

Edwin Wise

Journalism 61

Prof. Bob Rucker

03/12/2010

"Mechanics Searching for the Right Fit"

As auto makers continue to falter, demand for mechanics rise. But the notion that this is a great time for mechanics is not entirely true; especially if you were to ask Roger Radborne.

A mechanic for over 15 years, Mr. Radborne was an employee at Los Gatos Moore Buick before being laid off. • "We're on the cusp of some job growth, finally, finally," said Stuart Hoffman, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group. After 70-80 applications and 4 interviews later, Roger is still unemployed.

Before this economic downturn came about, the auto industry was already in a decline, Roger proclaims. With technology at its high point and more and more cars becoming fuel efficient, the need to get your car checked and tuned up was already reaching all time lows. "No longer were people bringing their cars in to get it checked out every 15,000 miles, cars these days can go much longer." He would continue on saying, "Plus now, people can change their oil at home. Things were getting a lot simpler and people were not willing to pay the extra \$120 hour that they didn't have any more cause of the economy."

Brainz.org suggests that an auto mechanic is one most "recession proof jobs available." Asked about why some have presumed that due to the poor auto making market, mechanics should have no problem finding jobs, Roger points out that this notion is a common misconception. "There are thousands of people all searching for the same job, so while some may find some, in no way are results the same for everyone."

Roger goes on to point out that experience can sometimes work against you. "With my experience, I was part of a union; I received benefits, required and earned a higher salary. Most places now are not willing to give in to that. They like the young kids just coming into the work force who are willing to take less, with little to no benefits."

Good news for a new generation of workers but not those who have paid their dues. "Evidence of the fierce competition for jobs was seen in a rise in the so-called under-employment rate, which includes the unemployed, plus those who have given up looking for work and those who are working part-time but would prefer to work full-time. The under-employment rate rose to 16.8 percent, from 16.5 percent in January," this from sfgate.com.

Good news for Roger and others who are unemployed, sfgate.com reported that the U.S. jobless rate held steady at 9.7 percent in February. And employers cut 36,000 jobs — fewer than predicted. Those figures signaled that the job market is slowly healing.

However, Roger adamantly points out, "mechanics receive benefits after a 90 day period; most are let go by the 80th." Statistics will show that more people are getting hired, but just as quick, several employees are constantly being laid off before they receive more pay and are again searching for another job.

Subsequently, "About 125,000 new jobs are needed each month just to keep up with population growth and prevent the unemployment rate from rising." –sfgate.com

For now, as Roger continues his search for a suiting job, he relies on side jobs to help fuel his income. Offering to work on the cars of his neighbors and friends, all the while people with far less knowledge and experience are welcomed with jobs, that is until someone else comes along willing to work for less.