

Help wanted in some sectors

By Carley Thornell & Renee Nadeau | Sunday, June 14, 2009 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Coverage

A silver lining of opportunity lurks behind the gloomy economic forecast, according to corporate experts, who urge local job-seekers to cut out the pity parties and instead check out burgeoning health, energy and other surprisingly robust fields.

"We have seen business just recently start to pick up," said Kip Hollister, founder and CEO of staffing group Hollister Inc.

Hollister, which works with 15,000 local businesses, is seeing the highest level of activity from clients since November, she said.

"There's an interest in hiring new people, and positions that were on hold and new definitions of positions are opening up," she said. "There's a new sense of, 'We're at the bottom and we're starting to climb.' I, as a CEO, feel it and have done some hiring."

The national unemployment rate in May was 8.9 percent; Massachusetts' unemployment rate last month was 8 percent. Economists at New England Economic Partnership predict that layoffs may continue at local companies through mid-2010, and that the state's unemployment rate could soar to more than 9 percent.

However, versatile job-seekers should take heart: Companies are condensing job descriptions and looking for people who can fill multiple roles, Hollister said. She has seen an uptick in demand for workers with creative and marketing skills with technological know-how, such as Web designers and content managers.

And certain sectors are seeing resilience and even growth.

Easy being green

Though every industry has been hurt by the recession, Commissioner Phil Giudice of the Department of Energy Resources said the green-energy sector has suffered less. The industry's jobs range from craftsmen and laborers to advanced positions in science and engineering. "It's quite a range, and there's hiring going on at all levels," Giudice said.

With about 10 percent of federal economic stimulus funds being injected into the industry, Giudice called it the "centerpiece of the stimulus package." Massachusetts is particularly well-placed for new jobs, with a great deal of political support for green energy.

"I think it's going to play not just a lead role in our economic recovery, but a role beyond that economic recovery," he said.

Hospital hires

Even in a downturn, hospital positions are almost always open in clinical, pharmacy, housekeeping and food services, said Lisa Zankman, senior vice president of public relations at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Zankman also expects more research positions to open up, thanks to new grant funding.

Rena Lithotomos, a chemical pharmacist, landed a Beth Israel job after being out of the work force for 10 years to stay home and care for her two children.

"I'm a glass-half-full kind of person. But I did have the fear I might not be able to find a job," said Lithotomos, who started retraining last month after looking for work for just a few weeks.

Lithotomos had previously worked at Beth Israel, and followed the cardinal rule of job-hunting: She always kept in touch with her colleagues.



"My friend called me and said, 'Do you want to come back?' " she said. "I was happy to come back."

Of course, competition at the hospital is stiff.

"We're used to a situation where we're scrambling. This is a buyer's market. We have 50 resumes for positions where we used to have 20," said Zankman, who said many applicants are "overqualified."

Auto upswing

A car dealership hiring salespeople? Muzi Motors CEO Neal Cammarano credits a long-standing philosophy of conservatism.

"We've always staffed ourselves at the appropriate level - we've never overstaffed," said the Needham auto dealer. "As we saw storm clouds on the horizon a couple years ago with Ford and Chevrolet, we worked on staffing appropriately. If someone left, we really would think before replacing them."

Now demand for Ford is back up, Cammarano said, and he's filled a few of a half-dozen open sales positions.

And those positions were filled with well-qualified candidates, Cammarano said. Unlike in previous recessions, when people applying for open jobs had training in other fields, this time he is receiving plenty of resumes from folks with prior sales experience.

The CEO said he isn't too worried about lagging auto sales.

"I think Ford is getting a favorable response from the public on several fronts," he said. "They didn't accept any government money. Also, the products they have coming out and the prices are tremendous."

As for his other line of cars, "Once Chevrolet works through their bankruptcy issues, they have a great product line. I'm fully expecting sales of Chevrolet to go back up, too."

Rx for employment

Novartis AG is looking for a few good men and women.

The 2,000-employee Cambridge outpost of the Swiss pharmaceutical giant - which announced Friday that it has produced the first swine-flu vaccine - is always looking for biologists, chemists and pharmacologists, said director of communications Jeff Lockwood.

"Three years ago, we were hiring at start-up mode," he said. "We may be tapering off," he added, but not completely.

Lockwood cites the recent long-term lease of an MIT-owned lot across the street at 181 Massachusetts Ave., which could add 250,000 square feet of research space, as evidence of the company's commitment to growth.

"What's great for us about Cambridge is it's the life-science industry innovation center of the universe," Lockwood said. "The mix of academic institutions, biotech, pharmacology and all the hospitals in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge are unlike any in the world. It's an industry really driven by brainpower and we wanted to have that brainpower for hiring collaborations and relations - and Cambridge has been that place, and then some."

Healthy sector

People will always get sick - meaning the hiring situation is healthy at insurance companies such as Network Health.

The Medford-based nonprofit is hiring in operations, customer service, information technology, administration and medical management. The company also relocated its headquarters to Station Landing in Medford to "provide space for our continued growth," said its president, Christina Severin.

Started in Cambridge and Somerville as part of Cambridge Health Alliance in 1997, Network Health now serves more than 300 Massachusetts cities and towns.

The company, one of 13 that administers MassHealth, has grown steadily since 2006, when the Bay State implemented its health-care reform act requiring residents to have insurance.

Nonprofit for profit

If all else fails, people who have been laid off might want to look at volunteer positions - a great way to learn new skills and get experience in a different industry, said David Mangani, executive director of the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network. A volunteer gig could even lead to a career with the organization.

"Many volunteers find work in a nonprofit or will find work later on when things turn around," Mangani said.

As endowments drop and demand soars, agencies are relying on volunteers, he said.

An unpaid internship also can open doors.

Hollister employee Emma Murphy graduated from Tufts University last year with a degree in psychology and began working with a small marketing firm in Boston. When her hours and benefits were sharply reduced, she turned to Hollister this spring for help finding a new job, but instead snagged internships with the firm and its creative partner, 451 Marketing in Boston.

"Just a couple of weeks ago, Hollister recognized the value that I added and offered me a part-time position as a public relations coordinator," said Murphy, 22. She also parlayed her internship at 451 Marketing into a part-time paid job as assistant to the senior accounts manager.

Article URL: <http://www.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view.bg?articleid=1178841>



[Contact us](#) | [Print advertising](#) | [Online advertising](#) | [Herald history](#) | [News tips](#) | [Electronic edition](#) | [Browser upgrade](#) | [Home delivery](#) | [Herald wireless](#)

Save on Boston Herald Home Delivery

Jobs with Herald Media

For back copy information and more information on other collectible copies please call 617-426-3000 Ext. 7714. [Click here for Celtics, Patriots and Red Sox back copies](#)



© Copyright by the Boston Herald and Herald Media.

No portion of BostonHerald.com or its content may be reproduced without the owner's written permission. [Privacy Commitment](#)

0.052824 : cached : owl.heraldinteractive.com