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business

Seeing a turnaround

Business is picking up for Suwanee staffing firm

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SUWANEE — If the way business has picked up at one local staffing firm is any indication, then the local job market may finally be turning the corner.

Dan Campbell, chief executive officer at Suwanee-based Hire Dynamics, said his business is placing nearly 60 percent more people in jobs than it was at this time last year. Another sign of an upswing: Hire Dynamics is cutting 900 checks a month for people it hooks up with new work — about 300 more than it was paying a year ago.

In recent months, Hire Dynamics noticed some companies were adding to their payroll. However, now businesses across the board are apparently getting into the act. Campbell, who just returned from an industry conference, said other staffing agencies reported similar hiring patterns.

"That's what's so exciting," he said. "It's not just us."

Lately, even Hire Dynamics needs more workers. Launched in 2001, the firm has grown from nine employees and \$8 million in annual revenue to a 34-employee company with a projected \$14 million in 2004 revenue. Campbell said Hire Dynamics needs to add five positions, including job recruiters.

A large part of the firm's business involves finding workers for distribution centers, where jobs are in greater demand lately as inventory moves out of the warehouses at a faster clip. Only manufacturing remains relatively sluggish about adding to the payroll. Of the dozen manufacturers that Hire Dynamics works with, Campbell said, "we're seeing them pick up their hiring, too, just not as much as distribution has."

It's been a week of encouraging news about the job market.

On Tuesday, global outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. said planned job cuts declined in March for the second consecutive

AREA JOBLESS CLAIMS

LOCATION	Current, previous month, a year ago		
	Feb. 2004	Jan. 2004	Feb. 2003
Gwinnett	2,233	3,240	2,291
Barrow	254	481	318
Hall	534	1,079	700
Jackson	169	405	192
DeKalb	2,804	4,441	2,968
Fulton	2,843	3,967	3,270
Forsyth	250	396	254
Cobb	1,743	2,172	2,045
Metro Atl.	15,900	24,004	17,787
Georgia	36,968	70,271	43,328

month to 68,034. It's the lowest figure in nine months.

"The heavy job cutting we have seen over the past three years appears to be trending down, John A. Challenger, chief executive officer of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, said earlier this week.

He added, however, that the national job market seems to be in a state of limbo. Companies may be eager to hold on to the people they have, but many are also reluctant to create new jobs. Increased outsourcing and improved productivity are the primary reasons, Challenger said.

On Thursday, the U.S. Labor Department said the number of people filing new claims for unemployment benefits dropped last week to the lowest level in more than three years. New applications filed for jobless claims declined by a seasonally adjusted 14,000 to 328,000 for the week ending April 3. That marked the lowest level since Jan. 13, 2001, the week before President Bush's inauguration.

— The Associated Press contributed to this report.