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## Outlook is positive for area job seekers

by Stephanie Geery-Zink

Omaha staffing agencies indicate things are looking up for job seekers, with more jobs available in a variety of fields.

"The economy is starting to trend strong," said Jessica McCormick, district manager at Kelly Services.

McCormick said one million jobs have been created nationwide over the past three months.

Chris Carlson, regional manager with Aureus Group, said her agency had a 33 percent increase in placements made in the second quarter of 2004, compared with the same quarter in 2003.

People are starting to hire again, she said.

"Overall in the last quarter we've seen a huge increase in open positions in all markets we serve," said Murray Hayes, general manager of Remedy Intelligent Staffing.

"We're starting to see full-time hiring pick up as more companies look for assistance on a full-time basis," said Patty North, regional manager for Celebrity Staffing.

A variety of positions are becoming available, although agencies have different perspectives on which jobs have more opportunities.

McCormick said the biggest demands are in the telecom, engineering and information technology fields.

Outsourcing also is big right now as a way to cut costs without hiring full-time employees, especially in human resources, McCormick said.

Hayes said manufacturing positions, especially assembly line jobs, are picking up because production levels are increasing.

There's also demand at Remedy for jobs designed to save money — purchasing positions and managerial positions. The most successful candidates will show what they have been able to save previous employers, Hayes said.

"Clerical is coming back, but not as fast as light industrial," Hayes said.

Mid-level administrative support and management positions, which employers have been reluctant to fill during the past few years, are starting to come back, North said.

Carlson said jobs are hot in the areas in which she specializes, information systems and finance and accounting, as well as technical.

"Experience and education are hot buttons," she said.

Accounting is especially hot right now, she said, as a result of the federal Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which requires more corporate accounting.

Everyone's concerned about meeting IRS requirements, Carlson said, so employers are looking for accountants with formal education and a proven track record.

Also hot is the health care field. Carlson said by 2010, 70 percent of jobs will have some tie to health care.

Many employers are being picky about who they're hiring now, and some have hired temporary workers to try them out and get them trained for when, in the near future, they're ready to hire them full time.

"We're seeing companies being very particular about hiring the right person," Hayes said. "They may be looking for exact experience."

People are starting to add contingency staffing, McCormick said. Companies are confident they will be adding positions, but don't necessarily want to commit in case the economy isn't headed for recovery. By adding temporary workers, they can get them trained and see how they'll fit.

Some customers are saying their business is picking up, North said, but they're hesitant to hire people for the long term. Celebrity has worked to put people in positions which start out temporary but may become full time, she said.

McCormick said unemployed job hunters will start to see competition for available jobs from people who were unhappy in their positions but stayed put because of the shaky economy.



North, at left, Celebrity Staffing regional manager, interviewing an applicant.

Now they want to find work elsewhere.

One of the most challenging things for staffing agencies is

the sessions to find out how you sound.

Those who have been on unemployment for extended periods should prepare to answer interviewers with a good reason why they weren't able to find a job, Hayes said.

"You have to be able to explain those gaps in work history," Hayes said.

"I think the most important thing is not to overstate who you are or understate who you are," Carlson said.

Also, don't be too wordy on your resume and keep it to one or two pages. Carlson said potential employers "don't have time to read a book."

In the resume, include lots of facts and figures, and use action words, she said. It's a summary of skills and not meant to show everything. That's for the face-to-face interview.

North said those who have been out of the workforce because of the economy need to present themselves effectively, working on their skills and going to an interview dressed for a position

above the one they're applying for.

McCormick said to network with everyone and not to rely on just one employment agency, since it may not work with all of the companies you may want to work for.

And those in temporary positions need to be on their toes because those positions could lead to a full-time job.

"Anytime you're in front of a client, it's an opportunity," Hayes said.



Carlson



Hayes



McCormick

dealing with the disconnect between jobs available and people whose skills don't match those jobs. Hayes said there is some of that going on now.

"I feel bad for people who want to work but we can't place them," Hayes said.

North agreed there is an ample candidate pool, but they don't necessarily match jobs available.

"There are lots of candidates, but they don't always have the skill set that employers are looking for," North said. "Companies are being very selective."

What can job hunters do to improve their chances of getting hired?

Job seekers need to make sure they do their homework, Hayes said. That includes doing research into the company they're interested in to know whether there is actually a job they're qualified for.

Hayes added that developing good interviewing skills is crucial. He advised practicing with friends and tape recording

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