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## Report: College grads will suffer from high-tech job slowdown

By [LINDA ROSENCRANCE](#)

College students hoping to find jobs in the high-tech industry right after graduation are in for a rude awakening, according to Chicago-based outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc.

In a report released Friday, Challenger said companies aren't spending as much on technology as they have in the past, and since they aren't buying the latest computer hardware and software, they don't need as many new graduates.

In fact, Challenger said, confronted with a weak economy, these entry-level job seekers will face the most difficult job market in decades.

Once employers considered college graduates to be the key to their companies' futures, because they were able to grasp the ins and outs of new technology faster than older workers, said Challenger's CEO, John Challenger. "Now, the demand for new graduates has fallen off significantly," he said. "Because of major cost-cutting, companies are not updating their technology as quickly. What they updated at the time of Y2k will hold them for a while, at least until the economy turns up.

"They also realized the benefit of letting all employees become accustomed to the technology," he said. "Additionally, new software is more user-friendly and even older workers can quickly learn the nuances."

Challenger said companies are now looking to hire workers with prior IT experience who need little or no training -- a requirement that often rules out the latest crop of college graduates.

Rex Kurzius, CEO of Resulte Universal, a Dallas staffing and consulting services firm, agreed with the findings of the report.

"I've noticed over the last 18 to 24 months that recent college graduates, particularly in the tech sector, are having an incredibly difficult time [finding jobs] because of the amount of displaced workers that were in the tech sector to begin with, and, then, [because of] companies slowing down capital expenditures and buying new software and hardware," he said.

Kurzius said companies want to hire expert application people -- people who have a track

record and a number of years implementing various types of systems. He said employers don't want to bring people in and then have to train them too.

"There will be problems for those students who just have a degree and get out and look for a job," he said.

However, the job market will look better for students who have taken part in cooperative education programs or internships and already have some real-world experience -- especially in high-demand technology areas such as ERP, security and Web development.

Source: Computerworld