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From The Associated Press:

Oct 25, 4:47 PM EDT

Study: Perception of Outsourcing Worse

By **VICKIE CHACHERE**
Associated Press Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) -- Fewer Tampa Bay area workers have lost their jobs to offshore outsourcing than might be thought in these politically charged times, a university study shows.

But the authors the study said Monday that there is still a concern because neither workers, employers nor the government are fully prepared to deal with the issue.

The study commissioned by the University of South Florida's Globalization Research Center said offshore outsourcing also will be an issue for years to come as businesses seek ways to cut costs. The three-month study was released amid some anticipation for its potentially political ramifications in a key battleground region for the Nov. 2 election.

The survey of Tampa Bay Area companies found that about 76,000 Tampa Bay area jobs were sent to other countries out of a total of more than 1 million jobs in 2001, the most recent data available. The numbers of outsourced jobs has increased consistently since 1993 when 45,328 jobs which were outsourced, the study said.

But in the region's steadily growing economy, outsourcing has not had the disastrous effect on area's employment pictures as might be suggested by some high-profile layoffs, including July's loss of 1,1000 jobs at a Capital One call center in a move which sent some of those jobs overseas.

"The perception is greater than the actual job losses of offshoring," said Guy Hagen, the project leader and president of Innovation Insight, the high-tech consulting company which conducted the study for USF. "The more we can help workers be prepared at the forefront, the less they are going to be caught up in offshoring."

The study's findings, based on a random survey of 70 area companies, mirror what is happening in the United States, the authors said. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that in the first quarter of 2004, one of every 40 U.S. layoffs was due to offshore outsourcing.

The survey found that outsourcing is not likely to be a short-lived trend. Some startup companies open the doors with foreign operations in place for some customer service or technology functions, noting a comment from one company official who said offshore outsourcing saved him two years of development on a technology department.

There is also a perception among most companies that their competitors are

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50	\$16.19	\$12.42
60	\$33.25	\$22.66

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considering offshore outsourcing and they should too, the report noted. Only 5 percent of companies surveyed said they considered offshore outsourcing, but 20 percent thought their competitors were exploring it.

Hagen said for workers across all industries and segments of the economy, the trend of outsourcing highlights the demand for more educated and skilled workers who are continually working at expanding their abilities and making themselves more valuable to their employers.

"Nobody should feel completely secure about their job, no matter what they do," Hagen said.

U.S. Rep. Jim Davis, who was on hand Thursday for the report's unveiling, said he was not surprised by the findings and doesn't think offshore outsourcing becomes less of a political issue.

Political campaigns, including Democratic Presidential nominee [John Kerry](#) and Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Betty Castor, have highlighted outsourcing in their races with both candidates pledging to end tax breaks for companies that outsource jobs.

Davis said he has been told of incidents where some U.S. startup companies are being told by investors they have to outsource some jobs if they want to be financed.

Davis said the political debate instead might now need to include discussions about what government can do to help workers adapt to an economy with fewer jobs and where their skills need to match up against those of foreign workers. There also needs to be greater coordination between universities and businesses working to produce the type of domestic work force companies need, Davis said.

"This is clearly a front-burner issue that awaits the next president and Congress," Davis said.

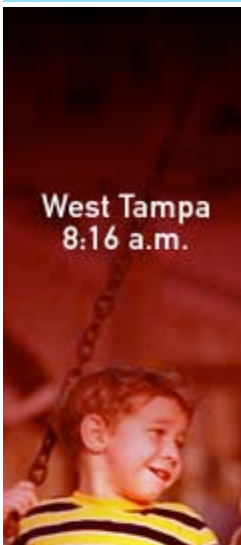
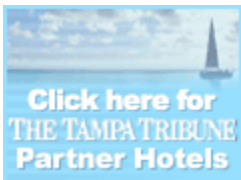
On the Web:

USF Globalization Research Center: <http://www.cas.usf.edu/GlobalResearch/>

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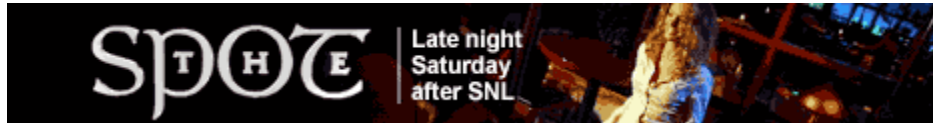


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