

Tue, November 2, 2004

Local workers big on small biz

By [GEOFF MATTHEWS](#), Ottawa Sun

The hours may be long and the pay low, but for increasing numbers of people in the national capital region, the dream of business ownership is still very much alive. Not only are more and more people setting out on their own, but they're boosting the economy by hiring employees to work for them, according to survey results published yesterday by the entrepreneurship centre of the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI).

More men than women took the plunge last year, according to the OCRI findings, and the majority of new entrepreneurs -- 60% -- were between 30 and 49 years old.

The trend towards business ownership may have been driven in part by hi-tech downsizing during the past three years, said Stephen Daze, executive director of OCRI's entrepreneurship centre.

CONSTRUCTION HOT

More than a quarter (27%) of the startups are in the tech sector, Daze said, while the city's hot construction sector is also popular with new business owners. And a "surprising number" of people are trying their hands in the field of arts, entertainment and recreation.

"The big number -- the one we're really excited about -- is the number of people being hired by these firms," he said.

"Traditionally, you would see a small business hiring one or two employees. Now we're seeing a lot of them hiring five or more. That's a pretty significant jump."

Other findings of the annual survey of clients who used the services of the entrepreneurship centre last year showed that 2,920 clients -- or 69% -- were still in business a year after startup, a 5% increase from 2002.

Total sales for the year hit \$284 million -- up 22%, or \$51 million, from 2002.

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