

"It's just amazing how fast we've grown. Each month is getting more and more calls."

Tom Laydon, the chief executive of X1 Communications



Chevol Davis (left) and Tom Laydon of X1 Communications, based in Winston Tower Main, have seen their business quadruple.

JOURNAL PHOTOS BY BRUCE CHAPMAN

Hiring hits 5-year high

In 2004, 2.2 jobs were added for every 100 jobless

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Employers hired workers at the fastest pace in five years, with all payrolls rising by 2.2 percent last month.

December's job growth was lower than expected, with the unemployment rate holding at 5.5 percent.

President Bush called the report "very positive," but economic analysts were quite so enthusiastic. One year went out "like a docile."

The Labor Department reported yesterday that employers added 170,000 jobs to their payrolls by a net of 170,000 in December, bringing the year-to-date gain to the highest level since 1999. The 3.2 million jobs were created since a government survey of 2003, there was a net gain of 61,000 payroll jobs, the report said.

For the year, the average job gain rate was 5.5 percent, the lowest since 2001, when the annual rate was 4.7 percent.

Bush called the jobs report a "positive set of numbers" that shows the economy is growing.

The report didn't worry about the economy but it didn't sour them either.

"2004 didn't go out like a landslide," said a labor economist from Mayland, the president of the Congressional Budget Office. "It went out like a beefy but docile." He said the results aren't great, but they're not either. They're kind of in the middle.

The figures capped a strong election year in which job growth was a big concern to many voters. The potential liability to Bush's administration has been slow since the 2000 election.

Info on the Go

Demand for wireless-data services grows, boosting profits for providers, small businesses

By M. Paul Jackson
JOURNAL REPORTER

Peggy Low was sitting in an airport when she got word that Dell Inc. planned to open a manufacturing plant in Winston-Salem.

But she wasn't using a phone.

Low, the senior vice president of technology for the Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, said yesterday that she was notified through her BlackBerry, a multifunctional wireless communication device. "You have to be in touch," Low said. "That's the only way I knew about Dell."

Nationally, wireless-data use — including instant messaging, e-mail and text messaging — has increased dramatically since the second quarter of 2003, because more people have begun to demand faster real-time communication, technology experts say.

In the Triad, there are more small businesses and telecom companies

rushing to provide general wireless services to customers, they said.

In Winston-Salem, Chelsee's Coffee Shop has seen its number of customers using laptop computers increase since it installed a wireless network in the middle of last year, owner Gena Knighten said. Borders bookstore at Thruway Shopping Center also does brisk business because of its wireless system.

Installing the wireless network "was a selling tool," Knighten said. "It really helped our business."

The increase is just a small part of the public's growing enthusiasm toward general wireless services, experts say. Nationally, consumer spending on wireless-broadband services rose 10 percent to about \$98 billion in 2004, analysts say.

A wireless service provides faster, easier connection to the Internet and to other hand-held communication



Heather Flow, a college student, uses her laptop at Chelsee's Coffee Shop.