

EMPLOYMENT in New York State

David A. Paterson, Governor

December 2008

M. Patricia Smith, Commissioner

Tips for Jump-starting Your Next Job Search (Part 1)...

Job Search Strategies for Challenging Times

It's now official -- when the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), the organization that serves as the barometer for the U.S. economy, announced on December 1 that the nation had been in recession since December 2007, it confirmed what many Americans had already suspected for some time. At 12 months old, the current U.S. recession is on track to surpass the 16-month slumps that occurred in 1973-1975 and 1981-1982 (the longest on record since the end of World War II).

If you're one of the thousands of people looking for work this holiday season, the news from the NBER comes as no surprise. There were almost 550,000 unemployed New Yorkers in October 2008,

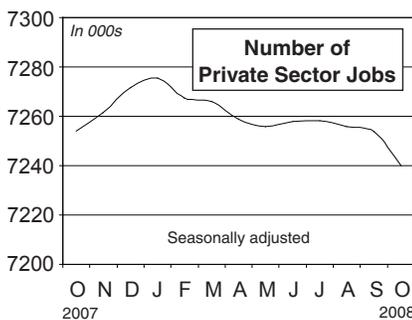
an increase of more than 100,000, or 24 percent, since the national economic slump began in December 2007.

Economic conditions are expected to get worse before they get better. In October, the Federal Reserve raised its 2009 U.S. unemployment rate forecast from a range of 5.3-5.8 percent to 7.1-7.6 percent. Many analysts do not expect a recovery until sometime in 2010. Given this gloomy set of economic news, it is no surprise that job seekers are reporting more difficulty finding a position. This is the first of a two-part series where we offer strategies for job seekers to use in an environment where job losses and hiring freezes have gripped a slowing economy.

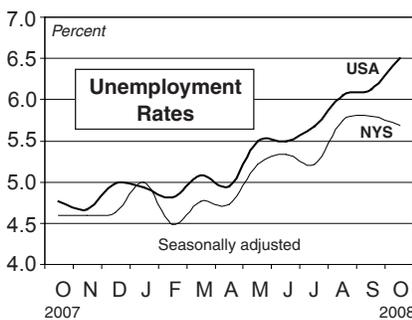
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IN OCTOBER...

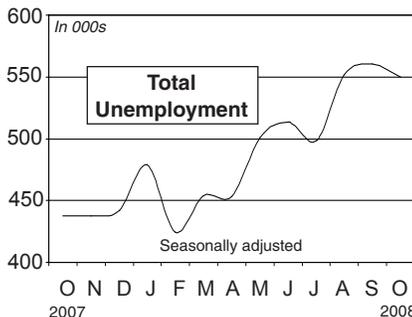
...NYS private sector jobs decreased



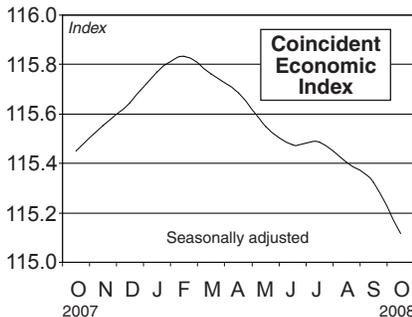
...NYS unemployment rate decreased



...NYS unemployment decreased



...NYS economic index decreased



At a Glance

In October 2008, New York's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 5.7 percent, down from 5.8 percent in September 2008. (The nation's unemployment rate was 6.5 percent in October.) In October 2008, the state had 8,759,300 nonfarm jobs, including 7,239,900 private sector jobs, after seasonal adjustment. The number of private sector jobs in the state decreased by 0.2 percent from September, while the U.S. private sector job count also decreased by 0.2 percent. From October 2007 to October 2008, the number of private sector jobs in the state decreased by 0.2 percent and decreased by 1.2 percent in the U.S. (not seasonally adjusted). In addition, New York's Index of Coincident Economic Indicators decreased in October.

Change in Nonfarm Jobs Oct. 2007 - Oct. 2008 (Data not seasonally adjusted, numbers in thousands)

	Net	%
Total Nonfarm Jobs	-2.9	0.0
Private Sector	-14.1	-0.2
Goods-producing	-19.0	-2.1
Nat. res. & mining	0.1	1.5
Construction	-1.7	-0.5
Manufacturing	-17.4	-3.2
Durable gds.	-7.7	-2.4
Nondurable gds.	-9.7	-4.3
Service-providing	16.1	0.2
Trade, trans., & util.	-11.0	-0.7
Wholesale trade	-4.8	-1.3
Retail trade	-8.0	-0.9
Trans., whrs., & util.	1.8	0.6
Information	-0.3	-0.1
Financial activities	-16.5	-2.3
Prof. & bus. svcs.	-5.7	-0.5
Educ. & health svcs.	30.2	1.8
Leisure & hospitality	5.0	0.7
Other services	3.2	0.9
Government	11.2	0.7

Focus on the Mohawk Valley

Holiday Retail Hiring in the Mohawk Valley

by Mark Barbano, Labor Market Analyst, Mohawk Valley

Tis the season! The word *seasonal* “applies to what depends on or is controlled by the season of the year,” according to the *American Heritage Dictionary*. Employment in many industries is affected by seasonal changes. For example, construction jobs increase during the spring and summer months, while the number of tax preparers climbs during the months leading up to April 15. The Christmas holiday shopping period is one of the most important seasonal economic events. Not only does it generate significant retail hiring, but it is also an important economic engine. According to the National Retail Federation, total holiday sales in the U.S. (defined as retail industry sales for the entire months of November and December) are expected to hit \$470.4 billion in 2008.

Analysis

This analysis looks at how much the Christmas shopping season boosts employment in selected retail industries in the Mohawk Valley. (See the November 2007 issue of this newsletter for an analysis of statewide trends in retail holiday hiring.) The “hiring boost” was measured by comparing retail industry job counts in September and December. Three years (2005-2007) of data were averaged together to avoid the possibility that one unusually “good” or “bad” year would skew overall trends. It is important to note that given the current na-



“Despite an ailing national economy, the Mohawk Valley region expects to continue to experience seasonal gains in retail employment during the 2008 holiday shopping season.”

Bruce Herman,
Deputy Commissioner
for Workforce Development

tional economic recession and the resulting cutbacks in consumer spending, the historic seasonal gains in retail employment noted here will likely be less in 2008.

Not all retail trade industries are equally affected by the Christmas holiday shopping season. Christmas hiring activity does, however, impact employment levels in the following eight retail industries in the Mohawk Valley during the holiday season: furniture and home furnishings stores; electronics and appliance stores; health and personal care stores; clothing and accessories stores; sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores; general merchandise stores; miscellaneous store retailers; and nonstore retailers.

Over the three-year study period, combined employment in the eight seasonal retail industries in the Mohawk Valley averaged 11,050 in September and 11,840 in December. This translated into an average September-December job gain of 790. Not unexpectedly, the rate of job growth in the seasonal retail industries (+7.2 percent) was much higher than all other industries (+0.3 percent) in the region between September and December.

Net job increases were largest in general merchandise stores (+390) and sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores (+100). Several retail industries in the Mohawk Valley experienced double-digit percentage hiring jumps during the holiday season. The largest percentage gains were recorded at sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores (+16.5 percent) and electronics and appliance stores (+12.9 percent).

There are also important differences in seasonal growth rates between the region’s one metro area -- Utica-Rome (Oneida and Herkimer counties) -- and its outlying counties (Fulton, Montgomery, Schoharie and Otsego counties). Over the study period, seasonal retail jobs in the metro area expanded three times faster (+9.2 percent) compared to the rest of the region (+3.0 percent). This difference is most likely due to the presence of shopping centers such

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Getting Started

In a season traditionally filled with joyful news and holiday parties, the downturn in the economy has many job seekers fretting over the increased difficulty in finding a new position. At its most basic level, the labor market functions like most other markets for goods and services. It is driven by the principle of supply and demand. Right now, it is a buyer’s market for employers. To get hired, job seekers will need to work harder and smarter than the other people trying to sell themselves to employers.

To increase the likelihood that you will be hired, we suggest a three-step plan: know your product (i.e., yourself) better than your competitors know theirs; research what employers need from you as an employee; and market yourself in a way that makes it obvious to the employer that you are the best choice.

Product Research

To paraphrase William Shakespeare, “Know thyself.” You must identify your unique strengths, skills and talents, and spell out how they meet an employer’s needs. Dr. Tom Denham, a career counselor at Careers in Transition, LLC in Colonie, NY, emphasizes that effective job seekers are focused, disciplined, and persistent. Like many high school students applying to colleges, it is useful for job seekers to think in terms of three types of jobs: ideal job; backup job (one you probably can get); and safety job (one needed immediately to prevent home foreclosure).

Your first step is “product research.” Look at every job you’ve ever done (paid or unpaid) and analyze the skills required. Next, broaden your analysis to include non-work experiences (hobbies, volunteering)

that helped you develop work-related skills. Third, and most important, identify and list tangible accomplishments related to each of them. A great site for job analysis is: <http://online.onetcenter.org/>.

Networking is Key

It is also important to decide early on where to concentrate most of your job search efforts. Historically, networking has tended to be the leading method in terms of finding employment. Thus, the old catchphrase -- “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” -- is as true as ever. Estimates from the job search literature vary, but research suggests that the vast majority of jobs -- around 70 percent -- are filled through networking. Another 20-25 percent are filled by recruiters, while only a tiny minority (5-10 percent) are filled through ads and online postings.

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Unemployment Rates in New York State

Data Not Seasonally Adjusted

	OCT '07	OCT '08		OCT '07	OCT '08		OCT '07	OCT '08
New York State	4.4	5.5	Hudson Valley	3.7	5.1	Finger Lakes	4.0	5.5
Capital District	3.6	4.9	Dutchess	3.7	5.2	Genesee	4.1	5.2
Albany	3.6	4.9	Orange	4.0	5.5	Livingston	4.1	5.3
Columbia	3.6	4.7	Putnam	3.2	4.4	Monroe	4.2	5.6
Greene	4.2	5.9	Rockland	3.7	4.9	Ontario	3.5	4.9
Rensselaer	3.7	4.9	Sullivan	4.6	6.3	Orleans	4.6	6.1
Saratoga	3.3	4.5	Ulster	4.0	5.3	Seneca	3.7	5.1
Schenectady	3.9	5.1	Westchester	3.5	4.9	Wayne	3.9	5.6
Warren	3.6	5.5	Mohawk Valley	4.1	5.5	Wyoming	3.7	5.1
Washington	3.6	4.9	Fulton	4.8	6.8	Yates	3.3	4.4
Central New York	3.9	5.6	Herkimer	3.8	5.2	Western New York	4.3	5.6
Cayuga	3.8	5.6	Montgomery	4.9	6.4	Allegany	4.5	5.6
Cortland	4.0	6.0	Oneida	3.8	5.3	Cattaraugus	4.5	5.8
Madison	3.8	5.1	Otsego	3.7	5.1	Chautauqua	4.0	5.3
Onondaga	3.7	5.4	Schoharie	4.5	5.6	Erie	4.2	5.5
Oswego	4.5	6.5	North Country	4.6	6.4	Niagara	4.6	6.2
Southern Tier	3.9	5.3	Clinton	4.5	6.2	Long Island	3.5	4.9
Broome	4.0	5.4	Essex	4.3	6.0	Nassau	3.5	4.8
Chemung	4.1	5.6	Franklin	4.9	6.4	Suffolk	3.6	5.0
Chenango	4.3	6.0	Hamilton	3.1	4.7	New York City	5.2	5.7
Delaware	3.7	5.5	Jefferson	4.5	6.5	Bronx	7.1	7.7
Schuyler	4.1	5.3	Lewis	3.9	5.9	Kings	5.6	6.2
Steuben	4.9	5.8	St. Lawrence	5.0	6.9	New York	4.5	5.0
Tioga	3.6	4.7				Queens	4.6	5.1
Tompkins	3.1	4.2				Richmond	4.7	5.1

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as Sangertown and Consumer Square in the Utica-Rome metro area.

Besides a substantial surge in retail jobs from September to December, there was an even greater gain in holiday wages paid during 2005-2007. While seasonal employment rose 7.2 percent in the Mohawk Valley, total wages advanced even more (+10.2 percent) between the third and fourth quarters. This is likely the effect of the boost in the state's minimum wage during this period, as well as seasonal increases in the number of hours worked by retail employees during the holiday season. Indeed, many employers expand store hours during the holiday season.

What kind of retail positions are people hired to fill during the Christmas shopping season? Staffing patterns data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey indicate that the dominant occupations in the seasonal retail trade industries include: retail salespersons, cashiers, stock clerks and order fillers, and first-line managers of retail sales workers.

Summary

Seasonal Christmas hiring is clearly evident in retail trade, but appears more pronounced in some retail industries than others. Retailers in larger urban areas typically hire a larger percentage of seasonal workers than retailers outside metro areas. To keep up with the demand for labor during the holidays, retailers typically often need to increase the working hours of the employees.

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These statistics underscore the existence of a "hidden job market" in which most available jobs at any given time are not publicly advertised or posted. However, once a job becomes public -- either in an online posting or newspaper advertisement -- competition for that position rapidly increases. Thus, while searching the Internet is a convenient method to look for a job, it is generally one of the least effective.

Dr. Denham points out that just as referrals are key to running a successful business, networking is unquestionably the most effective method for finding a job. However, networking is a learned skill which many people find challenging. Moreover, it can be time consuming. It essentially involves reaching out to other people, letting them know what you are looking for, and asking the question "Do you know anyone who can help me?" Dr. Denham suggests, for example, that job seekers "eat and drink their way" to networking by holding morning and afternoon coffee sessions with potential informants.

New tools on the web have made building a network easier than ever. As the usefulness of social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) has increased, their popularity with today's job seekers has skyrocketed, especially among recent college graduates.

Many job seekers are also turning to the LinkedIn web site, which has the philosophy that "professional relationships

are key to professional success." Using LinkedIn, a job seeker can build a free account to share information about their professional accomplishments and connect to past and current colleagues, clients or partners. LinkedIn offers job seekers an opportunity to develop a positive web presence. This is especially important when the first step for most human resources professionals today is to conduct a Google search of job seekers by name. (*Editor's note: In our next issue, we will conclude our analysis of strategies for job seekers in a difficult economic environment.*)

by Christopher Myers, Victoria Gray,
and Kevin Jack

Employment in New York State

is published 12 times a year. For a change of address, write to the Publications Unit at the address below and provide your old as well as new address.

Division of Research and Statistics
New York State Department of Labor
Building 12, State Office Campus
Albany, N.Y. 12240

Director	Peter A. Neenan
Editor	Kevin Jack
Director of Communications	Leo Rosales
Graphic Design	Jeff Mosher
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FINGER LAKES Tammy Marino 585-258-8870

Private sector employment in the Rochester metro area declined over the year by 4,300, or 1.0 percent, to 434,300 in October 2008. Job gains occurred in educational and health services (+2,200). Declines were largest in manufacturing (-2,700), trade, transportation and utilities (-1,600) and professional and business services (-1,200).

CENTRAL NY Roger Evans 315-479-3388

For the 12-month period ending October 2008, the private sector job count in the Syracuse metro area rose 400, or 0.1 percent, to 270,100. Job growth was concentrated in educational and health services (+600) and natural resources, mining and construction (+400). The largest job loss occurred in manufacturing (-600).

MOHAWK VALLEY Mark Barbano 315-793-2282

For the 12-month period ending October 2008, the private sector job count in the Utica-Rome metro area decreased 1,200, or 1.2 percent, to 99,400. Job gains were centered in educational and health services (+100). Losses were greatest in manufacturing (-500) and financial activities (-400).

NORTH COUNTRY Alan Beideck 518-891-6680

Private sector employment in the North Country fell over the year by 300, or 0.3 percent, to 119,200 in October 2008. The largest gains were in trade, transportation and utilities (+600) and educational and health services (+300). Losses were greatest in manufacturing (-500), other services (-300), and financial activities (-200).

CAPITAL DISTRICT James Ross 518-462-7600

From October 2007 to October 2008, the number of private sector jobs in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area rose 200, or 0.1 percent, to 344,500. Job gains were concentrated in educational and health services (+1,300) and professional and business services (+1,200). Losses were greatest in trade, transportation and utilities (-900), leisure and hospitality (-700) and manufacturing (-300).

HUDSON VALLEY John Nelson 914-997-8798

Private sector employment in the Hudson Valley increased over the year by 1,200, or 0.2 percent, to 762,600 in October 2008. Job gains were largest in educational and health services (+2,900), natural resources, mining and construction (+1,000), and professional and business services (+900). Losses were centered in manufacturing (-1,500).

WESTERN NY John Slenker 716-851-2742

For the 12-month period ending October 2008, the private sector job count in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area decreased 1,900, or 0.4 percent, to 456,400. Gains were centered in leisure and hospitality (+2,900) and financial activities (+1,000). Losses were largest in manufacturing (-2,100), natural resources, mining and construction (-1,800) and trade, transportation and utilities (-1,600).

SOUTHERN TIER Christian Harris 607-741-4485

Private sector employment in the Southern Tier declined over the year by 1,500, or 0.6 percent, to 240,400 in October 2008. Job gains were largest in educational and health services (+900). Losses were greatest in manufacturing (-900), trade, transportation and utilities (-600) and leisure and hospitality (-400).

NEW YORK CITY James Brown 212-775-3330

Private sector employment in New York City rose 5,300, or 0.2 percent, to 3,226,900 for the 12-month period ending October 2008. Growth was largest in educational and health services (+6,700), leisure and hospitality (+5,700), and trade, transportation and utilities (+4,600). Financial activities (-13,100) and manufacturing (-6,600) lost the most jobs.

LONG ISLAND Gary Huth 516-934-8533

The number of private sector jobs on Long Island decreased over the year by 2,800, or 0.3 percent, to 1,073,000 in October 2008. The largest gain occurred in educational and health services (+3,600). The largest job losses were in manufacturing (-2,200), financial activities (-1,900), and professional and business services (-1,000).

