

# DCA Capital in the News

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## Fresno software services firm adding jobs

### Decipher Inc. in former Gottschalks space doubling size.

By Tim Sheehan

A software services company based in Fresno since 2000 is more than doubling the size of its headquarters and adding coveted white-collar jobs in the area.

Decipher Inc. now occupies about 18,000 square feet of the former Gottschalks headquarters in north Fresno's River Park Place complex. It's a big step for the company, which outgrew its former digs of about 8,000 square feet in the Fig Garden Financial Center.

While the River Park building's owners are happy to find a tenant for some of the vacant Gottschalks space (88,000 square feet total), the real watershed is tech jobs -- including programmers and managers.

In a region where many of the new jobs that will be created over the next few years will be low-paid, low-skill positions in occupations like farm work, retail and food service, Decipher plans to hire 20 to 40 more people in Fresno this year.

Co-founder and co-CEO Jayme Plunkett said that Decipher considered freezing its Fresno staff at current levels and expanding instead at its offices in either Portland, Ore., or Los Angeles for fear of not finding enough college graduates with degrees in computer science to fill its jobs.

"We see lots of résumés from people who are not qualified," Plunkett said. "But there is talent in Fresno."

Plunkett and Jamin Brazil, Decipher's other founder and CEO, started the company in San Francisco in 2000, but later that year moved to Fresno because of lower business costs, including cheaper office lease rates.

Decipher has experienced double-digit revenue growth each year and now employs 110 people, including more than 80 in Fresno.

"The key reason we stay in Fresno is the pool of eager, smart and talented employees that we have access to," Brazil said Tuesday at an event announcing Decipher's expansion.

Decipher's workers program surveys and writes software for clients -- including eBay, PayPal and Whole Foods -- to collect and analyze survey results.

"It's exciting to consider that in Fresno, we know we can grow lots of crops ... but we can also grow startup technology companies," Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin said. "Like what Decipher is offering, there are jobs waiting to be filled. We need to communicate to people there are jobs here."

Local programmers and developers also need to be more aggressive in letting companies like Decipher know they exist, said Travis Sheridan, one of the organizers of a local application-programming competition, 59 Days of Code.

"The development community has not done a good job of promoting itself," said Sheridan, who is the member services director of the Central Valley Business Incubator. One of the goals of the 59 Days of Code competition is to connect local tech creators with local tech companies like Decipher.

And Decipher's success, Sheridan added, "says we're going to have a lot more opportunity here in the Central Valley.

"The positions they're adding aren't cheap," he said. "That means their business must be doing well, because those positions could equate to a few million dollars on the bottom line."

Growth by Decipher and other companies is also putting pressure on California State University, Fresno, to beef up its computer-science program, department chairman Todd Wilson said. The program now has about about 120 undergraduate students and 40 graduate students, and is adding two professors to the faculty next year.

"It's a challenge to meet the local demand for the number of students graduating each year," Wilson said, adding that he doesn't know of any recent graduates who have not been able to find a job, either in the Valley or elsewhere, after finishing school.

"There are at least a dozen firms here in this area, and we're excited this one is going to be hiring a lot more," Wilson said.