

## Hopes of recovery as new job vacancies grow by 20pc

By Anne-Marie Walsh Industry Correspondent  
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RECRUITMENT agencies have claimed that the economy is beginning to bounce back after the number of jobs on offer rose for the first time in a year.

Premier Group and Sigmar Recruitment both saw growth of more than 20pc in new vacancies during the final quarter of last year.

Sigmar's latest figures reveal there was a dramatic 29pc rise in new opportunities during the last three months of the year, the first quarterly growth it has recorded in 18 months.

Most of the jobs were in accountancy, engineering and IT.

Premier Group saw green shoots in the professional jobs market with a 23pc hike in vacancies -- the first increase it has seen since February 2008.

The 4,587 professional jobs for which it sought new recruits was a big improvement on the 3,743 positions it was trying to fill the same month the previous year.

Sigmar Recruitment said the figures showed the economy was stabilising as businesses start to show signs of renewed confidence.

### **Cautious**

However, employers are obviously still cautious as the figures also revealed that just 19pc of bosses took on permanent staff, with most of the positions offered on a temporary basis.

Sigmar director Robert Mac Giolla Phadraig said the growth was driven by companies who cut back earlier in the year but were now finding skills gaps in their business.

He said a major barometer of economic growth would be whether the jobs offered were permanent, which was not likely to happen until the end of the year.

"There is still a long way to go but this 29pc uplift in job placements clearly demonstrates the return of confidence in business activity and, in turn, the wider economy," he said.

"The demand for jobs was constant across the three months of the quarter, underpinning the stabilisation of the market.

"We expect further stabilisation in the first half of this year with stable growth in demand for permanent employment in the second half.

"Many companies play a political game internally because they can't be seen to take people on if they've just imposed a pay cut, so many of the jobs are still temporary."

By sector, the agency found demand was highest in accountancy, where almost 20pc of placements existed; with just under 17pc in engineering and almost 15pc in IT. Sales and marketing accounted for 12.6pc of the vacancies, healthcare for more than 10pc, and secretarial positions accounted for 9.6pc.

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