Online Layoff Tracker Captures Economy's Carnage

Michael Liedtke, AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — In a sour economy like this, entrepreneurs inevitably dream up new ways to turn lemons into lemonade.

At least that's the motive behind a free software program called Layoff Tracker.

Layoff Tracker can be planted on a Web site or a computer desktop to provide a running tally of the pink slips being handed out by major employers around the country. The tracker complies the numbers from news reports and company announcements.

After two weeks of testing, the application — packaged in a capsule format known as a "widget" — was being formally released Monday.

The program is designed to make it easier to monitor the massive payroll purge that has been worsening the 14-month-old recession. And it should trigger more online conversations that help the unemployed get back on their feet, said Bari Abdul, the Layoff Tracker's mastermind.

In the process, Abdul also hopes to generate more traffic and commentary on Telonu.com, a Web site that he launched two months ago to "rave, rant and rate" about employers.

"We live in a world where you can read 15 reviews before you go spend $50 in a restaurant, so it seems like you should also be able to read about places where you might go to work 40 hours each week," he said.

A Web site called Glassdoor.com also provides insights about employers, although it focuses primarily on data about wages and opinions about chief executives.

Abdul reasons that the way layoffs are handled can say a lot about an employer, so Abdul is hoping Teluno's new program encourages more people to write about their firings on the Web site.

"It's a reflection of the times," said Abdul, who has had to dump workers in previous management at McAfee Inc. and Procter & Gamble Inc. "There is a huge healing process that goes on when people realize that all these layoffs aren't really about them, but more about what went wrong at business."

For more information, visit: http://www.telonu.com/widgets [1]

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