

Bulletin Board: Good jobs in a bad economy

by Amy_Winter

Not all jobs will be affected by the weakening economy. Education, energy, health care and security are some industries that are expected to survive, or even prosper, according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc., an outplacement agency.

"Certain industries are particularly vulnerable during recessions, including retail, manufacturing, the financial sector and technology," says John A. Challenger, chief executive officer.

"However, there are always some areas that seems to be recession-resistant. These often change from recession to recession, based on global, economic and societal trends at the time of the slowdown."

Education and health care will likely stay afloat due to more retirements, an increase in student enrollment and a demand for elderly health care.

"There are times when education systems are significantly impacted by recessions as state coffers shrink," says Challenger. "However, educators may survive this slowdown, as a growing number of retirements, high turnover and increasing enrollment make it necessary to replace exiting teachers.

"Health care is another industry that is replacing retiring workers and adding workers to meet the demand for health services among aging baby boomers - demand that will exist regardless of the economy's health."

Challenger lists other industries that could provide more jobs for workers:

- Security: The desire for security isn't decreasing. Protection is needed on the borders and ports as well as for companies' priceless information.

- Energy: Possible growth in positions tied to oil and gas, nuclear and alternative and renewable energy.

- Environmental: Need for engineers and scientists to create green technologies for helping in the green movement. Program managers, attorneys and others may be wanted to assist in spreading eco-friendly practices among companies.

"Do not make the mistake of thinking that only those with industry-specific skills will be in demand," says Challenger. "Hospitals not only need nurses and physical therapists, they need administrators and information technology workers."

For more information, visit www.challengergray.com.

HIRE, DON'T FIRE

Firing workers during a recession is not a smart move for companies. Tom Gimbel, CEO of LaSalle Network, a staffing firm, says businesses should be looking to hire, even with the warnings of an upcoming recession.

Salaries, which are variable, tend to be the first place explored when companies face a loss in clients and profits. Gimbel says workers are fired prematurely and for the incorrect reasons.

"Companies lose a client and become nervous about the economy," says Gimbel. "They say, 'We'd better let people go.'"

Businesses may make less money this year, but Gimbel recommends keeping valuable workers. Take the time to train workers while the economy is slower; it is a chance to make the staff stronger. And hire better people, if needed. Job-seekers will likely choose a company that is adding positions rather than one that is firing employees.

In order to stay strong following a soft economy, keep employees, refocus efforts and hire the good people you find, according to Gimbel.

John A. Challenger agrees that the threat of the upcoming recession could give businesses the incentive to cut costs or jobs. Workers may want to assess their current job security.

"The best way to protect job security, regardless of the economic conditions, is to build a castle and place a moat around it," says Challenger. "This involves demonstrating to your employer that you are indispensable. You need to do the job that you have been hired to do and augment it with additional work."

Challenger provides tips to help your job security:

- Maintain a relationship with your boss. Take the time to fix the partnership and make sure your boss knows you are still valuable to the company. Meet with him or her regularly.
- Look for assignments on important projects. Become a part of a long-term project that will most likely live through a recession; the company won't want to lose you.
- Believe in the company's mission. Join committees that develop team-building practices and staff morale. Employers will probably keep those more dedicated to the mission of the business.
- Reach out to your boss' supervisors and peers. Go to company events and introduce yourself to upper-level executives. Even if your boss is part of the layoffs, at least you have approached other managers.

Companies should look at where they want to be following the downturn instead of their position during the slow times.

"Reinvest in the good people you have," says Gimbel. "A soft economy gives companies more time to spend with their staff."

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