

JOBS BELONG TO PURPLE SQUIRRELS: TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND BROADER SKILL SETS FIND DEMAND

A recent report by the Associated Press, Washington highlighted the fact of people with broader skill sets and formal training being preferred by employers, and the fact that older workers are coming to realize that they don't fit the bill anymore, even though vacancies exist in their occupational fields. The recession made it sure that companies had to do more with less, and only those staff who could handle multiple tasks, and had broader skill sets, managed to keep their jobs. Now, with the economy slowly settling down and having lost the velocity of its downward plunge, people who lost their jobs during the recession are finding it difficult to measure up to the standards of those who kept their jobs. The neat result is that without a perceivably broader skill set and matching certifications and qualifications, simple work-experience is failing to do its job even in performance-based occupations. Even though, many employers can recruit more people, they are focusing their efforts to hunt purple squirrels – the candidates who exactly meet the high standards dictated by the recession. Even though the number of job openings have increased by 37% over the same period in the past year, only 49% of the people who lost their jobs between 2007-2009 were able to **find employment** by January 2010, according to a recent survey by the Labor Department. The principle reasons for such historically low figures on regaining employment have been attributed to downscaling of wages, increase of workload, compulsory multitasking, and an employer's market that provides the luxury of seeking purple squirrels. The situation becomes pretty clear from the following facts: while number of advertised jobs in manufacturing at the end of August was 40% more than that of last year, actual hiring was up by only 6%, showing that 85% of the openings signifying job growth in August lay empty waiting for purple squirrels. It is heartening to note that at least 64,000 private sector jobs were added in September according to the latest BLS report, but it is still too low to address the concerns of unemployment. A gross 30% of the unemployed have been out of work for more than a year, creating a national record of sorts. Employers, with local governments leading the way cut 95,000 jobs in September making the private sector job growth ineffectual for helping the economy. The U6 unemployment rate including unemployed jobseekers, as well as, those who have given up hope of employment totaled at 17.1% according to BLS reports. New reform agenda by the federal government put local governments under severe budget pressure leading to an estimated loss of 76,000 jobs in September alone. More job losses from local governments are expected to follow. Needless to mention, economists had predicted a total job loss of 5000 in September: it turned out to be 95,000. This is without taking into account the 77,000 temporary census workers whose contracts were set to terminate naturally. The thing that is becoming amply clear for **jobseekers** in between the stories of job losses and job gains is the pressing need to acquire accredited certifications to support claims of broader skill sets. The purple squirrel is ruling and tailor-made resumes backed with certifications are the need of the hour. Too much specialization and "I know how to do this, and only this," is no more an option even for nuclear scientists. Whether it is private or public sector, if you intend to gain jobs and job security, you need to retrain yourself and gain certifications as well as new and relevant skills to prepare for your job role.

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