



Best Careers for a Changing Job Landscape

By Marty Nemko
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It has only been a year since U.S. News published Best Careers 2007, yet much has changed. As a result, we've dropped five of the 25 profiled careers and added 11 new ones.

We've also added a new section on Ahead-of-the-Curve Careers. These 12 careers are too nascent or narrow to justify inclusion as a Best Career, but they are currently viable and promise to grow further in demand and importance to society. If you'd enjoy being on the cutting edge, they're certainly worth a look.

The factors that prompted changes in the list of Best Careers have implications for all career seekers. Here is a glance at some trends and a word on how to search for your best career:

Even college grads might want to consider blue-collar careers. Last year, because U.S. News readers tend to be college educated, we included only careers that typically require at least a bachelor's degree. This year we've added four careers that don't. Why? More and more students are graduating from college at the same time that employers are offshoring more professional jobs. So, many holders of a bachelor's degree are having trouble finding jobs that require college-graduate skills.

Meanwhile, society has been telling high school students that college is the way, so there's an accelerating shortage of skilled people in jobs that don't require college. (Why else do you think you have to pay \$100 an hour for a plumber?)

The four noncollege careers we added would be rewarding even to many college graduates, especially because college grads are likely to stand out against the competition. Those added careers are: biomedical equipment technician, firefighter, **hairstylist/cosmetologist**, and locksmith/security system technician. Other skilled blue-collar careers that scored well on our selection criteria: machinist (manufacturers report a shortage), nuclear plant technician (few people are entering the field, yet plans are on the books for building more plants), and electrician/electronics tech (above-average pay, and it's easier on the body than many other blue-collar careers). **The takeaway: Many college graduates should consider skilled-trade careers.**

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Hairstylist/Cosmetologist: Executive Summary

By [Marty Nemko](#)
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In a recent British job satisfaction survey, hairstylist ranked No. 1. It's not surprising: It's one of the few careers in which you please nearly every client. (Save for the occasional one who cries, "What have you done to my hair!")

People tend to be loyal to their haircutter, so if you're at all pleasant, you can develop plenty of long-term friends or at least acquaintances. After all, there's a lot of time to chat while shampooing, cutting, and torturing hair so it curls or straightens.

Other pluses: This career is a fashionista's dream: It's one of the rare fields with good job opportunities in which you're rewarded for staying current on fashion and design. And your job won't be offshored—it may make sense to do robotic surgery from India, but not haircuts.

Most men now get their hair cut by a stylist rather than by a barber, and more and more men seek out related services such as facials and manicures. So, not surprisingly, the number of male hairstylists and cosmetologists is growing.

Whatever your sex, to succeed you must be a great listener so you can unearth what the client really wants. You also need a good fashion and design sense so you can offer appropriate suggestions. Perhaps most important, you must be able to translate a great hair concept into a great haircut. In addition, you must be engaging enough that your clients remain loyal and willing to buy the hair and skin potions that represent an ever larger proportion of a hair salon's profits. With those skills, you can likely get hired by a high-end salon, day spa, resort, or possibly even a film or TV studio, all of which tend to pay better than does the average clip joint. Or you can open your own.

Hairstylist/Cosmetologist: Median Pay

Location	Median Pay
National	\$33,700
New York City	\$39,500
Los Angeles	\$43,600
Chicago	\$34,800
Washington, D.C.	\$61,100
San Francisco Bay Area	\$58,200
Boston	\$40,300
Houston	\$49,800
Atlanta	\$42,500
Miami	\$56,200
Phoenix	\$41,900
Seattle	\$36,000
Minneapolis	\$40,900
San Diego	\$57,700
Sacramento, Calif.	\$45,900
Portland, Ore.	\$43,100

Data provided by PayScale