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# Malia Spencer: Tripwire's retiring CEO on threats to Portland's tech scene

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**Malia Spencer**  
Staff Reporter  
*Portland Business Journal*

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Back in January I wrote about how I expected talent issues within the Portland tech sector to remain a dominant story through 2015 as startups begin to gain traction, high-growth companies continue to scale, and big names come to town. All are competing for essentially the same people.

That story line has played out thus far. And I hear mixed results when I ask executives whether they are able to find the employees they need in this region. Many tell me they are importing people from places like Seattle, the Bay Area, New York and Chicago.

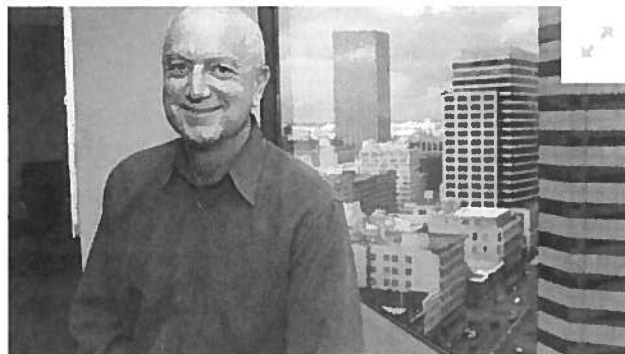
Moving to Portland isn't a hard sell, they tell me. And it's true, Portland is a desirable place to live and one of the last affordable cities on the West Coast.

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But this also has me wondering how long that will last. How far can we really get depending on people's desire to move to Portland?

I had a version of this conversation recently with Jim Johnson, who announced this week that he's retiring as CEO of Portland security software firm Tripwire after 11 years, and Gus Malezis, the longtime Tripwire executive who will assume the role of president.

"The thing we run the risk on – Portland is a jewel and there are wonderful things in Portland – but



Jim Johnson is CEO of Tripwire Inc.

we are tolerant of not-so-good behavior,” Johnson said.

Johnson, for example, said he’s had employees telling him they are concerned for their safety at night around the company’s downtown headquarters because of aggressive homeless residents.

“There are certain things we as a community better make sure we do right to be a wonderful place to live and attract families,” he said. “We need to think about the future.”

This means addressing the homeless issues downtown and other challenges such as education issues within the state. If Oregon employers rely on importing employees, those employees will be looking at the state’s education system as a factor on whether to move.

And further down the education continuum, Johnson and Malezis said Tripwire doesn’t see the employees it needs coming out of the state’s universities. In fact, Johnson noted that there are no cybersecurity degrees at Oregon schools, so the company looks to where it can find employees by growing offices in places like Georgia or allowing employees to work remotely.

“The balance is we have some real challenges that if we don’t address ultimately people will vote with their feet,” Johnson said. “Our culture says mobility is important.”

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