

## FAIRFIELD COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

### If you post it, they will apply *Angry reader claims some job ops don't exist*

BY ALEXANDER SOULE  
Appeared on March 16, 2009

Perhaps it is the bad karma of a cratered recession – others might call it just plain rotten luck.

On the same day Pitney Bowes Inc. published a dozen tips for job seekers feeling increasingly hopeless as they scan the daily headlines, a miffed reader of the Washington Post carped in an online chat session that Pitney Bowes and other companies are posting job opportunities that in essence do not exist.

"I told a lady at Pitney-Bowes that they had at least (eight) jobs listed in the Post and she called me a liar!" vented a Woodbridge, Va., reader to a newspaper columnist. "What's that all about?"

Coincidentally only an hour before the chat session commenced, Pitney Bowes had published a press release on how to make connections to land jobs. The takeaway? The tone, frequency and relevance of each communication have the power to either build winning connections or kill them.

It is an admonishment that would-be recruiters like Pitney Bowes must keep in mind as well, as they balance the need to hire people for specific needs and scout talent for the future, even as they keep costs in check until the economy recovers. Sheila McCaffrey, who holds the title of strategic talent management at Pitney Bowes, was scheduled to address the topic last week as part of a panel discussion by the Stamford chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management, along with peers from Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals Inc., General Electric Co. and Praxair Inc.

For its part, Pitney Bowes listed two dozen open job positions in Connecticut as of early March, some of them multiple openings for part-time work; others significant white-collar jobs – including a listing for a person to manage Pitney Bowes' relationships with vendors that help it screen potential new hires and other staffing needs.

Pitney Bowes spokeswoman Carol Wallace said the Stamford-based company was aware of the complaint in the online chat

session. At press time, Wallace was trying to arrange for a reporter to speak with someone at the company for comment.

The U.S. economy shed more than 650,000 jobs in February, pushing the unemployment rate to 8.1 percent, the highest it has been in more than a quarter century. Connecticut's jobless rate reached 7.3 percent, as the state shed 3,600 jobs between December and January according to the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL).

While that was not the bloodletting some had feared, Connecticut has lost more than 38,000 jobs in the past year.

DOL estimates that Fairfield County-area companies shed 1,800 jobs in January, with Danbury's unemployment rate still the lowest in the state at 6.6 percent, and coastal Fairfield County the next lowest at 7.3 percent in line with the state average (in the Waterbury area, unemployment hit 10.4 percent).

Still, local companies have dumped more than 11,300 jobs in the past year, according to DOL.

With FairfieldCountyJobs.com, Stamford-based OperationsInc is preparing to host a second "pink slip" party on March 24 in South Norwalk, allowing people out of a job to interact in a social environment with each other – and rub elbows with a small group of recruiters, the majority of them staffing agencies or those with compensation tied to sales commissions.

Morale at an inaugural party last month appeared to run the gamut, according to David Lewis, CEO of OperationsInc, with some attendees seemingly prepared to ride out the recession – provided there is indeed an end in sight. For others feeling comparatively stretched, the event took a more urgent tone as they scramble to replace lost income.

A week after the pink slip party in Norwalk, the state is holding a career fair at the Ethan Allen Inn in Danbury. At deadline, the state had yet to publish a list of employers planning to attend.