

## FL Man Beats the Outsourcers By Joining Them

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David Spring lost his technical support job when the company he worked for outsourced his position.

(Photo by A Staebler, Media General News Service)

Outsourcing is very real for David Spring, a computer technician in Safety Harbor, Fla. Spring, 41, a certified Microsoft engineer, was working for a Tampa company called SCC Soft Computer in 1998 when his job went to computer technicians in Poland.

He landed with Michigan-based Superior Consultant Company Inc. and traveled the country, helping companies with Year 2000 computer problems. But after the Y2K crisis ended, so did the job. Superior Consultant laid off 400 technicians and contracted much of their work overseas -- he never learned where.

Spring couldn't fight outsourcing, so he joined it.

He and his wife started a web design company called WebsOnly.com. He's making more money than before because he hires computer programmers in Belarus, a former Soviet republic, at a fraction of the cost of American programmers.



Both David and Kay Spring lost their jobs when their company outsourced them.  
(Photo by A Staebler, Media General News Service)

"We're loyal Americans, don't get me wrong," he said. But, "with American programmers the quality wasn't quite as good. I don't know if it's the dedication or the training. But we've had good success with the outsourced work."

Economists still are not sure if outsourcing will be good or bad for the American economy. Thousands, if not millions, of jobs could be headed overseas. But that does not necessarily mean bad news for American workers.

Americans calling for help with their computers, for example, increasingly reach tech workers with Indian accents. Medical records taken in American hospitals one day may be transcribed in the Philippines in time to report the results to the patient the next.

Outsourcing allows some companies to send specialized parts of their business overseas but still retain the bulk of their work in the United States, said John Coleman, a Duke University economics professor. It's a way to make those companies more competitive so they can expand their workforce.

The natural reaction to job losses is to protect those jobs, said Daniel Benjamin, a Clemson University economics professor. But that leads to stagnation and an eventual decline in national prosperity, he said.

Spring found computer programmers in Belarus through a Tampa company called Altoros Systems. Renat Khasanshyn said he founded the company in his native Belarus, and when he immigrated to the United States in 2001 he incorporated it here.

Khasanshyn said he works mostly with medium-sized U.S. businesses that are trying to get new computer applications on the market quickly and cheaply. In his native Minsk, computer programmers who once may have worked on Soviet missiles now are happy to be paid \$5 to \$10 an hour to work for him.

He employs 30 people in Belarus and 10 in the United States. Six are in Tampa and four in Massachusetts.

"The people who were trained as engineers to build rockets for the Soviet Union are now working for the U.S. information technology industry," Khasanshyn said. "The market is hot and there's a high demand."