

WHERE THE JOBS ARE 2008

Modest economic growth and a wave of retirements will create employment opportunities this year. Financial services and healthcare are growing, and job-seekers with technical skills are in great demand.

By Ed Lightsey
Photos By Wayne Parham

GEORGIA COMMISSIONER OF LABOR MICHAEL Thurmond, sitting in the conference room of his Atlanta office discussing the job market for 2008, zeroes in on a key development. “The first baby boomer [has] qualified for Social Security.”

The flood of retirements that begin this year will dramatically affect Georgia’s job market, say Thurmond and other job analysts. “We are seeing an inordinate number of highly skilled people leaving the workforce,” Thurmond says. “We are concerned about where the people will come from to fill the positions being vacated by the retiring generation.”

“Significantly affected will be the white-collar classes of employees,” says Georgia DOL workforce analyst John Lawrence. “In the white collar area, the better paying jobs are going to be those for the higher skilled workers that require more education, training, and experience,” says Lawrence, deputy director of DOL’s Workforce Information and Analysis department. Such employees are short in numbers and high in demand, an equation that equals higher pay.

“You’re talking about accounting, finance and sales,” Lawrence says. “Business will need better trained managers who think strategically.”

According to the DOL, Georgia employers will need 6,000 middle- and upper-level managers in 2008. But the corporate stars of 2008 may be found in a narrow niche among the estimated 1,040 jobs opening up for accountants and auditors.

Some of the better-paid numbers-crunchers may owe their jobs to an act of Congress, if they fit the bill. “One of the things we’re seeing universally is a large need for finance and accounting people,” says Allen Tansil, managing partner for Handler and Associates, a 30-year-old Atlanta-based executive search firm retained by corporations. “With Sarbanes-Oxley compliance issues, these are very, very hot jobs.”

“Sarbanes-Oxley says you cannot use your same [internal] audit company to do your compliance,” Tansil says. SOX is so new, he adds, that finding accountants with SOX experience is difficult, though the financial rewards for possessing such knowledge can be quite high.



HIGH DEMAND: Allen Tansil, managing partner for Handler and Associates, says companies need accountants with SOX and compliance experience

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“What’s happened is a lot of smaller accounting firms are growing like weeds because they’re coming in and providing this compliance audit work that [company] auditors cannot do.” In addition, corporations are also looking for directors of compliance, a job description tailor-made for an accountant. Tansil’s firm specializes in finding executives in the six-figure and up salary range.