested or potentially interested in contracting, while 65% of Project Managers were either interested or potentially interested.

The largest category of respondents who were

FIGURE 1.
If you are in a permanent role, are you open to looking at contracting oportunities over the coming 12 months?

Category	Percentage
Interested	19%
Potentially Interested	39%
Not Interested	41%
Don't Know	1%

not interested in contracting (50%) came from respondents with 7-10 years' work experience, followed by those with 10+ years' experience (42%). No respondents at the CIO or CTO level were interested in contracting and this is unsurprising.

The next largest group not interested in contracting were those from an infrastructure background (45%), followed by Business Analysts at 42%. This is likely due to the fewer contract opportunities available in Infrastructure, and the higher perceived risk of periods of unemployment after a contract ends. These results are in line with our own experience.

One of the primary reasons that candidates move to contracting is that they want exposure to new technologies, new ways of working and new experiences in a variety of settings. Our survey showed that almost 68% of those interested in contracting came from those with between 2 and 7 years' experience, and we feel this is one of the key factors driving this.

THE FUTURE OF CONTRACTING

Respondents were generally positive about the prospects for the contracting market over the coming 12 months. A majority of respondents (70%) felt that the market would offer more opportunities, while only 6% felt that there would be fewer opportunities available (See Fig 2). This compares favourably to last year's survey where 58% had felt there would be more opportunities and 8% thought there would be a decline, and it suggests again a rise in sentiment.

Unsurprisingly, given the huge growth in Data Analytics and Business Intelligence over the recent past, professionals from a Business Intelligence background were the most optimistic group. 75% of those respondents predicted that the market would perform better, followed by 67% of ERP professionals, 59% of Business Analysts and 45% of Developers.
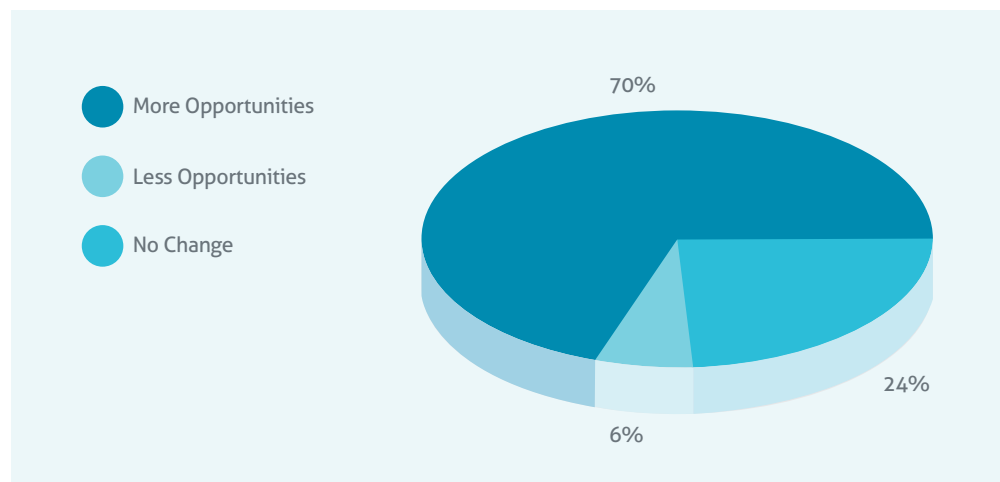
Only 3% of those currently working in a contract role felt there would be fewer opportunities over the next 12 months.

According to one Project Manager who responded to the survey "I feel it will continue to grow at the same rate with more companies looking to a) outsource their development requirements and b) get into the technology market quickly".

In relation to the rates available to contractors, as was observed in last year's survey the majority of respondents felt that rates for contractors would continue to push higher (See Fig 3).

Over 51% of respondents felt that rates would continue to increase over the coming 12 months, while only 6% felt that rates would decrease.

FIGURE 2.
How do you feel the contract market will perform over the next 12 months?

- More Opportunities
- Less Opportunities
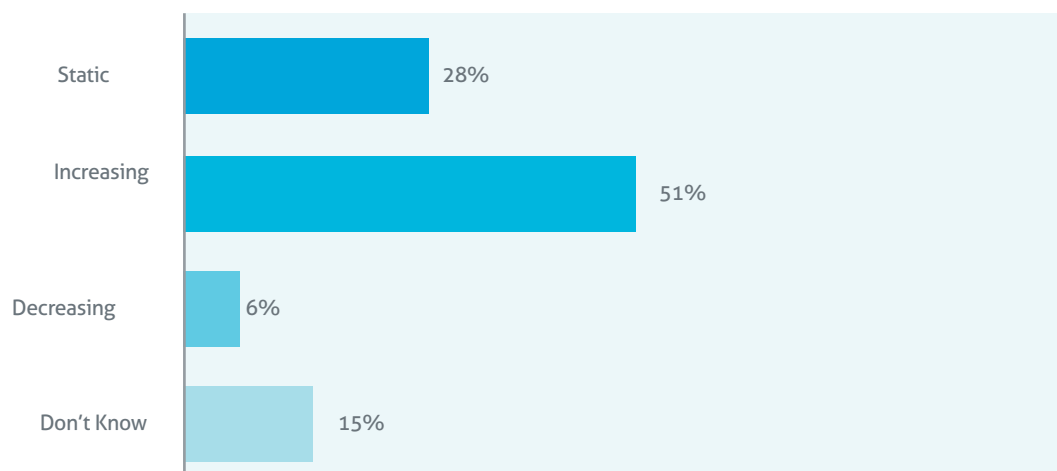- No Change

70%

24%

6%

TOP

Again, the largest group who felt that rates would increase (75%) came from the Business Intelligence community. These were followed by the ERP group at 68%, BA's at 59% and Creative/Design at 57%. Software Development has seen relatively consistent increases in rates albeit much more slowly in the past year. Of the developers who responded to the survey, 45% felt rates would increase while 31% felt the rates would stay static.

The largest group who felt that rates would decrease came from CIO's and CTO's (14%) and one could speculate that as people working to tight budgets, they are hoping to keep costs as low as possible. These were followed by respondents working in Infrastructure (11%). Infrastructure has been relatively quiet when compared to some of the faster growing areas and as a result there hasn't been quite the same upward push on rates.

Of those currently working in contract roles, 49% felt rates would continue to rise whereas 39% felt they would stay static this year. This compares to 51% of those in permanent roles who felt contract rates would increase, with 26% feeling they would stay static. Only 6% of permanent and 6% of contract workers felt rates would decrease.

One respondent commented: "If there are more opportunities for contract roles then there will be more contractors and hence more competition. It seems to me the overall goal is to try and cut technology salaries so that the industry becomes more sustainable going forward".

FIGURE 3.
How do you feel the contract rate in general will perform over the next 12 months?

Static	28%
Increasing	51%
Decreasing	6%
Don't Know	15%

DEMAND & FUTURE SKILLS

In last year's survey we asked respondents to assess how closely aligned our University courses were with the demand for skills from employers. That survey revealed an even mix of 33% of respondents feeling Universities were adequately providing the skills and knowledge to students to secure a role in IT, whereas another 33% felt that they didn't.

In this year's survey we asked the same question (See Fig. 4), and the results have changed only slightly. 35% of respondents now feel that the Universities are providing the skills and knowledge needed, while with a slight majority, 36% feel that they are not.

Broken down by profession, QA / Testers at 64% were the group who felt they were most aligned, followed by Business Analysts (53%) and then Infrastructure (48%). With the more technical disciplines, the majority of respondents held a negative view. Within Software

Development for example, 40% of respondents felt that Universities did not equip graduates with the knowledge required, compared to 31% who did.
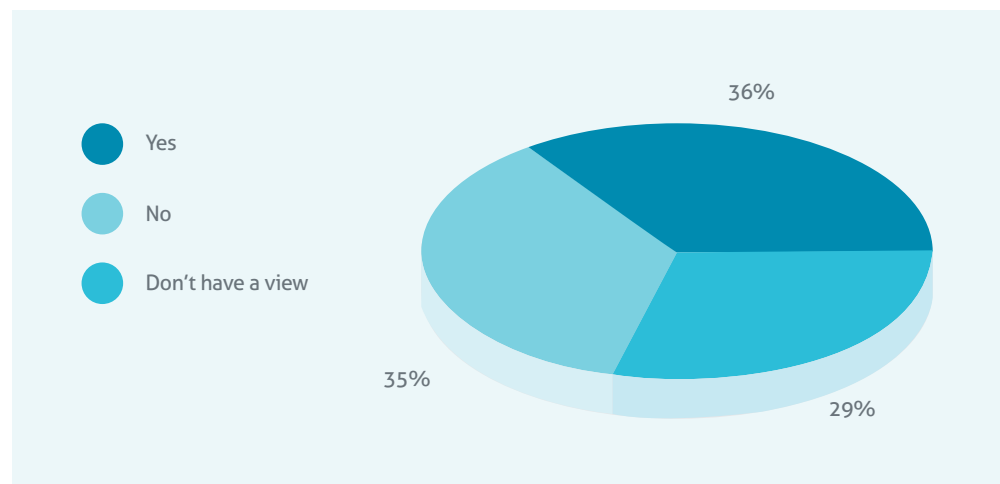
One Software Developer commented "They do equip people with the necessary skills to perform in an IT environment. After that it's down to the individual to find their own way in the industry which is fair enough." Within Business Intelligence, 44% of respondents held a negative view, whereas just 22% believed there was alignment.

At the senior end, the majority of those surveyed amongst CIOs and CTOs (43%) held a negative view while only 14% felt that graduates had the skills and knowledge needed.

One CIO commented "But I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I'm more concerned that they know how to learn."

FIGURE 4.
Do you feel that local universities have given IT graduates the skills and knowledge they require to secure a job within IT?

Legend:
- Yes
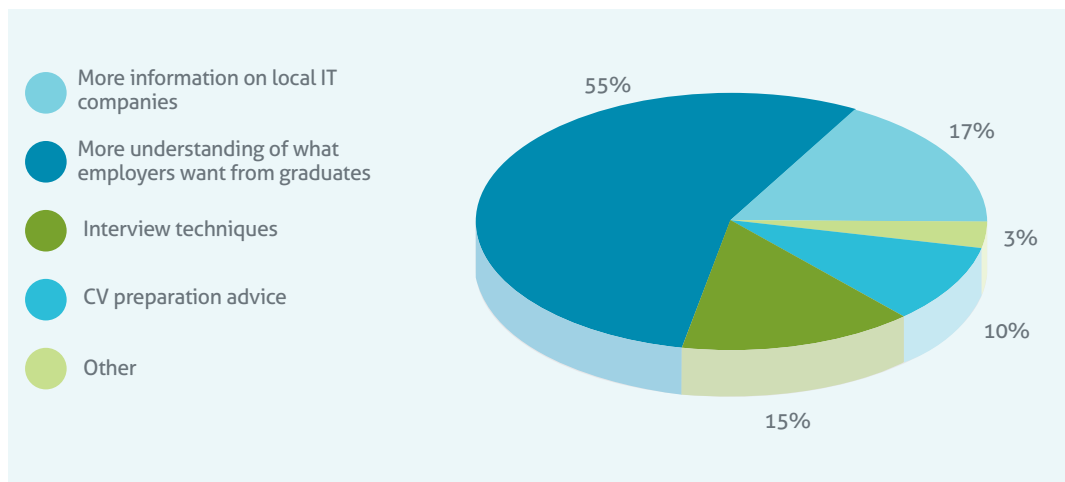- No
- Don't have a view

36%
29%
35%

We asked respondents where they believed the universities could improve in the assistance that they provide to students to increase their employability. The majority (55%) felt that the universities could give a better understanding of what exactly employers are looking for from graduates. This was followed by more information on local IT companies (17%), interview techniques (15%), and CV preparation advice (10%).

A number of respondents mentioned the significant benefit of students gaining actual work experience during their course, for example similar to that provided currently by DCU. Similarly, more exposure to group work and working on more projects dealing with real life problems were cited as important.

It is clear from the results that practical work experience in companies is highly regarded and should be a key component of all technology courses.

FIGURE 5.

In which areas do you think that universities could improve in terms of the assistance they give to students to increase their employability prior to graduation?

- More information on local IT companies
- More understanding of what employers want from graduates
- Interview techniques
- CV preparation advice
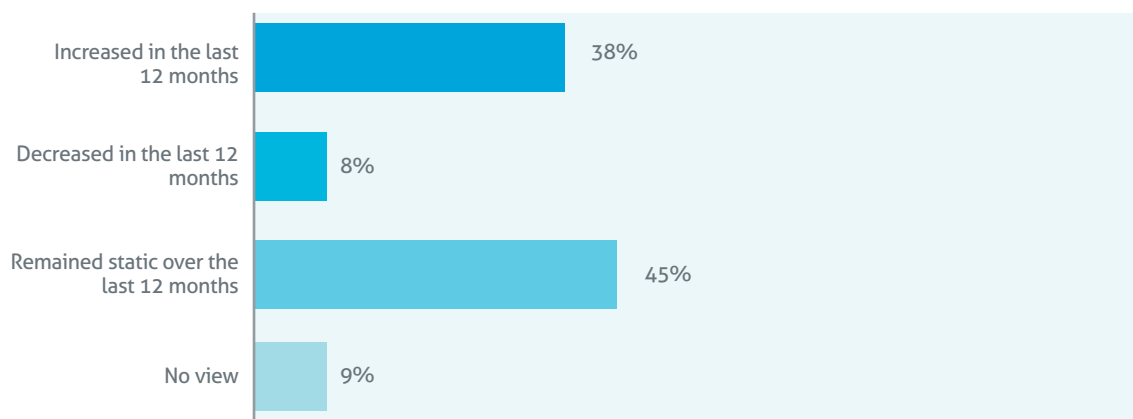- Other

55%

17%

3%

10%

15%

MARKET MOVEMENT

Our Brightwater Salary Survey of 2014 showed salaries across the breadth of IT specialisms rising between 5% and 10% on average. This compares very favourably to the other disciplines measured in our survey which saw an average increase last year of between 2% and 3%. There are a number of reasons for this including continuing strong inward investment into the IT sector, coupled with a shortage of skilled resources to fill many of the vacancies created.

The sentiment among candidates in our survey reflects this. There was an 18% increase in the number of people who believed salaries had increased in the local technology market over the last year, up to 38% from

approximately 20% a year ago (see Fig. 6). Overall, the data suggests a more positive outlook from candidates on the movement of salaries in the market.

In last year's survey, approximately 20% of respondents felt that salaries had dropped in the previous year, and this has decreased markedly to just 8% of respondents this year. Of the people who thought salaries had dropped in the last 12 months, 58% were infrastructure professionals, while only 5% were software development professionals. This is unsurprising as salaries in the infrastructure space have remained largely static or seen only small increases in the last year.

FIGURE 6.
What is your view regarding salaries within the Irish IT sector?

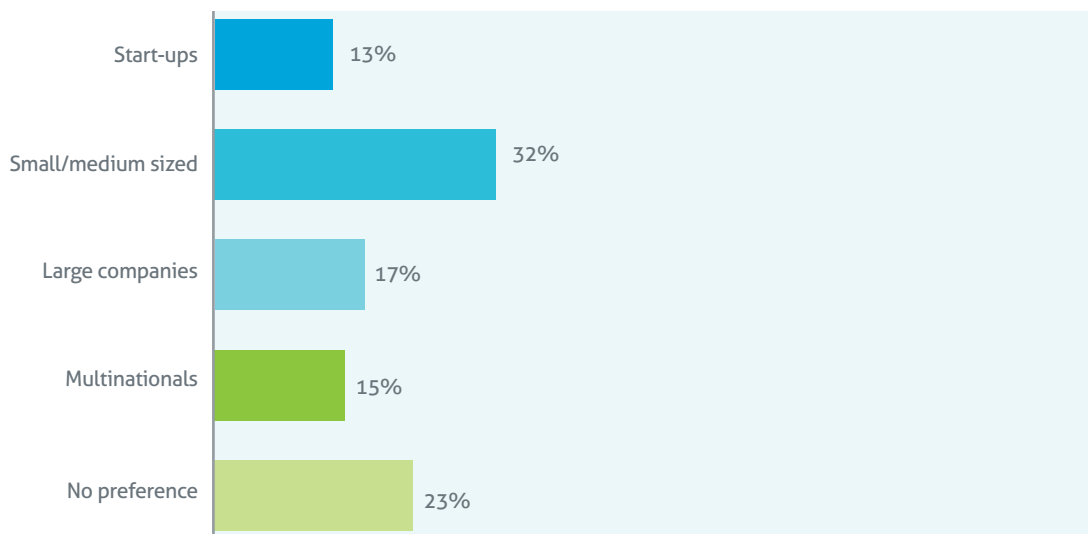| Category	Percentage
Increased in the last 12 months	38%
Decreased in the last 12 months	8%
Remained static over the last 12 months	45%
No view	9%

TOP

The size of companies also affects the decision making process of candidates. Over 35% of respondents to our technology survey last year said that they were more interested in moving jobs to established multinational companies, while this year the figure has decreased to just 15%. Conversely, the number of people this year that would choose to work in a start-up or medium sized company has doubled to over 45% (see Fig. 7).

When results are broken down further, the data suggests that a majority of software engineers still have a preference to work with more established small to medium sized businesses. However, some of the comments by respondents indicate that the amount of choice currently available to many developers allows them to make slightly riskier decisions and take a chance on joining a start-up company. This availability of choice means that if the role or company doesn't work out, they can usually find alternative employment within a short space of time.

Other comments suggest that the growing attractiveness of start-ups this year lies in the perceived flexibility of smaller companies, their tendency towards innovation and the perception that they "have their fingers on the pulse" of the local IT market. One developer commented "I tend to create better software in a place that values Test Driven Development, an Agile approach and where my ideas actually have an effect on where the product goes."

In contrast, the majority of project managers, creative and infrastructure professionals had a preference for employment in a multinational organisation. This may relate to a perception of security or more internal opportunity for advancement.

FIGURE 7.
When seeking a new role, what type of company would you prefer to work for?

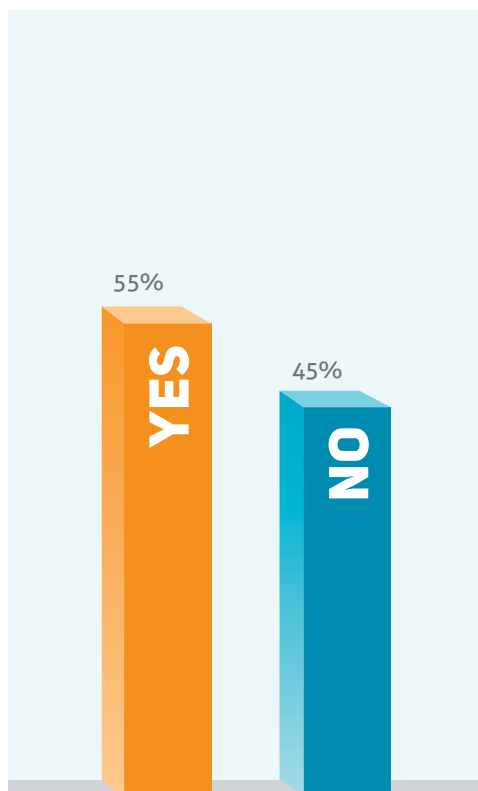| Company type	Percentage
Start-ups	13%
Small/medium sized	32%
Large companies	17%
Multinationals	15%
No preference	23%

TOP

We asked respondents whether they had declined a job offer over the past two years and a majority (55%) said that they had (see Fig. 8). Despite opportunities being still relatively abundant for many working in IT, there seems to be a disconnect between the expectations of jobseeker and employer in terms of salary levels and packages. Of those who rejected an offer, just over 30% said that this was because the level of salary being offered was not what they had expected.

Over the past year we noticed an increase in the amount of candidates who were dealing with multiple offers and counter offers, specifically within development, QA and Business Intelligence. From the sur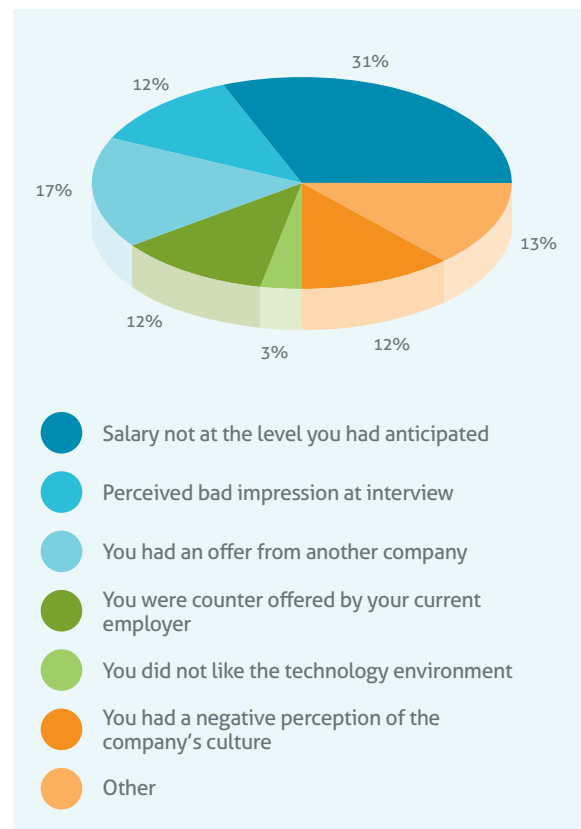vey results, we can see that there is still a high percentage of those experiencing multiple offers, at 17%, and those accepting counter-offers, at 12%. These make up almost one third of those who have declined an offer in the last 12 months.

Interestingly, there are still those who have turned down offers from companies because of a perception of a negative company culture (12%), and those that had a bad impression of the role/company at the interview stage (12%). There are increasingly more options being made available to highly sought-after candidates in the IT market. Employers who are aware of this and put considerable effort into selling their company as an employer of choice at interview stage will find that they will have much more success attracting the best talent.

FIGURE 8.
Have you declined a job offer in the last two years?

FIGURE 9.
Why did you reject the offer?

- Salary not at the level you had anticipated
- Perceived bad impression at interview
- You had an offer from another company
- You were counter offered by your current employer
- You did not like the technology environment
- You had a negative perception of the company's culture
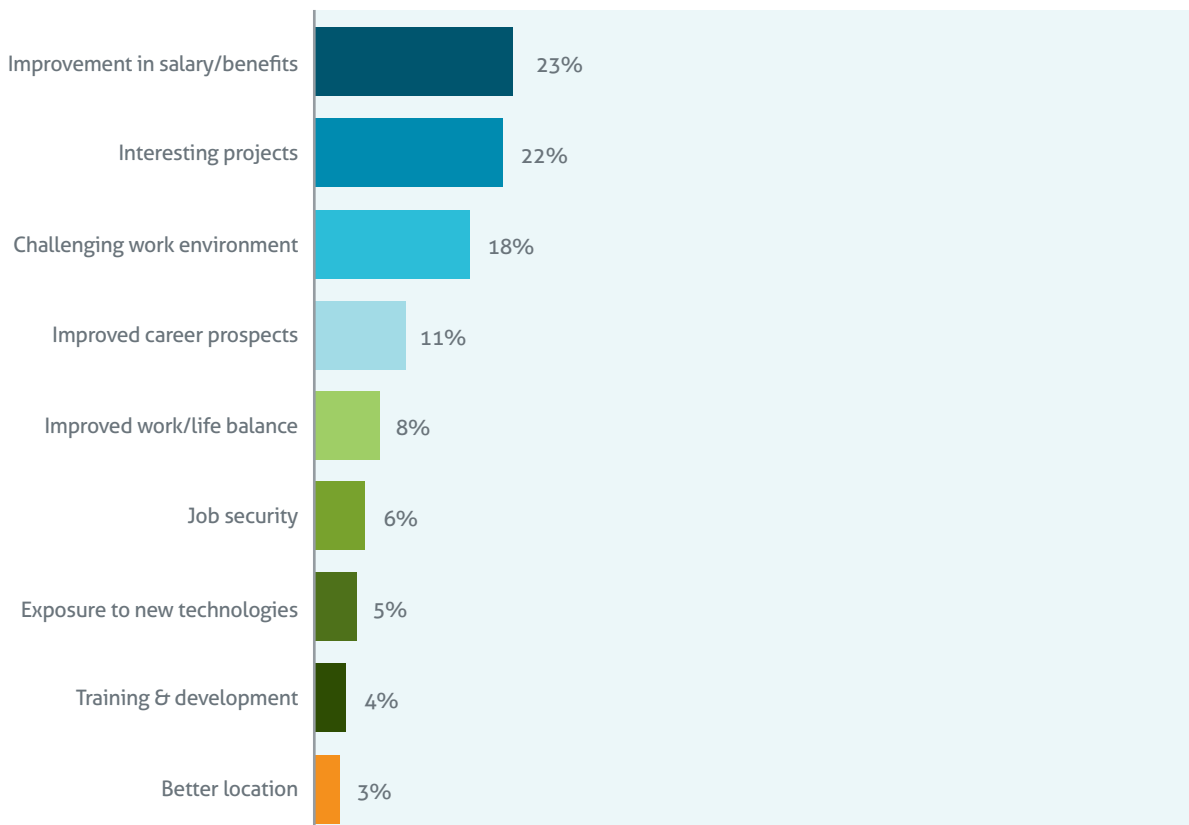- Other

TOP

WHAT MOTIVATES THE TECH COMMUNITY?

In last year's Technology Survey, the majority of respondents said that it was the salary and benefits on offer that were the main attraction for them when considering a new job. This year, that view remains unchanged among respondents. Exactly 23% of people said that improvement in salary and benefits would be the most important thing to them when considering a change and the right increase would ultimately be the deciding factor in that move. Other decisions that motivated individuals were the challenge they face in the work environment, with 17.5% indicating that this is a key area for them. Improved career progression, work/life balance and job location factors are all considered less important in the decision, totalling 11%, 8% and 3% respectively (see Fig. 10).

Interestingly, unhappiness with a current employer is a rising factor for candidates looking to move on, up by more than 3% this year. This is supported by information we receive during our own interviews and assessments in house.

The data has been very useful for getting specific information in key areas, but it is also important to take in the bigger picture as well as to what is motivating IT candidates to move jobs in Ireland. Undeniably it is salary and benefits packages that are at the forefront of the decision making process. However, there is a mixture of other factors as well, such as the perception of work culture, how innovative the technology environment is and whether the position is a step up in terms of seniority.

FIGURE 10.
When looking for a new role, what are the most important things an employer can offer you?

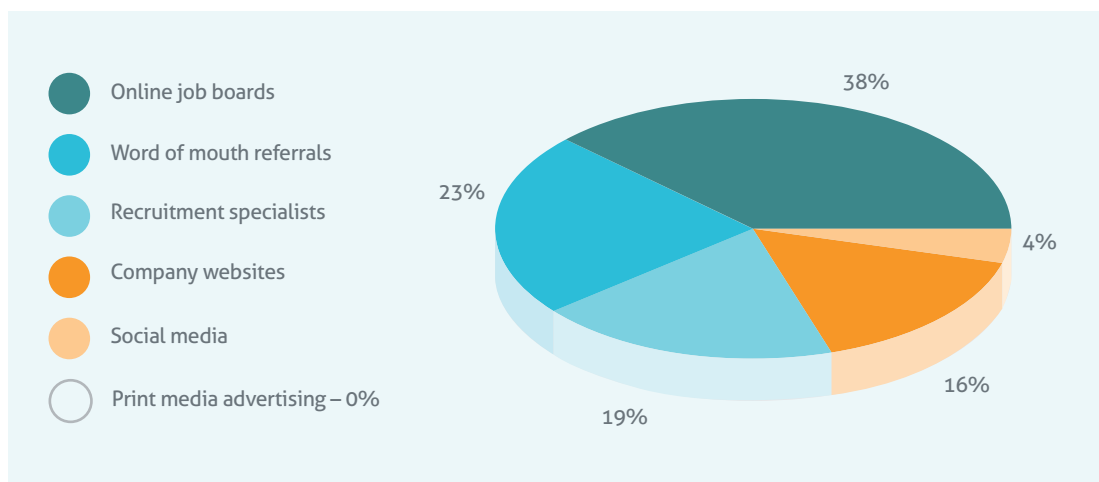|	
Improvement in salary/benefits	23%
Interesting projects	22%
Challenging work environment	18%
Improved career prospects	11%
Improved work/life balance	8%
Job security	6%
Exposure to new technologies	5%
Training & development	4%
Better location	3%

TOP

SEARCH METHODS

There are a number of possible alternatives for hiring managers when looking to attract new talent. Traditional methods have included recruiting directly, using specialist recruitment firms, and through referrals. From a candidate's perspective, online job boards have been the most popular route when searching for a job at 38%, down 2% from last year, closely followed by 19% who chose to use a recruitment consultancy (see Fig. 11).

What was surprising is the decrease in the number of IT professionals who have indicated that social media is their preferred method of searching for a job at only 4%, down from 5% last year. Interestingly none of our respondents chose print media as their first choice method while nearly 50% indicated that it would be their least likely method of finding a job. The results illustrate the importance of adopting a wide and well researched recruitment strategy in order to target and reach a specific group.

Overall, the data suggests that no single method is relied on by IT professionals when looking for a job. Employers should consider employing a variety of methods to attract talent, whether that may be online job boards, recruitment companies or through their own website. However, one benefit of using a recruitment company is underlined by one respondent who said they found recruitment consultants can offer an insight into the culture of a company in both a personal and technological capacity. This is something they would not get through a job board or a company website. In fact, 54% of respondents to this year's survey said that company culture, technology stack/environment, and the work/life balance were the main motivators in choosing a new job.

FIGURE 11.
When looking for a new IT position, what is the most favoured method?

- Online job boards
- Word of mouth referrals
- Recruitment specialists
- Company websites
- Social media
- Print media advertising – 0%

38%
4%
16%
19%
23%

TOP

EMERGING TRENDS & SKILLS

TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

We asked respondents what they believed will be the main frameworks, methodologies, trends, tools or languages over the coming 12 months. Similar to last year, the further development and expansion of cloud computing and cloud hosting, and also virtualisation and the growth of virtual desktops came out very strongly. Similarly, the further growth of Agile development and IT Governance including ITIL were very prominent.

Business Intelligence features very strongly this year including reporting, data analytics, dimensional modelling, data warehousing, web analytics, real-time analytics, predictive analytics and the increasing importance of Big Data. Also mentioned was the expected growth in open source BI platforms. On the development side, the growth in mobile development came out strongly. A growing focus on UI and UX is mentioned, including the development of UX methodologies and mobile standards.

Android development is expected to continue to grow, as is the continuing strong demand for mobile apps. Continued integration of web pages within mobile apps is seen as a dominant trend as is the growth or responsive (mobile friendly) websites. In terms of languages, respondents mentioned HTML5, Python, .Net, ASP.Net, MVC 5, Java, C++, Ruby on Rails, iOS, Objective C, JavaScript and JavaScript variants like node.js backbone.js, angular.js. On the database side, the continuing rise of NoSQL has been predicted.

Security is expected to continue to grow in importance especially security software and network security. The further drive for cost optimisation and process improvement was mentioned frequently and also the further growth of the Internet of Things and embedded devices.

It is clear there are a number of areas which are growing in importance and it will be interesting over the coming 12 months to see how readily available candidates with the enhanced mix of skills will be to service these evolving requirements.

GENDER IMBALANCE

One clear way of addressing the recognised skills shortage is to attract more women into IT. According to a 2013 report from the Digital Agenda for Europe, approximately 7 million people are employed directly in the Digital sector, and the sector creates about 120,000 new jobs annually.

Currently women only make up 30% of the IT workforce, with many in junior roles. This is despite a projected deficit of 700,000 skilled workers in Europe by 2015.

"The ICT industry also needs to recognise and put at the top of their agenda the fact that female talent cannot be overlooked if European companies think seriously of innovation," the European Commission said in a statement. "We need to attract more women into ICT jobs in order to ensure equality of opportunities and empower them to participate fully in the information society." "Women should shape the future world that new technologies will be transforming at a dizzying speed."

The Independent newspaper in the UK reported in October 2013 that most technology companies have no women sitting on the Board of Directors, primarily because there were too few women with the relevant technical skills from which to recruit.

According to our own survey, only 16% of respondents were female, while the majority 84% were male.

Looking at the gender breakdown within each specialism suggests that Software Development is very male dominated. Of the 86% of male respondents to the survey, 43% are working within development. In contracts, of the 16% of female respondents, 27% were working within development. This was the dominant specialism for female respondents.

Project Management was the next most popular specialism for female respondents at 21%, compared to just over 19% of males. Creative and Design was proportionally more popular among females, counting for 15% of female respondents compared to just 5% of males. Business Analysis had as slightly higher

percentage of females (12% of female respondents), compared to 10% of male respondents.

In terms of the type of employment they were engaged in, 73% of females who responded were employed in permanent roles, compared to 68% of males. The numbers working on Daily Rate Contracts were the same for both males and females at 15%.
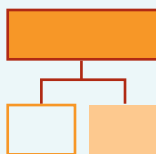
At senior level, there was an even split of 3% female at CIO/CTO level and 3% of males, however given the low sample of female respondents in the survey, this doesn't necessarily provide a true and accurate picture of the market. It does need to be highlighted that the IT sector, perhaps due to the shortage of candidates, may be one area that cannot afford to maintain any possibility of a gender based glass ceiling.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITHIN EACH SPECIALISM BY GENDER

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

MALE 43%

FEMALE 27%

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

MALE 19%

FEMALE 21%

CREATIVE DESIGN

MALE 5%

FEMALE 15%

BUSINESS ANALYSIS

MALE 10%

FEMALE 12%

TOP

PERMANENT & CONTRACT RECRUITMENT

We have continued to witness a vibrant daily rate market through the past year, and together with the overall growth in the IT sector it is unsurprising to see increasing positive sentiment towards contracting particularly across those working in Business Intelligence, Project Management, Business Analysis and Software Development.

Brightwater recorded a 9% increase in the volume of permanent roles over the past year, and a 7% increase in the volume of contract roles, while our Salary Survey of 2014 showed wage increases for both permanent and contract roles of between 5% and 10%.

It is clear that the contract market has improved over the past year. With the rise in opportunities available and rates on offer, we have seen more people prepared to take on contract work and this has been reflected in our survey. We noted earlier that over 58% of respondents in our survey who were currently in a permanent role would consider contracting over the coming 12 months.

The large numbers of people who are willing to consider contracting are very welcome in order to continue to fill contract roles as they become available. The reward for candidates who choose this route include strong rates, good work experience and exposure to new technologies or ways of working. For companies who are looking to recruit contractors, the availability of a flexible solution to cover roles which are not permanent is highly important.

On the permanent side we have seen growth outside of the development and Business Intelligence areas. More opportunities were available through the past 12 months across Project Management, Business Analysis and Infrastructure.

UNIVERSITIES & SKILLS ALIGNMENT

In last year's survey we noted "Any concern about Ireland as an FDI Destination is primarily driven by the resources available. Universities must align themselves with employers to support courses that are relevant, business focused and skills driven in order to produce graduates who can add value to their employers and have the key skills to handle the commercial realities of the market".

In this survey, we saw a decrease in the numbers who believe universities have given IT graduates the skills and knowledge they require to secure a job within IT, and the majority (36%) believe that they haven't. This is a key finding in this report and we would hope that this can be improved in the short to medium term.

According to the ICT Skills Action Plan (2014-2018) by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Ireland "is part of a global race for talent and we are increasingly competing for inward investment and export opportunities on the basis of the quality of our workforce". It is key therefore that the quality and responsiveness of our Education System fully supports the demands of employers to take full advantage of the opportunities which will present themselves over the coming years.

This new ICT Skills and Action Plan follows on from the previous 2012 Plan, and is focussed on building the supply of graduates and skilled professionals with core ICT and electronic / electrical engineering qualifications at honours level and above. Their ambition is to make Ireland a global leader for talent and skills, including meeting 74% of the demand for high level ICT skills from the education system by 2018, up from the current level which is estimated at just over 60%.

In addition, they are also collaborating with industry in the design of programmes, including the provision of structured work placements, and also developing support measures to better align programmes with enterprise needs. It will be interesting to review the progress of this plan as it develops over the coming years.

TOP

RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN MOVING JOBS

Many contributors to this year's survey indicated that they feel more confident when considering a change in career, compared to last year. This trend is seen in the fact that fewer people rejected job offers over the past year compared with the year before. Also, when asked if they felt the need to move to a new employer in order to progress their career, almost 70% of those surveyed answered yes. One respondent noted that "IT is an industry where there are so many opportunities in so many sectors. It can be difficult to progress in one place that has a fixed structure and you are left just waiting for the position to become available." This is a sentiment that is very popular and that employers shouldn't ignore.

MORE JOB OPPORTUNITIES & SALARIES

The number of jobs that are becoming available to candidates, especially in the areas of Software Development (Python, Java and Ruby), IT Security (risk, compliance and network security), as well as Business Intelligence (OBIEE, Microsoft BI) is increasing year on year. This can be attributed to the increase in the number of new companies (indigenous and multinational) based in Ireland, and the increase in funding available for companies already here. When respondents were asked when they intended to look at new employment opportunities, over 59% said they are either looking immediately or plan to look within 12 months. This has major implications for employers who need to look at their retention strategies amd consider succession planning.

SKILLS & TRAINING

We asked respondents what training or development activities they hope to undertake over the coming 12 months. Among software engineers, many said that they would like to gain some experience in the field of mobile application development, an echo of last year. Other areas were in modern web technologies such as Node, Angular and web analytics. Also, a large number of people mentioned they would like to get some hands-on experience with Agile. This methodology is already very popular with many companies and is being increasingly adopted throughout the industry.

Other significant areas that proved popular were cyber security and penetration testing, with a large number of respondents saying that these are areas in which they would like to gain some experience.

Overall, it is clearly important to IT professionals to keep up to date on developing trends and technologies and employers should be aware of this. Whether this is done through subsidising workshops, seminars, and certifications or by allowing time off to attend conferences or training courses, employers in Ireland would do well to consider their menu of education and training options as part of their overall package as a benefit to employees.

Reasons for increased job opportunities

INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR COMPANIES   **NUMBER OF NEW COMPANIES IN IRELAND**   **EXPANSION OF EXISTING COMPANIES**

TOP

CHALLENGES FACING THE IT SECTOR IN IRELAND

Looking towards the challenges facing the IT sector in Ireland, the majority of respondents (56%) felt that it was the lack of experienced resources available that was the most pressing issue. This was followed by a lack of opportunities (27%), external economic factors (21%), and then inadequate 3rd level education and lack of funding for start-ups both at 20%.
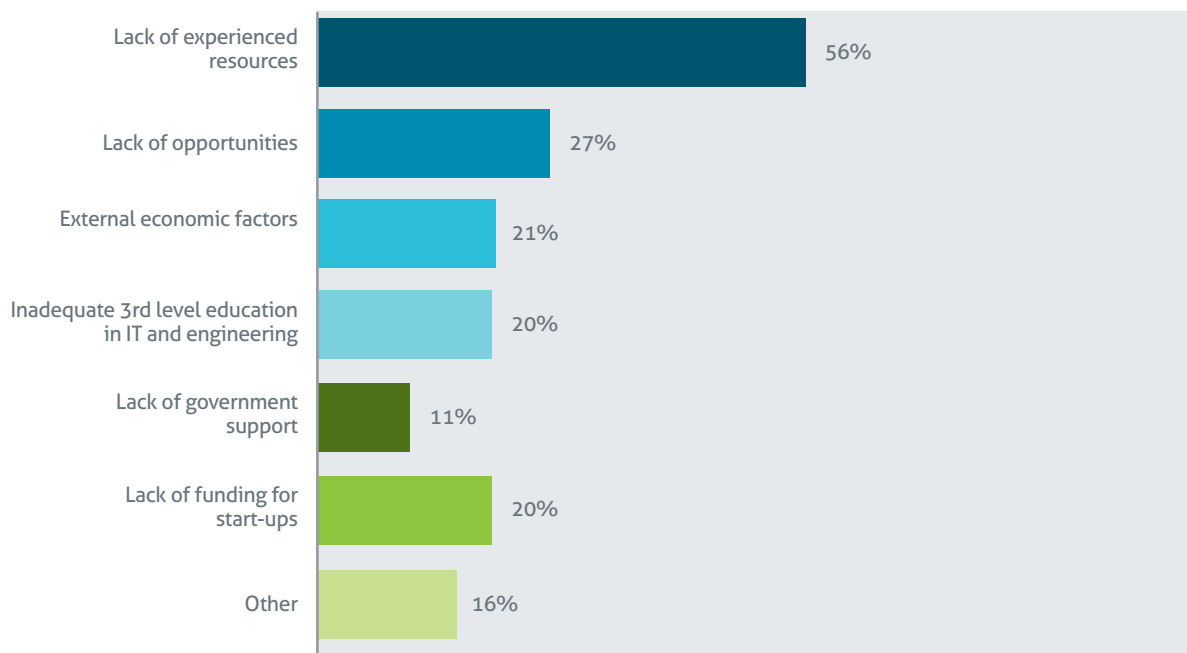
Among CIO's and CTO's, an equal number (40%) believed lack of experienced resources, and a lack of opportunities were the biggest challenges.

Other challenges mentioned were the tax regime for entrepreneurs, and a general lack of understanding of the potential of IT in business, which then translates to a lack of credible opportunities for professionals.

Two ways that the government is currently addressing the obvious skills gap in the market is to firstly increase the output from the education system releasing more graduates into the system, and secondly they have made the process of obtaining a working visa simpler and faster. This will therefore allow more skilled candidates access to the labour market here and helping employers to fill key roles.

Last year Minister Richard Bruton and Minister Ruairi Quinn announced a package of measures for the ICT sector, all aimed at helping to make Ireland the Internet Capital of Europe. As part of these measures, there would be an additional 2000 people graduating from IT courses per year, while an additional 700 visas would be issued yearly, an increase of approximately 50%.

FIGURE 12.
What do you perceive is the biggest challenge facing the IT sector in Ireland?

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of experienced resources	56%
Lack of opportunities	27%
External economic factors	21%
Inadequate 3rd level education in IT and engineering	20%
Lack of government support	11%
Lack of funding for start-ups	20%
Other	16%

(Respondents were allowed to cite more than one challenge)

TOP

In addition, many of the rules for work permits have been revised, including a simplification of the application process, with the result that the waiting time for visas will now be approximately two weeks.

Because there is much more certainty around visas for valid candidates, this will help make Ireland a world leader in the ease of allowing these highly sought-after individuals to make their home here. This will further allow companies to grow faster and create more jobs in Ireland. Instead of Irish companies and US multinationals based in Ireland having to outsource jobs to other countries, Ireland's technology sector will more readily be able to employ people locally.

This approach should have a second benefit to the Irish economy. Research has shown that every job created in the high-tech sector, whether through immigration or otherwise, created four to five roles elsewhere in the economy.

CONCLUSION

Similar themes to our previous survey came across very strongly this year. Salaries, career progression, on-going training opportunities and exposure to the latest technologies and methodologies are still considered key factors in attracting and retaining key people.

In relation to salaries, a clear message from respondents this year is the importance of salary and benefits in taking a role. While salaries in IT in Ireland are not yet at the levels being paid in California or London for example, as rates push upwards there may be a danger that we may become less competitive and therefore more likely to lose potential jobs to other countries. Companies are faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining the people they need in the organisation, while adhering to tight budgets. As a technology community, the challenge is to reward people appropriately for innovation, skill and productivity while at the same time remaining competitive in the international market.

There is still a feeling of misalignment between what the universities in Ireland are delivering, and what industry is demanding in terms of skills. Universities and colleges should continue to look at ways of making courses fully relevant to the constantly changing demands of employers, including an emphasis on working on real life problems and relevant work placements. The government's recent initiatives to both increase the throughput from our own education system and the increased volume and faster process relating to work visas for non-EU nationals should have a strong effect in addressing the current imbalance between supply and demand, while also bringing in some strong talent from the international community. This should have the additional benefit of skills transfer bringing new ideas and ways of working for the benefit of all.

The overall message of this year's survey is positive. Respondents believe that opportunities and salaries are on the rise and as a result they feel confident in looking at new opportunities and moving job. As the overall economy in Ireland experiences increased growth, we believe that the Information Technology sector will continue to perform well this year and offer increasing opportunities for graduates, experienced professionals and immigrants seeking to live and work in Ireland.

ABOUT BRIGHTWATER IT

Brightwater IT is part of the Brightwater Group, Ireland's leading specialist recruitment group. We recruit IT professionals across all industries in Ireland and overseas.

Brightwater IT has been established for over 15 years, and during this time we have built and enviable reputation in the market. As a result we continue to attract highly experienced permanent and contract staff who are looking for their next challenge.

We cover all roles from graduate and entry level positions, to executive hires. Our client base is wide and varied, and we have built long standing partnerships and mutually beneficial working relationships with companies from start-ups, to SMEs, to the large multinationals across the 32 counties.

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