

Make TheOlympian.com my home page

Olympia, Washington

Tuesday, March 22nd, 2005

Home Classified Jobs Cars Real Estate Customer Service

Weather

36°



S M I W I F S

7 day

Archive

GO

News Announcements Sports Opinion Living Entertainment Outdoors Photos & Forums Shop Classified Contact Us

KOMO 4 News On Demand

The News is ready when you are.



Sunday, March 20, 2005

E-Mail Discuss Subscribe

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Private sector offers unique challenges

Thurston County's quality of life, economic growth draw talented workers

CHRIS CLOUGH

THE OLYMPIAN

The professional services sector is one of South Sound's fastest-growing, providing a base of jobs that pay well and attract an educated work force.

In the market for a new home?

Jim Greene
GRI, CRS
360.701.3276

[Search for New Homes](#)

"Professional services are growing everywhere and include a range of services, including lawyers, accountants, engineers and architects," said Pete Swensson of the Thurston Regional Planning Council. The sector also includes computer services and Web design.

With a flat to declining manufacturing sector and budget pressure on state government, professional services are critical to South Sound's growing economy.

"It's one of the fastest growing segments, probably the fastest,"

Swensson said.

From 1997 to 2002, the number of people in the professional service category climbed from 2,000 to 8,000 in Thurston County.

Professional service businesses typically are fairly small.

Zhonka Broadband is in that category.

"As an Internet service provider, our main product is a utility, and as such, we think people are always going to need access," Zhonka's Dave Olson said. Zhonka also hosts Web sites.

Zhonka essentially is a two-person operation that also relies on the help of interns and friends from time to time.

Olson, who previously co-owned OlyWa.net before selling it to California-based Advanced TelCom Group, is optimistic about its prospects.

"When we got back into the market two and a half years ago, it was a downtime for the economy," Olson said.



Tom and Laura Skillings (left), along with Bob Connolly, serve as principals for the Lacey-based Skillings-Connolly engineering firm. "The revenue we are able to put back into the community is meaningful," said Tom Skillings. "Our annual payroll is \$4 million." Steve Bloom/ The Olympian

Professional services jobs

January 2005: 7,100

January 2004: 6,600

Join the Reader Network

Do you want The Olympian to keep you in mind when we canvass the community for opinions?

[Click here and sign up with our Reader Network to offer your view.](#)

Get the latest news delivered to your inbox. [Click here to get e-mail alerts from theolympian.com.](#)

shopLocal

Find Local Sales:

GO

Blue Camo BUFFET

RED WIND CASINO
Nisqually
360-412-5000

"So everything has been better than that. We've had good, consistent growth. A lot of what we see are new, small business start-ups. One of the first things they need is a domain name."

Professional services also include temporary office jobs, giving both employers and employees flexibility.

"As a company grows or the economy comes out of a slowdown, it can be advantageous to hire people on a temporary basis until the underlying business justifies a permanent position," Swensson said.

There are medium-size professional service employers in South Sound as well.

Lacey-based Skillings-Connolly, a civil engineering, environmental and surveying firm, has 80 employees companywide, with about 65 working at the Lacey headquarters.

Since 1983, the company has done more than 2,200 projects, from Black Lake Boulevard to major interstates as far away as Montana.

"The revenue we are able to put back into the community is meaningful," said Tom Skillings, the founding partner of the company. "Our annual payroll is \$4 million."

Low interest rates and attractive land prices have helped to keep Skillings-Connolly humming along.

"Activity is pretty strong in the engineer business and environmental business," he said. "We're also busy in right-of-way acquisition."

The public sector work is steady -- "transportation to a lesser degree, and a lot more water, wastewater work projects," he said.

The company also works on commercial and residential projects.

"The private sector has been really strong, primarily because of interest rates and pressure shifting from Pierce and King counties to the south because of land availability."

Swensson said professional services will continue to be a growth segment in Thurston County, which is well-positioned to draw talent because of the quality of life.

"Really, we can work from anywhere," Olson said.

"But we have our home base in Olympia because we know the market and enjoy living here."

Source: Employment Security Department

Professional services jobs

January 2005: 7,100

January 2004: 6,600



SITE MAP: [TheOlympian.com home](#) | [topstories](#) | [southsound](#) | [obits](#) | [sports](#) | [opinion](#) | [business](#) | [living](#) | [entertainment](#) | [education](#) | [state government](#) | [outdoors](#) | [environment](#) | [photo gallery](#) | [forums](#) | [classified](#) | [jobs](#) | [autos](#) | [real estate](#) - *this page requires JavaScript-enabled*

CUSTOMER SERVICE: [subscriber services](#) | [contact The Olympian](#) | [place an ad](#) | [terms of service](#) | [Newspapers in Education](#) | [newsroom ethics policy](#) | [about Gannett](#) | [jobs at The Olympian](#)

PARTNERS:  |  |  | [other Gannett newspapers](#)

©2005 [The Olympian](#)