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Queen of the Random Job

Go where the fishing is good, says odd-job expert

LINDA WHITE
Special to QMI Agency

She was armed with a degree in puppetry but Bethany Mooradian soon realized she couldn't pull enough strings to make a decent salary. Today, she's known as "Queen of the Random Job," whose claims to fame include working as Ronald McDonald's bodyguard and cleaning the estates of Microsoft co-founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen.

"I've never had a traditional 9-to-5 job for longer than nine months,"

says the Seattle, Wash., entrepreneur (www.QueenoftheRandomJob.com). She has worked as a mystery shopper, scored standardized tests, fabricated parade floats and taken on countless other random jobs in order to make ends meet.

Mooradian believes anyone can find extra ways to earn income from what they already know how to do. No one ever goes to college to learn how to work at home, she reasons. It's simply a matter of taking your skills — including hobbies, such as gardening and sewing — and translating them into a home office or flexible work environment.

Identify your skills

Compile a list of your skills to use as your own resource when looking for work. "Traditional jobs like babysitting, elder care, helping pack school lunches, dog walking revolve around your interests and things you want to do," Mooradian says.

"If you have basic computer skills, your world will open up ... Go where the fishing is good. Don't just put a worm on your hook and throw it in the river and hope someone will come and get it. You want to see what other people are looking for and then provide it to them."

Embracing social media and establishing yourself as an expert in your field of interest will help you stand out from the rest of the pack. How? Create a Facebook fan page for your field of interest, get on Twitter



Bethany Mooradian's claims to fame include working as Ronald McDonald's bodyguard, cleaning the estates of Microsoft co-founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen, working as a mystery shopper and countless other random jobs.

and talk with others, and blog.

Organization, efficiency skills

In addition to being resourceful, those who are successful at landing random jobs need to be organized and efficient. "Employers who hire people to work from home are looking for people who can focus ... and be self directed so they don't need to go into an office to be accountable." Employers weed out those who don't make the cut during training and trial periods.

Be open minded but cautious. "At one time, we said that if it sounds too good to be true it probably is but I don't think that applies anymore because there is so much stuff that you can do. A lot of people think mystery shopping is too good to be true, for example," says Mooradian.

It boils down to common sense, she maintains. "Does it make sense that I would get paid \$25 an hour to stuff envelopes at home? Probably not. Unfortunately, scammers are huge with random jobs and they do everything they can to take advantage of people." (See box below on tips to avoid being scammed.)

SAY SCRAM TO SCAMS

In her early days of looking for odd jobs, Bethany Mooradian was scammed in a work-at-home gig from a magazine ad. She shared so much advice to friends on how not to be scammed that she came up with a helpful acronym (SCRAM) and wrote the book, *I Got Scammed So You Don't Have To*.

S = scrutinize the source
C = check for affiliate links and fees
R = research the heck out of every detail
A = ask for more information
M = mouse over images and links to see what website you end on before you click



OPPORTUNITIES

Bethany Mooradian lists more than 300 companies and resources in her book, *I Got Scammed So You Don't Have To*. The following are income opportunities she believes many people overlook:

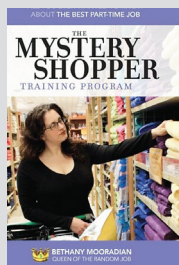
■ **Virtual Assistant (VA):** If you have computer and Internet skills, you can work as a VA doing general secretarial work or processing orders for corporations at home.

■ **Merchandising:** Merchandisers hired to set up displays, check prices on items and shelf products like

magazines, food items and greeting cards. They have specific locations to service but with fairly flexible hours.

■ **Mystery shoppers** are paid to surreptitiously check out the behaviour of employees in retail shops, bars, restaurants, apartment buildings, car dealerships, banks, cruise ships and travel resorts.

■ **Use your talent:** Call your local film board to find casting directors in the area to get on their "extra" list. Be a "standardized patient" acting out diseases to help medical students with their board exams.



Luck dependent on your actions

TIM RYAN
Special to QMI Agency

We give luck too much credit. We use it to explain serendipitous events or even accomplishments. Some credit luck in landing them the right job, others use it to explain how they closed a big contract or to justify the success of their company.

The reality is we make our own luck, it's rarely something that's independent of our own actions. With respect to our careers, putting yourself in the right position to be "lucky" is becoming increasingly important.

The days of a well-defined career path are over; some of the most prominent positions companies are looking to fill now didn't even exist 10 years ago. This creates confusion and uncertainty, but according to the Jocelyn Gleis of The 99 Percent blog there's much that can be done.

1. Explore the full breadth of tools at your disposal, as the tools you're using today won't necessarily be the same ones you use tomorrow. Understand what works and what doesn't.

2. Form a tribe of like-minded individuals. This becomes a powerful network of connections that are your eyes and ears across companies, industries and countries. You never know where someone might end up.

3. Help people: No one is an island and you can be sure at one stage you'll be in a position where you could use some help. A great way to get help is by first going out of your way to help others. Avoid being the one asking all the time.

4. Keep learning: There's a number of ways to keep sharp and continue building your skill-set, from codecademy.com that provides an easy way to learn to program software or skillshare.com that connects you with workshops across the country.

5. Make sure you're the one taking the lead in your career. Don't expect employers to put you first or groom you for special roles. Staying ahead means constantly thinking about where you want to be and ensuring the steps you're taking are going to get you there.

— Tim Ryan is the founder of Vestigo, a career destination for young professionals. Contact info@vestigo.com.

tage of people." (See box below on tips to avoid being scammed.)

Future of random jobs

Mooradian thinks opportunities will continue to grow. "I think we're going back to a trade economy rather than a corporate economy ... when people had specific skills and would sell those skills to make money, like the butcher and the baker.

"I'm really excited to see what happens over the next 10 years," she says. "Once people realize they can make money outside the 9 to 5, they don't want to go back."

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USEFUL WEBSITES

Looking for odd jobs? Mooradian recommends checking out the following websites:

- For the artistically inclined: www.etsy.com or www.artfire.com
- For the technically inclined: www.elance.com or www.guru.com
- For writers: www.Examiner.com or find actual job listings at jobs.probblogger.net
- For mystery shoppers: www.MysteryShop.org (Mooradian has created a video and book training course titled, The Mystery Shopper Training Program, available through her website and Amazon.com)
- For micro-gigs: www.fiverr.com and www.mturk.com (run by Amazon)
- For virtual assistants/telecommuting: www.Arise.com and www.alpineaccess.com