

Qualified staff badly needed

Even the most optimistic prognoses failed to guess that Belarus would so badly need IT specialists

By Denis Patolichev

Even in the crisis year of 2009, software production growth at the High-Tech Park reached 152 percent, with approximately the same expected for 2010. Exports are actively increasing, while the domestic market is also strong. Accordingly, the High-Tech Park's administration and its 88 company-residents (currently employing about 8,500 programmers and engineers) are concerned about finding adequately trained personnel.

Since early 2010, about 800 new jobs have been created at the Park but almost 500 specialist positions remain vacant. There is a dearth of applicants, despite the average monthly salary reaching \$1,150. The establishment has already employed all those whose qualifications more or less suit its needs and programmers from neighbouring countries, including Russia, have begun heading to Minsk's 'Silicon Valley'. The situation was quite different four or five years ago.

"At present, sadly, the needs of our company-residents for specialists exceed the number of such graduates from the country's higher education system," explains

the Deputy Director of the HTP Administration, Alexander Martinkevich. "The Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics has just completed its preliminary distribution of alumni. A quarter are set to join the HTP but we are ready to employ even more. Of course, we understand that other state companies also need staff. This is why we propose to increase the enrolment of students for corresponding specialities."

The HTP administration — with support from its company-residents — is trying to attract even those with basic technical education. To succeed on this path, over 40 laboratories have been launched jointly with company-residents at technical universities countrywide. Students work on real projects, while mastering technologies beyond their usual curriculum. On starting work after graduation, they continue developing projects begun at university.

Additionally, from 2011, the HTP is to open its own training centre to re-train personnel. For example, an engineer can be re-trained as a qualified programmer in just 6-8 months, while other IT specialists can be prepared. Importantly,



Qualified IT specialists are currently in great demand

antly, the centre will offer not just training but a guaranteed job at an HTP company (if final examinations are successfully passed). Simultaneously, a Belarusian-Indian training centre is being launched at the HTP. Belarusian specialists who have passed an internship at India's leading universities and programming centres and have mastered modern technologies will lecture.

Of course, being the largest of its kind in the country and pay-

ing good salaries, the HTP is doing well and is employing the best of the best: 'the personnel cream'. This is not appreciated by everyone but the establishment has its own logic. "If specialists can attract dozens of times more investments and modern technologies into the country while working at the High-Tech Park, rather than at any other company, then it's clear where they should be working," believes Mr. Martinkevich.

Sustained interest registered

Belarusian computer market witnesses sustainable growth

In distinction from Ukraine, where sales of computers dropped during the crisis, Belarus is witnessing sales growth. The global market for computer devices has been rising annually by about 7-10 percent, with the Belarusian market demonstrating a similar trend (according to Intel representatives).

Moreover, Belarus is seeing sustained interest in server solutions, while sales of mobile devices are rising. As a result, our market is becoming interesting to the largest producer of processors: Intel. However, the company does not plan to purchase any Belarusian companies or open a research laboratory in the country.

Around million PCs are sold worldwide daily and, by 2015, the global market looks set to reach 500m sales. By 2020, four billion Internet users will be registered (with 31bn devices boasting Internet connection).

Standing in line with ratings

High-Tech Park, headquartered in Minsk, compiles ratings for residents, based on their size, software production volumes and exports

EPAM Systems tops all three ratings, followed by System Technologies, Itransition and SaM Solutions. From January-September 2010, growth in software production at the High-Tech Park reached 143 percent (against the same period of 2009). Exports of services dealing with software development stood at \$94m during this period (up 36 percent on the same period of 2009) while exports accounted for 80 percent of the HTP's total production volumes. Among its customers were companies from 50 countries, with 45.1 percent of exports heading for North America, 33 percent to Western Europe and 17.3 percent to the CIS. At the moment, 88 company-residents are registered with the High-Tech Park. From January-September 2010, over 800 new jobs were created there.

Project has its own price

Austrian company to construct contemporary wood-processing manufacture in Grodno region

An investment agreement has been signed with Austrian Kronospan Holding Limited at the Belarusian Investment Forum in Frankfurt-am-Main. Now, a site for the construction of a wood-processing enterprise, occupying around 30 hectares, has been allocated in the Smorgon district. The new factory will manufacture laminated coatings and other timber processing goods from Belarusian hardwood and coniferous timber, for export. This will create around 300 jobs. The project is costing \$150m and is to be completed by 2016.

Alternative energy comes to the fore

German TDF Ecotech AG to build wind farm in Logoisk district

The Minsk region has recently been focusing on the development of alternative energy. An investment agreement has already been signed with Enertrag AG to construct a wind farm in the Dzerzhinsk district. The project is divided into two phases (2011-2012 and 2012-2014), with the total volume of investments reaching 400m euros.

This year, two biogas complexes are being launched: Berezino Distillery is to produce energy from distillery dregs, with four mini-CHP plants constructed with the help of Finnish companies — in Berezino, Smolevichi, Starye Dorogi and Logoisk. The cost of these facilities is estimated at 200-250m euros.

"We're interested in realising projects relating to alternative energy and will continue constructing biogas complexes. We seek to have several facilities in each district," explains the Deputy Chairman of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, Alexander Yermak.

Definite achievements



BMZ expands geography of export supplies

By Valery Sidorchik

BMZ manufactures 500,000th tonne of metal cord

The Belarusian Steel Works has manufactured its 500,000th tonne

of metal cord, having been in production for around 20 years. Its metal cord is a calling card of the flagship of Belarusian metallurgy — a trend setter in this sphere. It accounts for 14 percent of the

world market for the independent supply of metal cord.

The factory's iron and wire workshops are among the most contemporary worldwide for their level of automation and equipment. BMZ has developed some completely original innovations, significantly influencing the development of metal cord manufacture. Its specialists are ever working with scientists to improve production and were among the first worldwide to master high-strength and ultra-high-strength metal cord constructions, considerably raising the bar for quality and reliability of tyres. The Belarusian Steel Works was the first worldwide to set up a complete technological cycle on one site (from steelmaking in electric arc furnaces to creating metal goods).

Extending presence on market

By Mikhail Kovalevsky

Mogilev Metallurgical Works delivers trial batch of iron shot to New Zealand

If our foreign partners are pleased with the quality of the delivery, a long-term contract for supply will be signed. At present, the fac-

tory sells iron shot domestically and to the UK, with British companies monthly purchasing 20 tonnes of iron pellets for use in polishing various metal ware and for the manufacture of high-strength concrete, as well as some other purposes.

"At present, our specialists are negotiating export supplies of these

goods to Italy and Canada," explains MMZ Director Anatoly Volkov. "We link the expansion of our presence on foreign markets with the gradual shift to producing steel shot, which is much more popular and more expensive. Soon, we'll start to modernise, allowing us to supply new produce next year."