



Evergreen Realty Associates

235 Worcester Road

PO Box 1137

Sterling, MA 01564

Tel: 978-422-8181

Fax: 978-422-8383

www.EvergreenRealty.com

Senior Real Estate Matters

Monthly Newsletter – Dec. 2010

Landing a Retirement Job

By Elyse Umlauf-Garneau

Whether it's to stay active and engaged or because of financial need, more retirees and those aged 55+ are seeking jobs.

According to the Bureau of Labor, that number is expected to rise. It looked at labor force participation of seniors and expects the number of workers between the ages of 65 and 74 to increase by 83.4 percent between 2006 and 2016. And the number of workers aged 75 and up is predicted to grow by 84.3 percent during that period.

Many will need to work because of skyrocketing health care costs and because of retirement fund losses, according to Art Koff, author of *Invent Your Retirement: Resources for the Good Life* and founder of www.Retiredbrains.com, a resource for retirement information and job leads.

And though the perception is that job opportunities are scarce, such is not the case, says Koff, who sees demand for experienced, reliable, knowledgeable workers interested in temporary jobs.

He distinguishes temporary work from part-time work, explaining that temp work could entail consulting in your former profession, taking freelance assignments, or doing seasonal work, such as tax season jobs.

Companies are more apt to hire temps because they can find people with experience and knowledge without making a commitment to them. In addition, companies find that older workers are reliable and solid. Corina Kellam, founder of Life History Books, hires people to conduct interviews for family histories and says, "I need people to be punctual, polite, and considerate. I'm finding those traits are the most consistent in the older people I'm hiring."

Koff ticks off an array of temporary job categories frequently filled by seniors, including:

- Consultants
- Pharmacists
- Nurses and healthcare professionals
- Accountants
- Chemists
- Researchers
- Call centers and telemarketing
- Hotels concierges
- Retail and food service

Despite the available opportunities, there are obstacles to finding work. Here are some strategies to make the process go more smoothly.

Network: "People are hesitant to put themselves out there, but the best way to find a job is through networking," says Koff. That includes traditional methods of talking with friends, neighbors, and former colleagues, and tapping online venues, such as LinkedIn.com and Facebook. "Think about everyone you came in contact with

during your working years. Catalog your connections to see if any of them can introduce you to someone working in a field you want to explore," suggests Anya Korepanova, principal and founder of Dreamline Coach, San Francisco.

And don't forget about college and university alumni associations, suggests Kerry Hennon (<http://kerryhennon.com>), author of *What's Next? Follow Your Passion and Find Your Dream Job*. Many offer networking events, interviewing coaching, and resume consulting geared to helping alumni to reinvent themselves.

Temp agencies: Many companies facing a hiring freeze still need effective workers and often turn to temp agencies for help. Korepanova suggests making a strong impression on and personal connections with recruiters who will work as your advocate.

Volunteer: Some pooh-pooh the value of volunteering, but Hennon says that's a mistake. Not only can you enjoy doing something you love, but it also can lead to new opportunities. She talks about one woman who volunteered at a garden (think New York Botanical Garden, for example) and it led her to start a landscape consulting business. Another volunteered at a homeless shelter. She's now its executive director. "You just never know who you'll meet," says Hennon.

Resume revamp: Adjust your resume for the specific job, devoting the most space to areas where you have experience that matches the qualifications a company is seeking, suggests Koff. "Place a summary of experience at the top so the person reading it can say, 'ooh, this matches my needs,'" he comments.

Carefully consider what to include and exclude. A job you did 35 years ago that has no direct connection to the position you're applying for, for instance, may be worth eliminating. "People write too much. Employers want snappy, up-to-date resumes that highlight recent jobs and skills," says Hennon.

And resume writing trends change quickly, so hiring a professional to tweak your resume may be worthwhile.

Technical know-how: Depending on the job you're seeking, you may need to update your knowledge, particularly in technical fields like engineering or if a position requires heavy computer skills. Community college classes can help you brush up on social media, mobile technology, and the latest programs relative to your field. "People who aren't up to speed on technology are really behind the eight ball," observes Hennon.

Ageism: Yes, there's age discrimination, but those seeking temp assignments may have a leg-up on younger competitors. Koff points to several advantages seniors have, including their flexibility and reliability and the fact that they don't need benefits. In addition, seniors typically aren't hunting for full-time jobs and won't abandon a temp job on short notice for full-time employment.

"Companies will pay for expertise, so if you have a body of knowledge and experience, use those as selling points," says Hennon.

Interviews: Koff suggests doing some practice interviews for jobs that aren't necessarily your top picks. You'll gain experience, get a sense of questions that will be lobbed at you, and you'll feel more confident and relaxed.

Be prepared to explain how your skills can solve a company's challenges, instead of offering a laundry list of your successes.

And strike the right balance with your appearance. On one hand, it's important not to try passing yourself off as someone who is 30 years younger. But, points out, Hennon, appearance *is* important, and she suggests not being bashful about donning stylish clothes and hip glasses. "And showing passion, energy, and enthusiasm are big assets. People can sense that inner vibe," she comments.

Transition to the future

There's no shortage of resources to help you find a job, whether it's a consulting gig, a part-time job, or a freelance assignment.

Here are several additional sites worth exploring:

- www.encore.org
- www.execunet.com/executive-jobs.cfm?wt.svl=b_left_text
- www.WorkForce50.com

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Evergreen Realty Associates
235 Worcester Road
PO Box 1137
Sterling, MA 01564
Judy Reynolds, CRB, CRS, e-Pro

