

Top Jobs —and How to Get Them

Want a hot career with lots of opportunity?

The following profiles highlight some of the fastest-growing industries in the U.S. according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

By Don Rauf

Predictably, technology jobs top the list, with network systems and data communications analyst and software engineer in the top four. Technology is still a rapidly growing field, and computer specialists continue to be needed by a wide range of businesses.

Health care also continues to lead in employment opportunities. Americans are living longer than ever, and health care aides and medical assistants are in particularly strong demand.

Also in the top five are veterinary technologists and technicians. The American Pet Product Manufacturers Association estimates that Americans spent \$38.4 billion on their pets in 2006—that's more than double what they spent in 1994.

Personal financial advisors are also in demand, as more people are saving for their children's college education and for their own retirement.

Positions for substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors are surging. The Bureau of Labor Statistics attributes this to increased awareness and understanding of addiction, as well as more programs that send drug offenders to treatment programs.

One of the more unusual careers in the BLS's Top 10 is makeup artist. These professionals will be in demand as TV and movie productions find new markets in cable TV, abroad, and on the Internet.

Other hot fields include aviation, as low-cost carriers drive competition; and fitness, as more Americans adopt healthier, more active lifestyles.

In the following profiles, you'll meet working professionals in some top careers. Maybe one of these jobs will turn out to be perfect for you!



PHOTO: Osamu Takahashi

Technology Specialist

Matt Morgan >

Website manager,
Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York City

How did you get started in this career?

I went to college to study oceanography, but I also did after-school work and summer work in computers. I took programming courses, and my master's degree involved a computer-modeling project. I decided that oceanography was what I love to know about, but computers were what I love to do.

Hardly anyone I've worked with actually has a computer degree, although a lot of colleges now have specific programs in network and computer administration. Having a technical skill can be the ticket to having a good career in a place you like.

I've been an environmentalist since I was a little kid, so it was

great that one of my first jobs was working as a network administrator and programmer at the Environmental Defense Fund. I put together its website and became the Webmaster. I then worked at the Brooklyn Museum as the IT manager, doing network administration and programming as well as website management. The museum is a cultural center for Brooklyn, and I felt like I was serving my community. Now at the Met, it's fantastic. Every day, I walk through the Greek and Roman galleries and see thousands of years of beautiful art. It's invigorating.

What do you love about your job?

I love computers. My department is responsible for making sure the website furthers the mission of the museum. We offer practical information about museum hours and cost, details on exhibits, information on the collection database, podcasting, blogs, and a little bit of video. There is a real sense of satisfaction putting something up online and knowing a lot of people are going to see it—last year, we had over 22 million visits to our website!

What advice would you give to students?

A lot of what we do is like a crossword puzzle—when you first start, it seems really complicated and you feel like you're never going to get done. The more you work on it, though, the clearer it becomes. You need patience and persistence to get through the problems and make things work. The notion that IT jobs are all about working alone is a misunderstanding—it's collaborating to get things done. You have to keep up with the latest software, but it's more important to know what people need to do with the software. If you like to tinker and make your computer work better, that's a good sign that you'll be good at this. An interest in math, science, and statistics is also helpful.



Pilot

Colleen Andersen-Briscoe > First officer, United Airlines

How did you get started in this career?

I knew that I wanted to do something that not every other woman was doing. My dad was a mechanic for United Airlines, and

when I was a senior in high school, he told the flight manager that his daughter was interested in becoming a pilot. I met with one of the first woman airline pilots, and she taught me how to fly. I flew in the Coast Guard, and after I graduated from college I worked as a certified flight instructor (CFI) for one year. Many pilots work as an instructor to build up their flight time. When I finished as a reservist on active duty with the Coast Guard, I got a job flying for United.

What do you love about your job?

There's something special about seeing the earth from several miles above. I get to travel and meet lots of people. It's exhilarating knowing that you are in command of a complex airplane.

What is a typical day like for a pilot?

When you arrive at the airport, you get your paperwork and meet the crew. You do a pre-flight check of tire pressure and look for oil or fluid leaks, dents in the airplane, and other items. After pushback, you start the engines and contact ground control and tower control for instructions. You're watching parameters of the engines as you start up—how fast blades are turning, oil temperature and pressure, exhaust/gas ratio. You run a checklist on the way out. You make sure brakes are off, lights are on, you're clear for takeoff. When you get up to speed, you pull back on the yoke and lift the nose off the ground, and you're off. Many functions are computer automated, but you have to monitor these. It's not necessarily difficult to fly a plane, but to be a safe pilot you need a lot of practice and a very high level of attention, especially during takeoff and landing.



Makeup Artist

Sheri Kornhaber > Makeup artist for movies and television

How did you get started in this career?

I got in this career by chance. I went to college for psychology and fine arts, which is essentially what I do now. When I graduated

college, I was fascinated by filmmaking. I took an internship as a production assistant and then got hired as one. The producer asked what I really

wanted to do, and I said makeup. A week later, I was offered a job a makeup assistant on an independent feature film.

I worked on the comedy *Super Troopers*, and that job changed my life—I found people who constantly hire me. Since then, I've worked on the movies *Club Dredd*, *Dukes of Hazzard*, and *Beer Fest*, and the TV shows *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* and *Lipstick Jungle*.

What do you love about your job?

I've always been an artist, and I enjoy talking to people. To be a successful makeup artist, you need a balance of personality and skills. The actors trust that you will make them look their best.

It's exciting to be working in movies, but it's also hard. The first time I interned on a movie, I cried. I couldn't believe people work between 12 and 16 hours, 5 to 6 days a week. For *Law & Order*, I have to simulate lots of injuries—cuts, bruises, and gashes. For a reference, I often take pictures of bruises on people I know. To create the effect, you use colors in little palettes; everything is readily available in professional makeup stores, where you'll find bruise kits and burn kits. The biggest compliment I can get is when an actor walks into a room and people gasp, "Oh my God!"

What advice would you give to students?

Don't give up—this career is hard. I'd say 60 percent of the people I started with in this career have dropped out. If it's something you love though, stick with it!



Veterinarian

Diana Lafer > Veterinarian, cat hospital owner

How did you get started in this career?

As a kid, I always wanted to be a veterinarian. In high school I worked for a horse vet; I also did an

internship with a small animal vet and worked on a dairy farm in Israel. I majored in biology as an undergrad, then went on to four years of veterinary school. I was focused on horses until halfway through my last year at veterinary school, when I came to the realization that horse vets don't have time to ride their horses because they're constantly working!

So I took a job at a mixed practice, where we treated both small and large animals. I did large animal work one day a week with horses and cows, a few sheep, goats, and the occasional pig. Most of the time I was going to farms—on nice days, cold days, in the middle of the night, at 5 in the morning. It's fairly demanding. Working with cows is definitely physically challenging—sometimes I wasn't strong enough to reposition a calf for delivery and had to get help. Large-animal emergencies are things like cuts with horses, and births of cows and problems associated with that.

I also worked at a very small dog and cat practice

before starting my hospital in Connecticut, which specializes only in cats.

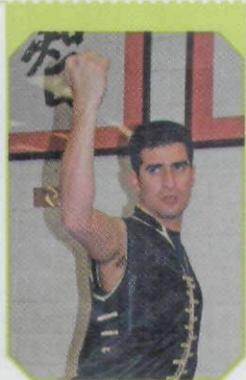
What do you love about your job?

Running a cat hospital is never boring—medicine is always changing. You constantly have to figure out what is causing a problem and decide what you can do to fix it, and you learn to do a good job at a variety of things. We have digital x-rays, a laser for surgery, and the same kind of dental equipment your dentist has.

The top thing we see cats for is preventive health—the yearly or twice-a-year exams—and dental work. We treat a lot of diabetes in older cats, as well as hyperthyroidism and kidney disease of varying stages. Younger cats can get urinary tract problems. We do also perform surgery; most commonly spaying, neutering, and declawing. Sometimes we see cats who eat string, coins, and pieces of toys that won't pass and need to come out surgically.

What advice would you give students?

If you're going to be a vet, you should be a people person. It can be very emotional, especially when you're dealing with putting a pet to sleep. There's also a certain amount of hazard: I've been bitten and scratched.



Fitness Instructor

Alexander Cardenas > Kung Fu instructor

How did you get started in this career?

When I was 16, I got mugged. I was walking my bike, and a guy jumped me and choked me. He took my bike and wallet.

After that, my mom signed me up for martial arts classes. I was glad to start, because I loved Bruce Lee and had wanted to do martial arts since I was a little kid.

When my teacher, Master Wong, saw how disciplined I was, he took me under his wing. He asked me to assist in classes and eventually I started teaching for him for real. I still work with him today. We currently have four academies in the U.S. and one in Brazil, and we would like to open more schools.

What do you love about your job?

I'm a people person, so this is probably the perfect job for me. I like to talk and I like to explain things. I can relate to kids very well. I can play with them, but at the same time I help them be serious and be more focused. It's rewarding to see a child make it—whether it's winning a first-place medal or finishing a form and making it sharp. I deal with all ages, though. I have a 70-year-old student, and we cried with joy when he got his black belt.

People are getting more fitness-minded, and many take Kung Fu because they want to get in shape. Kung Fu keeps your mind and body polished. I teach kids who were doing terribly in

school, and Kung Fu has helped them bring their grades back up. They're also always at the top level when it comes to physical activities.

This can be a perfect career if you're not ready academically to go to college. It can help you focus, and if you decide on college later, it can help you achieve. Plus, martial arts looks good on your resumé!



Financial Advisor

Michael Davis > Vice president, wealth management advisor, Merrill Lynch

How did you get started in this career?

In high school, I never thought I'd be wearing a suit to work. I was mathematically oriented. In

college, I was a biology major, but my interests changed. I took some business classes, like economics and accounting, but it was really my fraternity that led me to this career.

Pi Kappa Phi created its own charity, called PUSH (People Understanding the Severely Handicapped) America. PUSH's largest fundraiser is Journey of Hope, a bicycle ride across the United States that takes place every summer. I wanted to be a big part of it—not only for the challenge of riding, but also to help the disabled community. There was a \$4,000 fundraising requirement to make the team. I turned out to be the number-one fundraiser in the country that summer, raising about \$11,000! I realized after this experience that helping people and raising money were a great combination for me. Financial advising seemed like a perfect match.

My job is to ensure that people invest their savings wisely so they can achieve their life goals, whether they want to retire at 65 or afford college for their kids. My clients range from age 23 to 83.

My primary job is to listen first. I like to sit down with people and find out what they're working hard to save for. I offer retirement accounts; investments in stocks, bonds, mutual funds; and multiple cash instruments.

What do you love about your job?

It's a very rewarding job where you talk to people about all aspects of their financial life. The lifestyle is phenomenal. You're very independent and can set your own schedule. It's hard in the beginning as you're building your client base, but you get as much out of it as you put in it.

What advice would you give students?

Candidates for this job usually have a college degree and must be motivated and hard-working. Most importantly, it comes down to liking people, earning their trust, and offering sound financial advice. You don't have to be exceptionally advanced in mathematics. You learn a lot on the job, and you need to read *The Wall Street Journal* and other financial publications. <<<

Copyright of *Careers & Colleges* is the property of *Careers & Colleges Magazine* and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.