



Randy's Work *and You*

April Edition

Dear clients and colleagues,

What does the economic stimulus package mean for job hunters?

The good news is that a broad range of employment opportunities are expected to open up nationwide, says Joanie Ruge, senior vice president at Adecco North America, a staffing company based in Melville, N.Y. The bad news: It's likely that they won't start opening up until the second half of this year. "Unfortunately, it's going to take some time for us to see the trickle effect," she says. "It's not instant."

The Wall Street Journal spoke to Ruge about the kinds of new jobs are on the horizon and what unemployed professionals can do in the meantime.

Ruge reported that industries most likely to offer career prospects from the stimulus are engineering, manufacturing and construction, information technology, and health care. Jobs are predicted to be evenly distributed throughout these industries and across all job levels, as well as jobs in infrastructure. For example, in construction, workers will be needed to build bridges, but engineers will also be needed to design them and project managers to oversee those projects. Ruge estimates about 3.5 million jobs will be created over a span of one to two years

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This month's topics:

1. **Featured Article: The Art of Your Story**
2. **Interview Tips: Follow Up After The Interview**
3. **Boomer Corner: Generation B Boomers in a Post-Boom Economy**
4. **Success Story**
5. **Humor Department**
6. **Words that Inspire**

1. The Art of Your Story

The Wall Street Journal
March 30, 2009

For some, making the decision to change careers is the easy part. It's harder to convince others, especially potential employers, that you're doing the right thing.

During your transition, you'll often be asked why you've decided to move in the new direction. I've learned to communicate my story quickly, and more importantly, in a way that makes sense and puts listeners at ease.

Beth Zimmerman, the 46-year-old president of business consulting firm Cerebellas, experienced a similar challenge when she made the leap to brand management after 10 years in architecture. "If I was lucky enough to get an interview, I was typically met with incredulity as to why and how an architect could become a brand marketer," says Ms. Zimmerman. She knew she needed a story that showed how her transition was "a logical and natural application of the capabilities I developed during my architectural career."

Tell a Factual, Compelling Story

Ms. Zimmerman created an interview narrative that drew on her architectural background and related it to her new field. "I explained how architecture and marketing share many of the same core competencies -- process-oriented thinking, intensive discovery of a client's business and an ability to navigate between big ideas and the smallest details," she says.

She also focused on how her problem-solving skills could be applied to new kinds of challenges. "Coupled with a skills-based résumé, my story helped me draw the picture for potential employers." After just a handful of interviews, Ms. Zimmerman landed a job.

Whether your career change is your choice or not, you must carefully craft your story before heading out on interviews.

"I recommend writing down your story. Try to stick to the facts, and rather than sulking or blaming other people, put in positive statements about how you turned a challenge into an opportunity," says Cy Wakeman, a workplace expert.

"Employers like candidates who reflect on and learn from their own experiences, take control of their lives, and show that they're bulletproof."

Counter Skepticism

The more drastic your reinvention, the more persuasive your story must be. Make sure you've consulted with several contacts in your new field to find out what interviewers will be looking for. And have a plan that shows employers how you'll acquire any missing skills.

If a hiring manager expresses skepticism, don't argue with her. "You can say, for

instance, that great leaders have a wide range of experiences, and that while you haven't done this specific task, you've compensated in other areas and are willing to work hard," says Ms. Wakeman. This is also a good opportunity to point out any work you've done in the new field, even if it was completed on a pro bono or volunteer basis.

Remember that your goal is to make a potential employer as comfortable as possible with the decision to bring you on board. Your reinvention may lead a hiring manager to suspect you're less qualified, so your story has to immediately address those concerns.

2. Interview Tips— Follow Up After The Interview

One of the most frequent questions I am asked is: "I had my interview. What's the best way to follow up?" Of course you will send a thank you note.

And you wait and wait. One week goes by. They said they would get back to you in 2 weeks. Then the third and fourth week goes by with no contact from them. You leave voicemails and send emails. Very frustrating!

What's a person to do?

The follow up is actually established at the end of your interview. You ask: "What are next steps?" The reply is usually, that they have to think about it or they have to interview more people. You would then say, "When do you think you will finish this round of interviewing?" Most will have a pretty good idea. You would then pick the next business day and say: "I would like to set up a 5 minute touch base telephone appointment on (date). Would 2:00 pm work for you?"

Remember, they set the time that they need. If you get the requested appointment, that's a very good sign that you did well in the phone interview. If they push back and refuse your request for a follow up telephone appointment, then you probably did not do very well as you hoped.

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Randy brings expertise in executive search as a certified career coach. He has guided all levels of professionals in the areas of career transition: changing careers, choosing a career direction, evaluating/negotiating offers, executive career marketing, finding jobs, getting organized, as well as finding opportunities for self-employment, freelancing and consulting. He holds an IJCTC certificate from the Career Planning and Adult Development, a CCMC (Certified Career Management Coach) from Career Coach Academy.

3. Boomer Corner-- Generation B Boomers in a Post-Boom Economy

The New York Times

March 1, 2009

TORY JOHNSON, the owner of Women for Hire, has been running job fairs in 10 of America's largest cities for the last decade, and during that time she has never had more than 2,000 people come to the events. Last Tuesday, at a little after 3 p.m., after the last person had checked in at her latest job fair at the Sheraton Manhattan, she showed me the counter she uses to keep track of attendance: 5,103.

"Never," she said, shaking her head. "Nothing ever like this before." Many of the women and men (she opened the event to men for the first time) had waited over two hours on the sidewalk in 20 degree temperature for the chance to mill through a ballroom, push to the front of a line at one of the 40 employer booths, hand a rep a résumé, maybe get a minute of face time and collect a business card or two.

"Very humbling," said Pat Gericke, 61, of Manhattan who has had a successful interior design business for 20 years that suddenly went dead last fall. "I never thought I'd be at one of these."

"First job fair," said Joe Palmieri, 54, of East Hanover, N.J., an I.T. supervisor for Novartis pharmaceuticals for 29 years before being laid off recently. "This is all new for me and my family. I have to keep a positive attitude, stand on my own two feet, otherwise you fall to the bottom."

Greg Kramer, 53, a buyer for Video USA for 15 years before being laid off Nov. 12, woke at 3 a.m. in suburban Massapequa, was on a 5 a.m. train, and at 7:25 was one of the first of the 650 who had paid \$20 (the main job fair is free) to attend the early bird seminar, "Coffee With Tory." "I don't mind being here so early," he said from his fourth-row seat. "I'm going through my notes to see who I want to meet with."

Nancy McCollum, 53, an I.T. supervisor laid off in October from an insurance firm, had driven from Hartford. Like many, she signed up for the early seminar because that would admit her with the first wave of 1,000 when the job fair started at 10. She was struck by all the people like her — well-dressed, middle-aged white-collar workers, carrying briefcases with résumés and business cards. "It could be discouraging," she said, "but I have to remind myself, all I need is one job."

That's all a lot of boomers need these days. The unemployment rate for adults age 55 and older was 5.2 percent in January 2009, the highest since July 1992; 1.7 million adults 55 and older were unemployed, almost twice as many as in November 2007.

When Ms. Johnson started organizing job fairs in 1999, the majority attending were recent college grads and a lot were looking for advice on how to climb the corporate ladder, ask for a raise, start a business. Now, she said, the majority are baby boomers or older and they just want to work again. She usually gets 1,000 to 1,500 at a fair. This time, she knew what she was in for when those who paid the \$20 preregistration fee for the early seminar quadrupled from the usual 150.

Ms. Johnson, who is also a weekly contributor to “Good Morning America,” makes her main income from the employers who pay for booths. They’re getting harder to find — a few years ago, she had 60 at a fair. She said the 40 companies this time had 1,000 jobs to offer, including positions at New York University Medical Center, Thomson Reuters and Girl Scouts of the USA. How many of the companies actually had the good-paying full-time salaried jobs that many boomers had lost was hard to gauge. Insurance companies like Prudential and New York Life were mainly offering sales jobs paying commission; Enterprise rental car listed over 70 jobs, but most were summer internships.

People knew this — the information was posted on Ms. Johnson’s Web site — and still, they came. To get in, you had to wear business clothes and have a prepared résumé. In eight hours, I saw just one person, a man in jeans, turned away.

What surprised and moved me most, was the civility of those waiting. I’d come to write about this because of an image in my head: that black and white Depression photo of men in neckties waiting in an enormous line for a chance to work. I thought I’d see the 2009 version and did. Midmorning, the line started on Seventh Avenue at 53rd Street, ran east to Sixth Avenue, south to 52nd Street, then doubled back to the Sheraton at 53rd near Seventh.

Taxi drivers lowered their windows, asking what the line was for. Told a “job fair,” they rolled their eyes as if to say: Is this what we’ve come to?

A few fairgoers, like Jacqueline Chester, 45, gave up. “It doesn’t make sense to stand in line with thousands to be seen by a handful of people,” she said after she’d spent a half hour waiting and was still a block away. “I’m heading to another career fair on 32nd Street.”

But most just waited, with patience and dignity, moving from sidewalk line, to lobby line, to second-floor registration line, to third-floor-almost-there line and finally to the promised land, the actual job fair, where crowds seven deep waited in front of the Kelly temporary services booth.

Part of the credit for the orderliness goes to Ms. Johnson, who hired extra security and ran as efficient a job fair as one could for 5,103 people trying to access a ballroom with a capacity of 1,000. Even if most didn’t get jobs, she offered useful services — like free résumé critiques by 26 experts at 13 tables.

But it is mostly a tribute to the 5,103, and I don't know if that's generational — all those middle-aged people who've learned self-control from decades in the workplace — or the wealth of America, which still provides some buffer from public rage and despair; or a continued faith in our economic system and our country.

Certainly, there is much to be miserable and angry about. First Joan Renaudo, 47, got breast cancer, and then, on Dec. 31, she lost her job as a hedge-fund comptroller. Carolyn Davis, an executive assistant at UBS for 13 years, was laid off in October. "Finding a new job at 59?" she said. "I've had one 10-minute interview in Midtown, Jan. 10, that's it. I met with four recruiters three weeks ago and none had anything."

But Ms. Renaudo added: "Getting over breast cancer taught me how to manage that feeling of helplessness. You're angry, you're anxious, you're afraid, but then you have a better day and it goes away." And Ms. Davis, who woke at 4 a.m. to catch a 6:20 express bus from Brooklyn, said, "I came today because I hope it will give me hope."

Maria Hunsicker, ("No age, just say I'm a boomer,") who was with a bank for 24 years before being laid off as a vice president, was waiting with three friends she met last fall at an outplacement center in Stamford, Conn. — Sue Rahaim, 55, Mona Seid, ("No age") and Max Mina, 54.

They weren't complaining about the crowds. "We went to one not long ago," Ms. Hunsicker said. "The room was filled and people were out the door."

They weren't complaining about rising so early to wait so long. "I felt like I was going to work again," said Ms. Mina, who was with XL Capital 20 years before being laid off in September. "It gives you direction."

They weren't complaining about the cold. "I'm just thankful it's not snowy and icy," Ms. Mina said.

They just wanted what those men in neckties in that black and white photo from the 1930s wanted: jobs, decent jobs.

4. Success Story

Dan P. (mid thirties)

Dan had been working in the steel industry since he graduated from college. He held the title of Fabrication Manager at his current firm. He completed his MBA and wanted to move up in the organization. He had several discussions with his management but to no avail.

He decided to make a move. His first inclination was to try to stay in the steel industry. Dan investigated the players and came to the conclusion that the growth was not going to be there (found very few openings). He then decided to look outside at some growth industries (healthcare, retail etc.) He contacted Target and went through an extensive screening process.

Dan is now working for Target heading up one of their distribution centers with a clear career path in front of him.

5. Humor Department:

These comments that were actually written by job applicants during their searches for employment:

In a cover letter:

“Here are my qualifications for you to overlook.”

“Please call me after 5:30 because I am self-employed and my employer does not know I am looking for another job.”

“My goal is to be a meteorologist. But since I have no training in Meteorology, I suppose I should try stock brokerage.”

“I demand a salary commiserate with my expensive experience.”

In a resume:

“I was working for my Mom until she decided to move.”

“Marital status: Single, Unmarried, Unengaged, Uninvolved, No Commitments.”

“Note: Please don’t misconstrue my 14 jobs as ‘job-hopping.’ I have never quit a job.”

“Marital status: often. Children: various.”

“Reason for leaving last job: They insisted that all employees get to work by 8:45 am every morning. I couldn’t work under those conditions.”

6. Words that Inspire

Whether it’s the best of times or the worst of times, it’s the only time we’ve got.”


--Art Buchwald, journalist

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