

COMPETING TO WIN

Even a downturn can have an upside

In the face of tough economic times, [Susan Ascher](#) says she keeps an upbeat outlook.

As founder, president and CEO of the Ascher Group in Roseland, she has transformed her company, founded in 1981, from an executive search firm to a contract staffing outfit.

The national economic recession, she said, will force certain pockets of the staffing industry to rethink their business plans and change tactics. She likes to quote the Coca-Cola slogan: "It's the pause that refreshes."

Ascher spoke to The Star-Ledger about how the tight economy forces businesses to think creativity.

Q. In what direction do you see the labor market going in the next 10 years?

A. I see the labor market in the country reinventing itself again. As Baby Boomers retire, the Millennials and Generation X are emerging. While we'll lose tribal information, the knowledge base older workers have, we're gain-

ing younger workers' creativity, tech savvy and ability to view things in new ways.

We're going to see growth in small mid-sized pharmaceuticals, biotech, energy, utilities, technology, and elder care services to Baby Boomers. With focus on going green, companies will also be coming up with products to conserve energy. Banking, credit and real estate will come back. It's just going to take time.

Q. What advice would you offer job seekers?

A. You have to remain positive. People have to understand that the term "permanent job" doesn't exist anymore; only "full-time jobs with benefits." Younger generations seem to understand that better. They take jobs to learn, but they don't expect to be there for 20 years. Job security in the modern world is an oxymoron.

Marketing yourself during a recession requires flexibility. Maybe transforming things you've learned and putting it towards a passion you have.

People should be networking every single day, not just when they're out of work.

When it comes to interviewing, we need to go back to the basics in this current competitive market. You have to look good to feel good to come across good. Everything flows through that first impression when you walk in the door. You need to stand out from the crowd in communication, presentation, physical appearance, the overall way you package yourself.

Q. What is the worst job you've ever had?

A. I graduated college during a recession and went into a retail training program with a major company. After three weeks of classroom training, when we went out to the floor I took one look and said, "I hate my job." I started looking in the classifieds. I took my first job as a recruiter. It became my passion. I have never looked back.

— Rhea N. Bernard

Please submit suggestions for "Three Questions" to rbernard@starledger.com.



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