



Searching for that Hot Job

Looking online for openings in the scorching Puget Sound job market is all the rage.

BY MARJORIE ROMMEL

IF YOU HAVE a hankering for a new job, you'd better start looking now—especially online.

Even with the holiday retail rush fading, the Puget Sound's red-hot job market is expected to stay strong in the first part of 2007, barring some unforeseen calamity.

Just how hot is the job market? The state's unemployment rate fell to 4.8 percent in October (the lowest annual average rate since 2000), when an estimated 10,700 non-farm jobs were added to state payrolls, according to the Washington State Employment Security Department (WSESD). Not surprisingly, a good number of those jobs across the state were created in small businesses based in the Puget Sound area. Manufacturing was the most active sector, adding about 2,300 jobs. Retailers and food and beverage stores also beefed up their ranks with 2,200 new positions in preparation for the holiday shopping season.

While some cooling is expected, Evelina Tainer, chief economist for WSESD, expects continued demand in King County for workers in construction, transportation, health care, senior housing and technology. "Anything related to aging boomers is big," she notes.

For those wanting work, she advises looking for jobs and posting résumés through the various online employment listing sources, such as Jobster.com or Monster.com.

"The help-wanted index has always been a very good indicator of activity, but after the 2001 recession, the index fell and never came back," Tainer explains. "Monster Worldwide

started an index two years ago, but it's not seasonally adjusted yet and hasn't gone through a complete business cycle. Still, we're seeing results ... If job seekers are not posting their résumés on Monster, they're missing a bet."

In Washington state, individuals can tap into various websites, including NWJobs.com, an online version of the classified advertisements for *The Seattle Times* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Other sources include temporary labor agencies, such as Manpower, Kelly Services or Tacoma-based Labor Ready.

Even the state government has gotten into the job-search business. WESD's workforceexplorer.com website offers WorkSource Washington, a statewide service that lists job openings in each city. It also offers links to classified ads in the state's newspapers and other sources. America's Job Bank, a national job listing service, can be searched by ZIP code.

Many, if not most, upper-income, high-tech and top administrative positions are tracked through targeted job-match agencies. For example, Kirkland-based Chameleon Technologies, a technical staffing and professional services company, offers job matches for executive-level and IT positions for several large companies in the area.

Chameleon co-founder Melissa Acton says demand in the high-paying IT sector remains strong—for the right candidates.

"Good people with the experience, tenure and skill sets that employers want—specifically related to Java technology—are very hard to find," Acton notes.

While some technology companies remain reticent to hire full-time workers following the tech crash of 2000, Acton says an increasing number of companies are looking to fill permanent positions.

Tainer cautions that "there's a pretty good chance" of a slowdown in economic growth within the next 12 to 18 months, but she says the state's staffing services business is as strong as ever.

Sam Virgil, the Seattle-area metro manager for Kelly Services, does not see a slowdown in Kelly's future.

"The Seattle economy seems to be going crazy," he adds. **SB**

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT POLLACK