

The Shortage of People for Jobs

By James O. Armstrong

There is a tremendous disconnect between what the professionals in the economic development community and the human resources community know about the job situation versus what the typical man or woman in North America believes about jobs.

The most common misconception is that there is an abundance of people for the jobs. In fact, there is a shortage of men and women for jobs. Even more significant, there is a skills shortage. It is fairly acute in certain areas and it is going to become worse. This is particularly true as baby boomers begin to drop out of the work force, either in whole or in part, in the coming years. This is going to become quite serious in our nations.

Today, many of the major television networks and big city daily newspapers focus their coverage almost exclusively on the loss of jobs at major corporations. In the process, they have taken a shortcut in evaluating what is really taking place in our society, which has been and continues to be that smaller companies in the U.S. and Canada have become the real job growth engines in our society. In addition, the health care sector and hospitals in particular, plus the government at all levels, are hiring.

Bear in mind, for example, in the recent past we have had a 4.4 percent unemployment rate in the United States and even lower in Canada, which is the equivalent of a full employment economy. And, that is with the 11 or 12 million illegal immigrants in our society. This situation does not exist without them. In the future, we will be 800,000 RN nurses short of what we need. We are already 20,000 or 30,000 truck drivers short of what we currently require. We also have a shortage of IT workers, engineers, school teachers, and government workers at all levels of government. By the way, these trends are becoming more acute all the time.

What Can We Do About This?

Instead of giving up, if we happen to be the victim of a downsizing, rightsizing or reorganization exercise, it's time to reinvent ourselves. It's time to look at things in a new way because it's a new day in our lives. It's time to explore all of our options. Of course, one of our options includes the possibility of moving from a higher unemployment area to an area of low unemployment in our society, such as the Rocky Mountain states, or the prairie provinces. Almost every one of them currently has 2 to 3 percent unemployment rates.

Now is also the time to consider going back to school for more education. In many instances, for example, a person may have lost a manufacturing job. The federal and state governments may be willing and able to pay for that individual to go back to school.



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And, it could be entirely free. In other words, the entire cost of the re-education or training effort may be paid for by the government, which is certainly an option that needs to be explored.

Have an Optimistic Attitude

In my book, which is "Now What? Discovering Your New Life and Career After 50," I profiled 19 different men and women from all over North America, with all different jobs and education levels. They also had different ethnic and religious backgrounds. And, they ranged from high school graduates to PhDs on the top end. But, what I found was this: There are many more similarities than dissimilarities between all of the men and women who were profiled. The ones who succeeded in this transition process continued to have an optimistic attitude, in spite of changes they were experiencing. ➡



For example, there was a college professor from Austin, Texas, who was a locally prominent man. And, he is a PhD who was teaching MBAs and PhDs about labor arbitration and mediation. Meanwhile, he was serving part-time, in that capacity, from a federal government standpoint. But, now that he is retired, he receives his full retirement benefits from the University of Texas pension system. In fact, he receives a very fine retirement benefit from that system for the rest of his life.

Now, three or four days a week, depending on how many of these assignments he accepts, he goes out all over the southwestern part of the U.S. especially to arbitrate and mediate labor disputes. My questions to you are this: "How can we possibly outsource, to China or India, a labor negotiator or mediator? And, when will there ever not be a demand for someone in his position?" He told me, often times, just the threat of binding arbitration caused people to settle on their own even without him being physically in the room. He is in his early 70s, and he is, in fact, CEO of a small company that is headquartered in his home. He travels on behalf of the federal government and the mediation organizations that he represents.

Opportunities

Let's say that you're a nurse, or you're considering a career option within the medical community. There are job openings or opportunities in virtually every kind of medical category

you can imagine. There are even shortages of dental hygienists in our society. If someone goes back to school for two years and becomes a dental hygienist at 35 or 45 years old, they can have quite an excellent income. Plus, they will have a choice of dentist's offices, where the hygienist gets to choose. Of course, MORE opportunities automatically go with the more education that someone pursues.

For example, someone who has been a CPA all of his or her life and who wants to continue to work part-time after age 65 or 70, can certainly continue to do that. In fact, the former senior partner of the CPA firm I use for my family, as well as for my two small businesses, has an older partner. He comes back to work at the beginning of January and works through the end of May. In other words, he continues to work with his former clients each year during tax season. This is because small companies have had this partner as their CPA and they would still like to do business with him. But, during the other seven months of the year, he travels with his wife extensively throughout the U.S., including catching up with his family and friends.

That's a very common model among professionals in our society, whether it's doctors, dentists, CPAs, architects, engineers or public relations professionals. So long as they don't have the professional liability responsibility for plans, which they would have as an architect or an engineer, these valuable professionals in our society can go back and assist on projects.

The Current and Coming Labor Shortage

Over and over again, I have found this situation to be true. Specifically, there is a tremendous discrepancy between what people believe the job market to be like today and what it really is. There are wonderful opportunities, in almost every direction you can imagine in the marketplace. This situation exists because of the current and coming labor shortages plus the skills shortages that exist in our society. This analysis actually works in favor of baby boomers and not against them.

Our options are broad, as we move forward into the next chapter of our lives. Once again, they aren't narrow; they are without limit.

My role today is to speak hope to my generation of fellow baby boomers. Despite the bad circumstances they may be encountering at this moment, there is hope for their future. They can have a better tomorrow than they have had today.



James O. Armstrong, President of NowWhatJobs.net, Inc., (www.nowwhatjobs.net), also serves as the Editor of NowWhatJobs.net, the resource for job and career transitions for workers 40 years old and over, Baby Boomers, and Active Seniors. Read NowWhatJobs.net for skills training, relocation options, job opportunities and much more. In addition, James is the author of "Now What? Discovering Your New Life and Career After 50" and is the President of James Armstrong & Associates, Inc., a media representation firm based in Suburban Chicago.

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"And tell David to come in out of the hall. I found a way to adjust our project budget estimate."