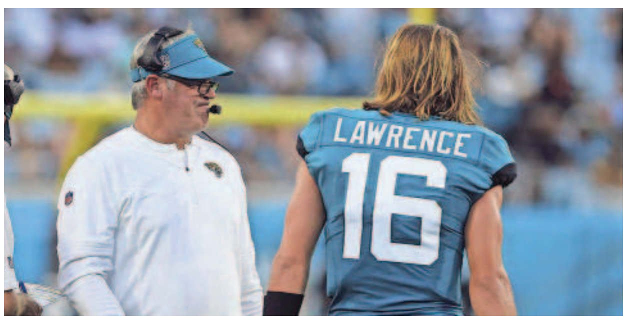

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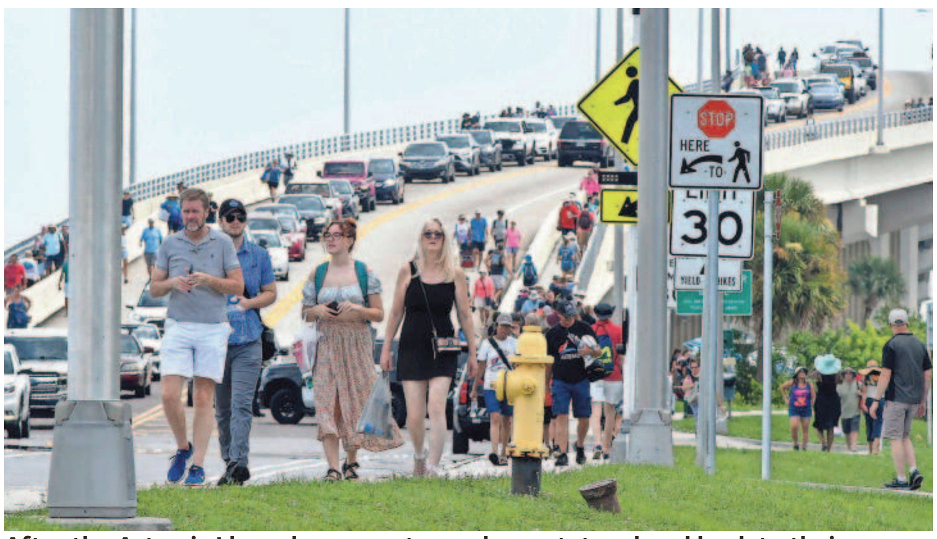
SCRUBBED AGAIN

Artemis I remains on the launch pad Saturday morning. A hydrogen leak during tanking scrubbed Saturday's launch attempt. CRAIG BAILEY/FLORIDA TODAY

Hardware issues force NASA to call off Artemis I launch at KSC

Jamie Groh and Emre Kelly
Florida Today
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA



After the Artemis I launch was postponed, spectators head back to their vehicles after being on the A. Max Brewer Memorial Bridge in Titusville to see the launch Saturday.
TIM SHORTT/ FLORIDA TODAY

NASA's second attempt at launching the 322-foot Space Launch System moon rocket was called off again Saturday due to technical issues at Kennedy Space Center.

Counting down to a 2:17 p.m. EDT liftoff, Artemis I mission managers were forced to call a scrub about three hours before liftoff due to a liquid hydrogen leak at pad 39B. The rocket successfully completed the liquid oxygen fill process, but the core stage's hydrogen level was only able to reach 11%.

Launch Director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson agreed with her team's scrub recommendation at 11:17 a.m. EDT, setting the stage for a third attempt no earlier than 5:12 p.m. EDT Monday, Sept. 5. That opportunity has a 90-minute window.

There's another window available at 6:57 p.m. EDT Tuesday, Sept. 6, but it's much shorter – 24 minutes.

"There were multiple troubleshooting efforts that were made to try to get the leak to stop and re-seal the connection," Derrol Nail, NASA's launch commentator, said after the scrub. "Unfortunately, those attempts to troubleshoot it did not succeed."

The delay means engineers will have to head out to the pad again after a previous attempt on Monday was also scrubbed. That ultimately came down to engine temperature readings that weren't low enough.

Engineers then began the process of de-tanking, or offloading fuel, from the rocket and powering down hardware.

Artemis is NASA's program designed to take astronauts back to the moon. This first flight is uncrewed, but if it goes well, Artemis II will take astronauts to lunar orbit after 2024. Then Artemis III plans to put two people on the surface after 2025.

Why scrub a launch?

Launch scrubs can be costly and disappointing for spectators and launch providers alike. But whether they're caused by technical issues or weather impacts, scrubs are a necessary part of the launch business and it all comes down to one reason: safety.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson

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EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK 2022

Plenty of jobs in local counties, experts say

But are health care job cuts related to waning COVID-19?

By Joe Callahan
Ocala Star-Banner
USA TODAY NETWORK

Marion County workforce experts say many job sectors, including health care, are making cuts in the wake of high inflation and rising gas prices, though the moves are limited when compared with the recession that began in 2009.

The good news is that there are many job openings in Marion County and workers can find work if they want, unlike the downturn 13 years ago that left thousands in the unemployment line.

"We are starting to see more candidates coming into our offices because of a few layoffs in the area," said Dale French, executive vice president of CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, adding that unlike the great recession there is much hope this time around.

"You don't want to see people losing their jobs, but the benefit to that is there's plenty of positions available," French noted. "The amount of layoffs we've seen hasn't been a red flag, where you start seeing layoffs from a specific industry."

Marion County's unemployment rate in July was 3.5%.

Though the handful of layoffs are not all from one sector, there are more than expected in the healthcare sector. Right now, officials are trying to

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More inside

Find additional stories about the USA's changing hiring dynamics, **7A**

NOTE TO READERS

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EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK 2022

Avoiding a bad boss – and joining the right team

Rachel Loock
Guest columnist

When interviewing for a new job, remember that you're assessing the company and the team you'll be working with as much as they're interviewing you. Start by researching the company and key players through their website, LinkedIn, online news articles and databases.

But while online sources can be helpful, the best source of information about a new team and boss is through conversations with current and former employees. Along with understanding the company's mission and values, you'll want to get a handle on the culture.

Ideally, you'll have the chance to discuss team culture and dynamics and the boss' management style through conversations with your professional or alumni connections, outside of the formal interview process. But if this isn't possible, ask about the culture during the interview process.

Specifically, probe to see if the team you'll be working with is a good fit – and that includes the boss. Understanding how employees work together and your new supervisor's management style is critical to ensuring the work environment aligns with your personality and values.

When interviewing for a job, determine what cultural factors are important to you. GETTY IMAGES

Know yourself

Before reaching the final interview stage, determine what cultural factors are important to you. Reflect on positive experiences with teams you've been on in the past and strong working relationships with current or previous bosses. For example, do you prefer working in a highly collaborative environment? Do you like to work within the broad outlines of a project and determine how to execute it, or do you want more detailed guidance? Is recognition for a job well done important to you? Self-awareness about your preferences and past successful (and unsuccessful) working relationships can help to inform what will work best for you in a new role.

Ask the right questions

Asking the following questions during the interview process can help you assess whether the team and boss will be a good fit.

For the team:

- How do you all work together?
- How is performance feedback provided?
- How is conflict resolved?
- What do you like about the team culture?

For the potential boss:

- Who are the people I will be working with most closely?
- How is work/life balance encouraged/supported?
- What does success look like for this job in the first six months?
- What's your management/working style?
- Why is this position being filled?
- How many hours a week do you expect your top performers to put in?
- What has been the staff turnover rate in the last two to three years?
- What traits do you value most in your direct reports?

Body language of the interviewer(s) may also provide additional clues about team dynamics. Evaluating cultural fit can be subjective and difficult to quantify.

One person's dream team and culture may be a nightmare for another. In addition to asking questions, here are a few red flags to be aware of that might indicate a less than ideal fit:

- Indirect/vague answers to questions posed.
- Inconsistent/different answers from team members as compared to the boss or HR.
- Supervisor position (for the role you're interviewing for) is vacant.
- High turnover.

Bottom line

Do your research through every means available to you before and during the interview process to ensure your new team and new manager are the right fit.

Rachel Loock is a career and leadership coach with the Office of Career Services at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business.

Hiring still booming despite recession fears, slowing economy

Paul Davidson
USA TODAY

FrescoData has seen sales flatline this year, but that isn't stopping the San Diego-based email marketing company from adding seven workers in coming months.

Last year, amid dire labor shortages, the 26-employee firm struggled to attract job candidates as it battled larger competitors offering higher pay.

"I'm preparing for the holidays," said CEO Tony Raval, citing "the hardship that we faced last year not having enough people."

Now, with recession fears mounting, some of those bigger rivals are laying off staffers, and Raval aims to scoop them up. "We're looking to take advantage of that," he said.

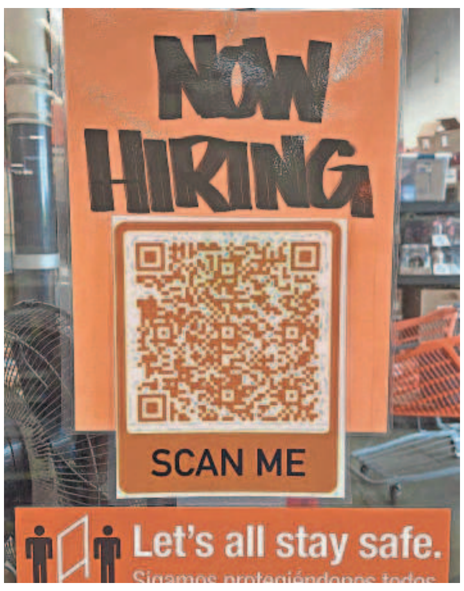
Millions of businesses are taking a similar approach, helping the labor market defy expectations of a slowdown and remain a pillar of strength in an otherwise wobbly economy. Consumer spending is moderating because of rampant inflation. The economy contracted the first half of the year (though top economists say we're not in a recession). The Federal Reserve is aggressively raising interest rates to fight soaring prices. And the Fed's campaign, along with the recession chatter, has hammered the stock market.

Yet somehow the labor market has only picked up steam. The U.S. added 315,000 jobs in August, a still-solid figure that pointed to an economy that remains resilient despite rising interest rates, high inflation and sluggish consumer spending. The August hiring gain was down from 526,000 jobs that were added in July, and it fell below the average increase of the previous three months.

Several factors are driving the remarkable showing. Worker shortages have discouraged many businesses from laying off workers and prodded others to stick to their hiring plans despite the economy's warning signals, economists and staffing officials say.

Also, many industries are still catching up after shedding employees during the COVID-19 recession. Americans have shifted their purchases from goods to more labor-intensive services, like dining out and traveling. And weak labor productivity – or output per hour of work – is forcing many employers to add staffers to meet demand.

"The labor market remains incredibly strong and is likely to remain so," said Traci Fiatte, CEO of professional and commercial staffing for Ranstad, an employment agency.



In July, there were a near record 11.2 million job openings, or two for every unemployed American, Labor Department data shows. JIM WATSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

Economists do expect job growth to pull back as the Fed continues to raise interest rates to slow inflation and the economy, but at a slower pace than had been forecast.

Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Analytics, now expects payroll gains to average slightly more than 100,000 a month by the end of the year, compared with his estimate of about 50,000 several months ago.

A slowdown "is going to happen," Zandi said.

In the short term, the robust job gains are providing Americans more income that they can spend, propping up the economy and staving off a recession, says Matthew Luzzetti, chief U.S. economist of Deutsche Bank. But the booming payroll additions and rapid wage growth mean the Fed probably will raise interest rates more aggressively to tame inflation, increasing the risk of a downturn by mid-2023, Luzzetti says.

Some employers are already hunkering down. Outlaw, which sells colognes, soaps and other fragrances online, has scrapped its plan to add three employees to its staff of 16 ahead of the holidays, says Danielle Vincent, CEO of the Sparks, Nevada-based company.

"We're concerned about the uncertainty," Vincent said. She points to the recession worries and notes the company sells a discretionary product that could be hit hard if consumers tighten their belts.

Many companies, though, are forging ahead with hiring plans or at least avoiding layoffs.

Here's why:

Worker shortages

Labor crunches have improved since schools have reopened, and enhanced unemployment benefits expired a year ago. But shortages are still severe. In July, there were a near record 11.2 million job openings, or two for every unemployed American, Labor Department data shows.

So while lots of businesses are posting smaller sales gains or even declines, many have had such a tough time finding employees that they're reluctant to lay people off. That has kept elevated net monthly job gains – which include all cuts and hiring.

Even if the economy continues to sputter or slips into recession, "they're thinking, 'Sales will rebound and I'll have a hell of a time' " filling the vacancies, Zandi says.

To be sure, some brands have announced significant job cuts in recent months, including Oracle, Amazon, Netflix and Ford. And initial jobless claims, a gauge of layoffs, have trended higher since spring. But they dipped recently and remain historically low. The share of all those employed who were laid off or fired was near a record low at 0.9% in July.

Many employers believe any downturn will be short-lived, and so they figure, " 'I'll ride it out because (finding workers) is so expensive,' " says Jim McCoy, senior vice president of staffing firm Manpower. Some companies that need to trim staff are instead retraining employees and shifting them to other departments, McCoy says.

Employers generally aren't hiring workers who aren't needed now, McCoy and Zandi say. But Julia Pollak, chief economist at job site ZipRecruiter, says some hoarding is happening.

Raval, head of FrescoData, the email marketing company, says his hiring plans are on track even though sales are flat in part because "it will take three or four months for employees to get trained" so they're in place for the holidays.

Of recession jitters, he asked: "What if there is no recession?"

Even some firms in the industry hit hardest by rising interest rates – housing – are hiring. St. Louis-area home sales were down 23.6% in July from the year-ago period, according to St. Louis Realtors, a trade group. But the Hermann London Group, a real estate brokerage in Maplewood, Missouri, is looking to add two administrative staffers and five to 10 brokers, says owner Adam Kruse.

"I think of it as an opportunity," Kruse said. "Many Realtors are getting scared" and cutting staffers. "I want to be one of those gaining market share."

Catching up from COVID job cuts

Although the nation has recovered all the jobs wiped out in the pandemic, it's a few million short of where it would be if the pandemic hadn't happened. Leisure and hospitality – which includes restaurants, bars and hotels, sectors decimated by COVID-19 – is still 1.2 million jobs shy of its pre-pandemic level.

"If you look at spending at restaurants, it's fully recovered, but there's a huge jobs hole," Pollak said.

Many consumers, meanwhile, are still flush with more than $2 trillion in savings they socked away during the crisis and are resuming activities as COVID-19 eases, she says. Employers also are still struggling to fill longstanding openings created by the labor shortage.

Neema Hospitality, which owns a dozen hotel franchises in the mid-Atlantic region, finally crept close to its normal summer occupancy of about 80% the past few months as Americans hit the road despite record gas prices, President Sandeep Thakrar says. The company has hired 30 permanent staffers and about 20 temporary workers this year, but it still has about 25 openings.

"We're always understaffed," he said.

Other businesses say worker deficits are improving.

Forever Floral, which sells handcrafted artificial bouquets online, is adding 25 employees this year, says interim CEO Alex Ledoux. Sales at the 110-employee company have doubled in 2022 as couples hold weddings that were deferred earlier in the pandemic.

Despite the labor shortage, Ledoux says, the Ogden, Utah-based company is receiving about 100 applications per opening, versus about 10 earlier in the crisis.

The pivot from goods to services

As the pandemic has waned, Americans have shifted their purchases from TVs, furniture and other goods to services like dining out and moviegoing, says economist Bob Schwartz of Oxford Economics.

But such services require more workers than factories, which rely heavily on labor-saving technology. In July, services accounted for 402,000 of the 528,000 job gains, Schwartz says.

Employment

Continued from Page 1A

determine why that is happening, though it could be COVID-19 related.

"I think we've kind of gotten to a level where COVID-19, and I do not want to downplay it, is more like the general flu," said French. "It's just kind of become part of our lives."

How that may tie to the healthcare sector is that during the pandemic, staffing increased, boosted in part by federal CARES Act funding. Many of those jobs are no longer needed. Strict COVID protocols have eased and extra staffing is no longer needed.

French said the reason could also be "oversaturation of medical offices in a particular geographic area, where maybe they can't support as much competition as they have .. there have been some downsizing there."

French noted: "We haven't really been hearing that much in the hospitality industry or retail industry" in terms of needing more employees, though he knows there is a shortage.

"I think a lot of businesses have just come to terms with the fact that a lot of that workforce is not coming back," French said. "We still are seeing shortages in manufacturing, distribution and transportation, too."

And considering Marion County has become a manufacturing and distribution hub, with many of the new jobs available in that sector, it is a good profession for people wanting to make a career change.

"I think a lot of those businesses are just coming to terms with a smaller workforce and managing that within their businesses," he said.

French said when it comes to inflation, so many people put back a lot of money during the early part of the pandemic and "they weren't spending, they weren't out driving, and they weren't out going out to restaurants."

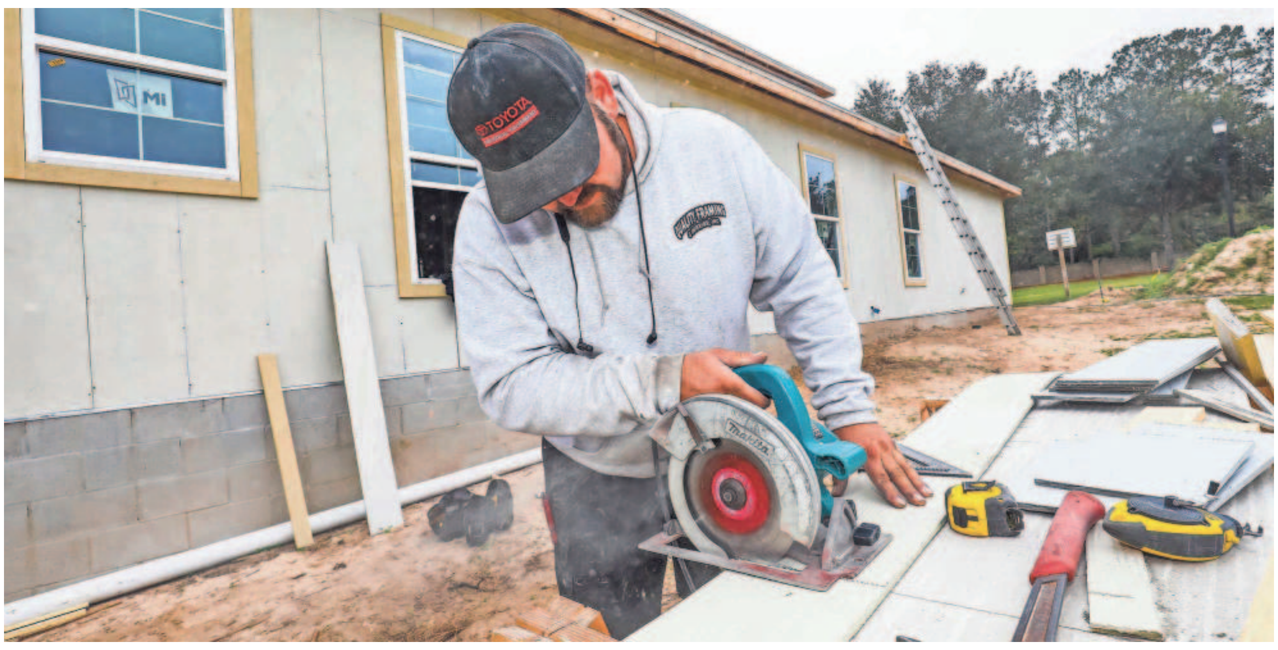
"So for a year and a half they saved all that money," he noted. "Then when things freed up, people were buying basically anything they could get their hands on, whether it be housing or recreational vehicles."

French said he read an article that people have reached a point now where the extra income that they had saved is now gone.

"So we may see two things from that," he noted. "We may see inflation start dropping because spending is dropping off and that means consumer confidence is dropping and the question is whether that will push us further into recession."

French added that though he is not an economist, he does know that Marion County does have a lot of jobs right now.

"And people need to take that into consideration because we all know we're going to enter a time when there's not as many jobs available," French said. "Everyone should be thinking now about where they want their career to go, what industry do they want to work in because there are options now."



Construction worker Steven Nilsen with Quality Framing, cuts siding for a new home being built in Woodfield Crossings Monday afternoon, December 20, 2021 in Ocala FL. DOUG ENGLE/OCALA STAR-BANNER

Why are less than half of all Floridians ages 18-64 not in workforce?

More than half of Florida residents ages 18-64 are not in the workforce, and area officials hope to soon find out the reasons why and help these workers to get back to work to fill many open positions.

Early this year, officials announced they were going to complete a study as to why there is a 45% workforce participation in Florida, including Marion County.

The main reason that there is only a 45% workforce participation in Florida – far less than the 61% national average – is that the state is a retiree destination and many of those not working are ages 55-64 and have retired early.

Local officials also suspect that many of the people not on the books may be working in the gig economy: driving for Uber or Lyft or delivering food and groceries for DoorDash, GrubHub or Instacart.

Another reason some people may not be in the workforce: Daycare is too expensive, and people have figured out how to make ends meet during the pandemic with just one parent working, one local official said.

Whatever the reasons, local officials want to know why half of Marion County residents ages 18-64 are not working, and in the process help employers figure out ways to bring them back to fill jobs.

Where can I learn about career opportunities that are available?

In the continuing effort to match job seekers with businesses with immediate hiring needs, CareerSource CLM will hold a general job fair on Sept. 22 from 3-5 p.m. at the College of Central Florida Klein Center.

Rusty Skinner, CEO of CareerSource CLM, said recently in a press release the agency offers "several online programs that allow people top access training at their convenience."

Those include Metrix Learning's SkillUp, which offers both basic skills and career skills, including Valor/180 Skills, which provides training with a strong concentration on manufacturing-related skills.

"These allow those seeking employment as well as those seeking employment advancement, to schedule their learning around their work and family obligations," Skinner said in the release.

Information about job fairs, hiring events and other candidate and business services are available at careersourceclm.com.

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