

Good Careers with Bad Reputations

Melissa Ezarik Yahoo! HotJobs

Todd Huettner resisted becoming a mortgage broker for more than a year. "It is the used-car salesman of my generation," says Denver-based **Huettner**, 35, who holds an MBA degree.

If the industry had as many incapable people as **Huettner** suspected, then his honesty and competency would surely make him successful, a friend suggested. People he knew were already having him "run the numbers" on home loans anyhow. So, putting his reservations aside, he launched **Huettner Capital**.

Business at mortgage brokerage **Huettner Capital** doubled between its first and second year, grew by 50 percent the next year, and remained flat for the next three years as many in the industry went out of business.

A former recruiter, executive job coach Rita Ashley has also shined brightly in a field with reputation cracks. "Media being what it is and human beings loving to gossip as they do, it's always easier to learn the bad about a career."

But nearly every field has "excellent practitioners, ordinary practitioners, and bad practitioners," says Ashley, author of the e-book "Job Search Debugged," now in its second edition.

Consider the merits of five professions with a bad rep:

Mortgage Broker

Brokers match home lenders and buyers. Many have given the profession a bad name in recent years by convincing people to take on loans they couldn't afford.

What sets **Huettner** apart, he says, is his professionalism and knowledge of finance. Unlike other mortgage brokers, **Huettner** may suggest that his clients look elsewhere or not refinance at all if it doesn't make sense for them. "People are surprised by my approach." Their trust wins many referrals.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2008-2009 Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), loan officers (including mortgage brokers) can expect an 11% increase in employment between 2006 and 2016, and median annual earnings for loan officers was \$51,760 in May 2006. A bachelor's degree in finance,

economics, or a related field is generally required for staff positions, although training and licensing requirements vary by state.

Executive Recruiter

"How much worse can the 'headhunter' name be?" asks Carolyn Dougherty, a Philadelphia region executive search consultant who has found that good reputations in this field are built on quality results. Recruiters screen and interview applicants and typically work in fields like human resources, training, and labor relations. Those in the field should experience a 17% (faster than average) growth between 2006 and 2016, notes the OOH.

About one-third of high-level placements are made by recruiters, Ashley notes, so good ones are "extremely highly regarded." A degree in personnel, human resources, or labor relations is ideal, with courses in the social sciences, business, and behavioral sciences an added plus.

Publicist

When Andi Enns, who owns a Kansas City, Mo.-based public relations/marketing firm, tells others about her profession, she'll often get looks suggesting she had just morphed into a "hideous bug," she says. "PR isn't just covering up the bad stuff ... It's about telling stories about awesome companies and people!" PR rep Termeh Mazhari, who works in New York City, says people assume she's "incapable of making genuine, no-B.S. statements."

In the next seven years, PR specialists are expected to grow by 18%, reports the OOH. For those planning to pursue a career in PR, a bachelor's degree in public relations, journalism, advertising, or communication is best.

Insurance Sales Agent

Many agents sell life, health, and property insurance as well as products such as annuities. A growing number also offer financial planning. Commission-only structures make consumers leery.

"If I don't want to talk to someone, all I need to do is tell them what I do," says Illinois-based insurance agent Robert Slayton. But he loves helping people. Slayton has gotten insurance for people declined by other carriers and even spent 10 hours seeking the best Medicare plan for someone and recommending one sold elsewhere.

Thirteen percent growth in overall employment, reports the OOH, is expected between 2006 and 2016. Health and long-term care insurance opportunities are also anticipated. College grads have the best chances at employment, particularly those with degrees in business or economics.

Tax Collector

These professionals deal with delinquent accounts and work with taxpayers to settle debt. "Someone has to do the job," says Lynne A. Sarikas, director of Northeastern University's MBA Career Center. And jobs there will be, thanks to the large number of retirements expected during the next 10 years, according to the OOH. For federal workers, a bachelor's degree is required, although state and local government workers often assume the position with some college-level business classes under their belts.

Whatever your profession choice, don't apologize for it, advises Sarikas. "You can have a successful, rewarding career in these fields regardless of what others think."