



## A s k J a c k

# CareerLine Q & A

by Jack Wilson

*ACM's career consultant, Jack Wilson, answers questions from students about their forthcoming careers in computing and information technology.*

**Q: I want to work in a software development company, preferably one that is not too large. There aren't many like this that are coming to our campus though. Is there some way I can find out about these companies and where they are?**

**A:** Yes, there is a set of directories called CorpTech, which is short for Directory of Corporate Technology Companies, a large four- volume publication that is updated annually. Your school library or your public library should have a copy in their business reference section. Computer software is one of the technology categories in this publication, which lists more than 11,000 software companies. They also publish the same information on a CD-ROM, which makes a search like yours much easier. Their web site is [www.corptech.com](http://www.corptech.com).

The directory will give you information about both public and private companies, with fewer than 1,000 employees, which they refer to as emerging companies. In it, you can get a summary description of each company, along with the names and addresses of key executives to whom you can write.

**Q: Also, how can I find out more about the software industry itself?**

**A:** CorpTech also tracks each technology industry, including software, on a monthly basis. They do continual surveys to assess where the growth is happening and they

publish a Technology Industry Growth Forecaster. The computer software industry is typically featured annually in the March issue. In it, they describe industry trends, tomorrow's star companies projecting the greatest job increase, the top 30 cities for jobs, plus the highest growth by region of the country.

In a recent industry report, they showed the surveyed companies growing at an average of 14.9%. Almost half of them expected to grow at more than 25%.

I think you and anyone else looking for employment in the software industry will find this directory a valuable tool. It also contains similar information about the computer hardware industry, which is usually featured in the September issue of the Growth Forecaster.

**Q: I've responded to a number of ads but never seem to get an answer. Is it proper for me to follow up with the company, and if so, should I do it by letter or telephone? What do I say?**

**A:** Not only is it proper to follow up, in my opinion it's essential when you don't get an immediate response. There are several reasons: one, it shows you're interested enough to take the time and make the extra effort to do so; two, it keeps your name in front of them; and three, if done by telephone, it gives you an opportunity to speak to them, even if it's only their voice mail. So in answer to the second half of your question, I recommend the telephone, unless the ad states "no telephone calls", in which case a short, follow-up note would be appropriate.

As to what you say, there are at least four possibilities, individually or in combination:

- You're following up to make sure that they received your response to their ad.
- You would be pleased to answer any questions they may have.
- You want to reiterate your strong interest in the position (and/or their company).
- You want to let them know of your availability for an interview at their convenience.

One of my colleagues, a corporate executive, told me of his own technique for screening the flood of resumes he usually gets when he advertises. He said he piles all of them up by his desk and waits to see which ones follow up, either by letter or telephone. If he gets a follow-up in about two weeks, that tells him the person is truly

interested, and he moves it into a separate pile from which he selects the ones to be interviewed.

**Q: Many ads for IT positions list a number of skills that they want in a candidate. What do I say if I don't have all the skills that they require?**

A: First, I do not recommend your saying anything negative, i.e., that you do NOT have certain skills. I do recommend focusing strongly on the ones that you DO have and emphasizing them. One technique in a cover letter is to make a two-column list, headed "Your Requirements" and "My Qualifications". The more that you can match, the better. If the ad lists seven required skills, and you can match all seven, that's great. If you can only match four or more, then list only the requirements that you can match. If you can only match three or fewer, then I don't recommend using this approach. Cover the skills that you do match in a paragraph of narrative.