

## Transitioning in a New Economy: How Can I Help?

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Having experienced multiple recessions that included gas lines, employee layoffs, cutbacks in services, it almost comes as no surprise to see a recession of this magnitude and its impacts in the classroom. This time around, I am an educator and not providing services in the private sector. Many of my students may be casualties of our new economy who wait re-training, new knowledge and a glimmer of hope for a new job. The 18-24 year olds seem somewhat unconcerned by the deep recession, as many have fewer expectations of what the future will hold. Many of these students, fresh out of high school, have not held jobs and if they have, only for relatively short periods of time. These part-time jobs are not usually tied to specific career goals. The Gen-X and Baby Boomer populations appear to have higher expectations and desperately want to see a light and the end of this long dark tunnel. Many of their previous careers were successful and tend to often be referred to in my classes. I am beginning to step back and have been asking myself the following: "How am I handling all of this and as an instructor, what am I doing now that differs from my previous years of teaching students in transition?"

My work and level of concern has increased in this economy. More students equates to increased workload and counseling. Shasta College's Introduction to Hospitality course has doubled in enrollment since the last semester that it was offered. The attrition rate has dropped to nearly 0%. Students are listening, participating, and doing the work. As a result, I am working harder to get the job done. As a recent example, students had to submit resumes, cover letters, and business references as assignments in the Introduction to Hospitality course. There were nearly 150 documents for me to review in terms of grammar, sentence structure, and correct format.

Many new questions have ensued regarding common threads between Hospitality Management and other careers such as, "I have been in plumbing most of my life...what skills do I have for the Hospitality industry?" and "I have owned my business for years...how can I prove to a potential employer that I have the qualifications for the job?" and "I want to do an internship, but I need to be paid the same way I was in my last job." In terms of employment trends, the UC Davis Dateline [http://www.dateline.ucdavis.edu/dl\\_detail.lasso?id=11063](http://www.dateline.ucdavis.edu/dl_detail.lasso?id=11063) recently referred to a shift in employer priorities in hiring. A shift that may not be the best news for some students and their resumes.

*"The problem students now have is that many companies may be reluctant to hire people for entry-level or junior positions. Companies will instead assign more work to current employees..."*

Recently, I traveled to San Jose to meet with the Director of Sales for a large luxury hotel property to discuss plans for an event. He mentioned that business has been steady, but difficult in some months. He mentioned that now is a difficult time to be seeking employment in lodging as many employees have lost their jobs, there has been downsizing, and investors are seeing less returns. I noted that the occupancy of the property appeared full with a large group from the technology industry. A large technology device was conspicuously displayed in the hotel lobby, a distinct blemish to the otherwise elegant ambiance of the lobby. As a hotel guest, I found it to be out of place in the luxury concept. However, it appeared that one of the concessions for acquiring this group's business was to have it placed in the lobby for all to see. Obviously, this was the price of doing business in a down economy.

It has become a responsibility of mine to give more direction to students on how to approach finding work in the hospitality field today. [Hcareers](#), a site devoted to the industry, offers a relevant article that emphasizes how to beat the odds and become hireable. The points mentioned in their "[Job Market Outlook in 2009: A Mixed Bag for Hospitality Job Seekers](#)" include abilities to multi-task, control costs, network, market, maintain high-standards and be a "low-maintenance" employee. These have always been the desirable attributes of a potential employee, and are even more so in the current economy.

Lately, my role as an instructor has expanded more into counseling, as some of our counselors are not aware of the subtleties of the Hospitality and Tourism. Many counselors are also overloaded with a higher number of students. Throughout my teaching career, I have always counseled students, but not to this extent. I usually focus on informing students which courses to take for quick completion, paths to four-year institutions, and inform them that many internship in the local community are non-paid. I have warned my current students that when the industry does bounce back, the selection process will become more selective; benefit packages may not be as prevalent, and starting salaries may be lower than several years back.

The final question: Is the hospitality market rebounding to begin hiring more employees? Yes. Here are some links to guide students and potential applicants through the new paradigm:

<http://www.htrends.com/trends-detail-sid-40604.html>

<http://www.htrends.com/trends-detail-sid-41138.html>

<http://www.nrnjobplate.com/Years%20later%20returning.html>