The Official Ekco
Trends Report
2023

EKCO

Tech job losses could be a boon for indigenous organisations

For some time now, small and medium-sized organisations have struggled to find skilled technical professionals, which has been a real hindrance to business transformation. Cyber security specialists are in particularly short supply.

However, we've recently seen some of the large multinationals start to lay off many staff – and not just commercial or operations employees. Large swathes of technical professionals have found themselves redundant and on the hunt for a new role.

While it's undoubtedly unfortunate for the individuals involved, there is massive opportunity behind this labour market shift, both for those job hunters and mid-sized organisations in particular.

Many technical professionals are now weighting risk more into their decision-making process when taking on a new role.

Consider for a moment what has happened with Twitter recently, with Elon Musk sacking thousands of staff at the stroke of a pen. We've also seen Salesforce, Amazon, Microsoft, Alphabet and others announce the trimming of the global workforce, and this is impacting Ireland, UK and beyond.

At a time of significant increases in the cost of living and soaring accommodation costs, safe is the order of day and that's why many technical staff are now looking at growing, mid-sized indigenous organisations such as Ekco for their next career move.

TREND 1

> "If I were on the hunt for a new role following redundancy, I might take the view that mid-sized indigenous organisations are a safer bet. They're stable, more predictable and less influenced by company policies outside the region. One can also get more rounded technical experience, rather than being pigeon-holed into a niche role in a multinational."

Conor Scolard, Technical Director, Ekco
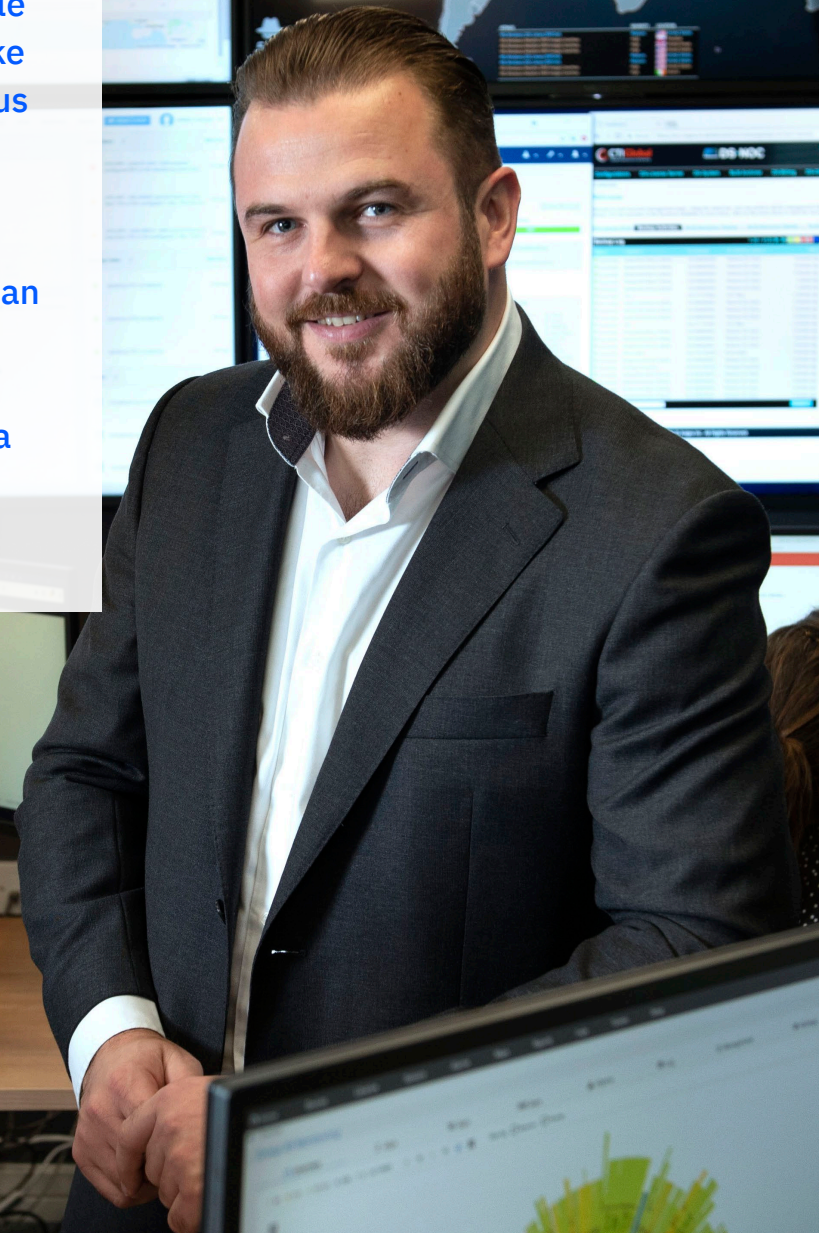
Examining the profile of the business you want to work for is important. Job seekers need to watch for financial stability, senior management with a solid track record, defined career progression, and growth ambition. Who doesn't want the option of geographic or role mobility once you cement your position within the company?

TREND 1

Demand for **business and data analysts** will continue to accelerate

Information is power, and faced with an increasing number of data streams from everything from wireless routers to business and financial applications, we predict a far greater emphasis on data analysis across every business sector. In many ways, it goes hand-in-hand with the explosion in AI and machine learning.

As AI software grows in maturity and sophistication, it's likely that some data analysis functions will be absorbed by AI software. Human intervention will always be required to validate the data outcomes, but manual analysis will almost certainly be reduced.

Take a simple example of a support helpdesk. Ticketing data can assist us in understanding the nature of support tickets that are raised. Using AI or ML models, we can then use this data to create automated fixes for these tickets before they even reach a human for intervention. Once the script has been created and validated by support staff, it can be made operational.

Helpdesks can expect to slash support ticket volumes with this technology and this frees up engineering staff for more strategic work within the business.

Similarly, analysing the consumption patterns of IT services by customers can yield additional opportunity to deliver more business benefits to them and in the process drive more revenue for the supplier. For example, we would look at Office 365 customers and ensure that they are aware of the need to take a third party backup service to protect their data.

We would also look at their use of the various tiers of Office 365 subscriptions, analyse their usage and ensure that they are on the most appropriate subscription-type for their use case. With more analysis, we can build a deeper profile of the customer and meet their expectations for service.

TREND 2

By 2025, the market for artificial intelligence (AI) software will reach almost

$134.8 billion.

AI market growth will accelerate to reach **31.1% in 2025**, considerably outpacing the overall software market growth.

Source: Gartner

"While the team are writing code, developing our portal and integrating solutions into it, the data analysts are looking at the backend and asking how this can add value to the business. The Board want to see data in a way that they can easily digest and then use it for data-driven decision-making."

Conor Scolard, Technical Director, Ekco

TREND 2

A tightening economic environment will drive cost consolidation across the **entire IT estate**

It's of no great surprise that organisations are looking to cut costs wherever they can. Energy increases in recent months have had a significant impact on data centres, for example and this is having a downstream effect.

If they haven't already been hit, users of cloud services will pay significantly more in 2023. That's bad news for the OPEX budget, but all is not lost. A good business analyst can yield cost reduction benefits.

Many organisations are already analysing their use of public or private cloud services, asking themselves questions around consolidation of services and whether a particular service needs to be 'always on'.

Larger organisations have teams of analysts dedicated to trimming the parameters of existing cloud services and other infrastructure or application delivery tools to optimise cost.

Items such as software licensing are coming under the spotlight and with staff numbers decreasing, organisations are looking to subscription-types that can scale down, rather than getting locked into annual contracts and fixed subscriber numbers.

Gartner research shows that while most CFOs have been relying on pricing-focused strategies to offset inflation,

39%

will zero in on cost cutting if inflation remains persistently high. That will soon turn into explicit demands for rapid cost cutting.

And it's not just about cutting IT costs.

At a very practical level, companies are also now having to bear the costs of bringing staff back to the office. Thanks to Covid and the increasing trend towards remote work, many haven't had this burden to deal with in recent years.

"
We don't see cloud migration projects being put on hold, per se, as it's clear that organisations can never hope to replicate such a secure and robust infrastructure in their own data centre."

Mark Donnellan, Sales Director, Ekco

TREND 3

Growing importance of the **CISO as a stand-alone function**, detached from IT operations

The focus on cyber security will continue unabated in 2023. We've been saying it for a long time – cyber security is a board-level issue and sits within the realm of organisational risk. As such, its separation from IT operations was always inevitable and will accelerate this year. Its profile within the business will grow.

The CISO is under increasing pressure not only in terms of protecting digital assets from the latest threat vectors but also ensuring business continuity. In fact, the responsibility for business continuity planning is transitioning to the function of the CISO.

If you consider the triumvirate of confidentiality, integrity and availability, all three have moved from IT operations to the CISO, within the realms of gated security. Hard questions are now being asked by CISOs and wider risk management professionals.

CISOs want to know that their data is safe, immune from ransomware and can be retrieved quickly and easily with its integrity intact. There's more focus on data validation and that's a positive development.

This feeds directly into the issue of cyber insurance, something that is increasingly hard to come by.

The overhead placed on organisations in being able to avail of the service is significant and the maturity level of its security operations has to be reasonably high to fulfil the myriad conditions laid down by cyber insurance underwriters. There can be as many as 160 individual questions on an insurance proposal form before an application will even be considered.

TREND 4

Integrity

Availability

Confidentiality

> **Business continuity planning is not an IT function anymore. It now firmly sits within the realm of cyber security and risk. Business executives want to know that their operational data is highly available and can be restored in the face of an unforeseen event. The CISO is now the one reporting to the board on these issues and must be seen more as a strategic-thinker and direct influencer."**

Mark Donnellan, Sales Director, Ekco

TREND 4

EKCO

We're Ekco: Europe's fastest-growing, security-first managed cloud provider

Ekco is a leading Irish headquartered security-first, managed cloud provider. With over 600 employees across Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands, Ekco offers its 3,000+ clients access to the deep expertise of its 400+ technical specialists to deliver services to drive technology growth.

Want to discuss these trends with us? Great.

Pick up the phone or drop us an email and let's talk.

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