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WHERE THE JOBS ARE NOW

If You're a Computer-Software-Writing Nurse Who Can Run a Hot Shuffleboard Game, Draw Up Contracts, and Watch for Intruders in Her Night-Vision Goggles, You've Got It Made!

By Elizabeth Kaminsky

Day One—Brewed a large pot of coffee. Slunk out into the front yard in pajamas to retrieve the Sunday paper. Caught by neighbor, looking like something out of a horror movie. Sprawled paper out over coffee table. Put on distance glasses to find reading glasses. The hunt begins . . .

Job hunting—ugh! For me, that task ranks right up there with capturing the dust bunnies underneath my bed. Most people I know don't relish the thought of putting together a resumé, networking, and beating the bushes. One woman told me that job hunting feels a lot like door-to-door sales. Another friend, however, keeps an updated

resumé on her computer at all times. She is constantly scanning for better jobs and is poised and ready to nab one whenever it comes along. She treats the job market like the hunt for the perfect pair of shoes. "It's when you're not really looking that you find the good ones," she reports.

Over the years, my job-hunting experiences have been a lot like shopping excursions at my favorite discount store. I go there in search of bath towels and come out with an evening dress. For example, when I was looking for a marketing job, a writing job emerged. I hunted for a writing job and ended up in education. The point is: my searches have been a bit unconventional and have yielded interesting results. These days, though, I'm rusty. I consider myself to be starting from scratch—kind of like re-entering the dating world after a long time on the bench. But, ya gotta start somewhere, so off we go.

Shopping for Work in Today's Marketplace

Everyone's been telling me it's a tough market. Any market is tough if you're the one looking for a job, so that doesn't scare me too much. I'm expecting that I'll have to work hard, be creative and keep my sense of humor. I'd recommend that same prescription to any woman who finds herself looking for work.

So where should we be shopping for jobs these days? There are a few key professions topping the list for the foreseeable future. These hot fields include computer and data processing services, health care, elder care, legal services, and homeland-security-related services. No surprises in this list, and I know what you're probably thinking: "I'm not a computer-software-writing nurse who can run a hot shuffleboard game, draw up contracts, and watch for intruders in her night-vision goggles." OK, well, that's what I was thinking, too.

You were probably also thinking that you would need to retool your skills to go after a job in one of these fields. Maybe it's been a while since you've been in the work-

place. Don't let that stop you. Once you understand the nature of these professions and the types of jobs they offer, you may find there's something here that you're perfectly qualified to do right now.

Computing Careers. If you're reading this, chances are you already have a good set of computer skills. Feel good about that. If you have the energy and interest to get further training, the outlook for jobs in computer programming, creating software or troubleshooting technical problems is bright, indeed. Jobs in these areas are set to grow rapidly—more than six percent a year over the next several years. Salaries aren't too bad, either. A person in this field in the year 2000 made an average of between \$53,000 and \$85,000.

People in the field must have strong problem-solving and analytical skills. They also must be team players who communicate effectively, juggle many projects, and pay attention to detail. Hmmm, sounds like every woman I know.

People in computer-related fields must be team players who communicate effectively, juggle many projects, and pay attention to detail. Hmmm, sounds like every woman I know.

Can't commit to a lot of schooling? There are a number of computer-related jobs that can be done by a person who gets a little on-the-job training or who is willing to sign up for a certificate program and has a good dose of curiosity and perseverance. Perhaps you are an expert Web surfer and have seen some sites that you know could be improved. With an eye for art and graphics and some writing savvy, you could work up to designing Web pages. Web pages have become like business cards for even the smallest businesses. Even individuals have their own Web sites now. They seem to use them for everything from showing off the latest photos of the grandchildren to selling off that inventory of homemade jam. →

Someone has to create all those sites.

If Web pages aren't your thing, chances are there is something else you can do involving computers. You may be just the person to take your local business or charitable organization from mimeograph to Microsoft, bringing its files and record-keeping on line.

Healthy Employment Options. The next hot field for jobs is just about anything to do with health care. And you don't necessarily have to become a doctor or nurse to find a good job. Several occupations are projected to grow faster than average for the next few years. Some of the more interesting and unconventional ones that I found include: medical-records technicians, physicians' assistants, and respiratory therapists. Each one requires some training, but not a full-blown trip through med school. The median salaries weren't too shabby, ringing in at \$24,000, \$47,000, and \$37,000, respectively.

Working in elder care may be the most rewarding and satisfying job ever. There's a real chance here to make a lasting difference in people's lives every day. Not too many jobs can offer that.

Medical-records technicians review patient charts, assign diagnosis codes, and run specialized computer programs to pull together a complete picture of a patient's medical history for the physician, or physician's assistant. Speaking of physician's assistants, these professionals are formally trained to provide health-care services under the supervision of a doctor. If you have the aptitude for the training program, which lasts about two years, this field may be a worthwhile investment. The same goes for becoming a respiratory therapist. These individuals, once trained and certified, treat all types of patients with breathing disorders—from premature infants whose lungs haven't quite formed to senior citizens whose lungs have diminished.

It Pays to Respect Your Elders. And

while we're on the subject of age, with boomers and their parents growing older in record numbers these days, elder care is quickly becoming one of the hot sectors for future jobs. The number of assisted-living facilities is steadily climbing. People want to age in place, without having to move from their home to a nursing home, and as they age, they require increasing care. These new living situations offer a variety of options for residents and bring with them an array of jobs to be filled.

Activities directors, patient representatives, occupational-therapy aides and social workers are or will soon be in high demand. Salaries range from \$30,000 up to the mid-\$40,000's, depending on the type of facility and the level of responsibility. These positions don't require medical degrees; what they do require are employees with some solid training and a nurturing and patient spirit. For the right kind of person, working in elder care may be the most rewarding and satisfying job ever. There's a real chance here to make a lasting difference in people's lives every day. Not too many jobs can offer that.

Talk About Job Security! Want a little more action in your next job? Check out organizations that support the homeland-security effort. I'm not necessarily talking about James Bond stuff here, but a number of companies and government agencies are now in the business of keeping our people and places safe. Jobs exist in just about all categories, from accountant to baggage inspector. The skills you already possess may be put to good use in a company that is developing the next-generation metal detector.

Ever since 9-11, firms in the business of managing risk have been hiring researchers and investigators to track down all kinds of information for their clients, from background checks on employees to trailing unfaithful spouses. Are you curious, nosy, or just plain good at digging for facts? You may have what it takes to be a private investigator. Much of the work is done through computers, but there is the occasional need for surveillance or undercover work. It's a field to watch, to be sure, and one that offers tremendous poten-



Photo by Kieth Brofsky/Photodisc/PictureQuest.

BEFORE YOU START TROLLING THE HELP WANTED'S...

To find more information on the professions mentioned in this article, surf on over to:

www.bls.gov: The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, found on this site, describes what workers do, how much they make, the training and education they need, and expected job prospects in a wide range of occupations.

www.ahima.org: The American Health Information Management Association site has a Job Bank, continuing education info and more.

www.aarc.org: Go to this site of the

American Association for Respiratory Care to view a six-minute video on the roles, responsibilities and educational requirements for respiratory-care practitioners and listen to interviews with students and physicians. Then search the Job Bank.

www.aapa.org: The American Academy of Physician Assistants Information Center offers resources, information and career opportunities in this field.

www.casinocareers.com: From accountant to blackjack dealer, search for jobs at Casino Careers Online.

www.paralegals.org: There's a Career Center, Salary Survey, and more at the National Federation of Paralegal Association's site.

www.iccp.org: The site of the Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals lists universities, colleges and other schools that provide continuing-education courses, many available at night, to prepare for employment in this field.

www.careervoyages.gov: This site, run by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education, includes a list of fastest-growing occupations by state.

tial. Many private investigators are self-employed, so salary details were top secret. But the average PI employed by a corporation earns about \$40,000.

A Good Bet. Speaking of excitement, why not consider a career in casino gaming? Opportunities in this industry cover just about every job category. And more and more women are making their way to the top slots. According to Beth Deighan, CEO of Casino Careers Online, "The gaming industry started primarily as a male-dominated business. That has changed. Atlantic City casinos probably offer the best proof that intelligent, hard-working women can break the glass ceiling and rise to the top. The

presidents/general managers of five of the city's 14 resorts are women. Women have made significant gains in holding senior executive positions in accounting and human resources, gaming operations, marketing, and information technology."

That's good news. After all, what better field to get into? This industry stays relatively isolated from downturns in the economy. People gamble when times are good, because they have the extra money, and they gamble when times are bad to relieve their stress. Not to worry if where you live is nowhere near Atlantic City or Vegas. Deighan reports that "Native American gaming has led the industry in growth this year. With

more states considering gaming as a source of revenue to support deficits, more casinos will open or expand and more jobs will become available." Salaries in the casino field run the gamut, based on job type, geographic location and experience.

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The Law on Your Side. Games of chance not your cup of tea? Perhaps becoming a paralegal is more your style.

You get to delve into facts, research cases, draft contracts, and help clients navigate the legal system. The need for paralegals is expected to grow, because many different types of companies are looking to fill positions. Places like banks, real-estate offices, insurance companies, corporations and public-sector agencies will be hiring people with legal expertise over the

next several years, and there are plenty of accredited training programs where you can get the needed education.

What do employers look for in a paralegal? Ted Schaer, partner with the Philadelphia firm Zarwin, Baum, DeVito, Kaplan, Schaer and Toddy, reports, "We like our employees to be self-starters. They must be able to work independently and hit the ground running. A good paralegal will be trusted to assist with all aspects of a case."



A wise woman once told me, 'It's never too late to do what you really love.' In that case, there's probably room for one more 'chick singer' in the world. Why not me?

If you work well on your own, have a quest for knowledge and a sharp eye for detail, you'll feel right at home as a paralegal. Median salaries for these jobs are around \$35,000.

In preparing this article, I found some good ideas for jobs I might consider as I journey through job-search land. I could picture myself doing quite a few of them actually, because my interests are broad and I love to learn. But, just for kicks, I decided to look up my dream job, cabaret singer, in the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

I didn't expect to find it, but there it was, plain as day. The good news was that the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that jobs in this profession are "scheduled to grow at least as fast as all other occupations." They are quick to caution that "only the most talented performers get regular work."

I guess the people who wrote the handbook haven't listened to the radio lately. A wise woman once told me, "It's never too late to do what you really love." In that case, there's probably room for one more "chick singer" in the world. Why not me?

Day 31—Use free ticket to Las Vegas. Freeload with friends. Slink into their front yard in pajamas to retrieve the Sunday

paper. Frighten neighborhood children with witch-like hair. Snitch classifieds. Borrow the family car. Find a nice, comfortable stool at a one-armed bandit. Read the Help Wanted with one hand and pull the Megabucks handle with the other. C'mon now, machine. Mama needs a new pair of shoes □

Elizabeth Kaminsky is a contributing editor to **MAKING BREAD**. Her alter-ego acts, sings, and has extensive experience in marketing and public relations.



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