

[FREE]



CTRL+ALT+DULUTH BY MICHAEL KOOL

If you're ever curious about what life is like in a given town, just pick up the jobs section of the local paper. Chances are, you'll learn everything you need to know.

Take Duluth, for example, and the *News Tribune's* weekly batch of odd lots and table scraps. Most Twin Ports job opportunities seem to fall into one of four categories: 1) Working with people who are sick, old, mentally ill or all of the above, 2) Operating machinery that you've never heard of before (but need an expensive license for), 3) Driving all over the Northland to sell or deliver someone's crap—*part time*, or 4) helping other people who can't get a job in this town cope with the consequences.

Sound like Shangri-La to you?

Jobs in the first category seem most numerous, but some can involve feeding, bathing and wiping the asses of people who will not always be as invested in these activities as you. God bless the hard-working men and women who do this essential yet often

thankless (at least in terms of pay) work every day. But if you don't have their bottomless reserves of patience and empathy, six weeks of it could see you trading places with your charges.

The other categories pose their own problems. Expect a piss test in category two. Expect to put a lot more in than you get out in category three. And expect to be reminded every day of how close you are to the same dire straits in category four. All categories typically require significant amounts of self-medicating—a fact you'll have to figure into your "salary requirements."

Of course, most employers know this, so they load up their ads with glittering yet spurious enticements. Lest you be tempted to ignore everything you've learned about job hunting, here's a brief refresher:

Immediate Openings: This job sucks so bad that our employees routinely quit by simply never showing up to work again.

Get in On the Ground Floor: Prepare to shovel some serious shit.

Now Hiring All Shifts: Say good-

bye to your weekends, your loved ones and the sun.

Great Opportunity for a Self-starter: Get ready to become someone you'd otherwise like to stab with a letter opener.

Good Salary + Benefits: You better fucking know somebody who works here who can hand deliver your resume.

Such tricks remind me of another handy practice: If you're unsure whether you'd like a certain job or not, go hang out near the front entrance for a day. Watch the people who already work there as they arrive in the morning. Do they look like they've found "the keys to career success, happiness, and the satisfaction [they] not only desire, but that [they] deserve," in the words of Jason and Sarah McClure, authors of *How to Find Your Dream Job and Make It a Reality?* Or do they more closely resemble the "hordes of beastly wretchedness and inarticulate misery...[dragging] out a subterfuge existence until mercifully released by death" that Jack London describes in *The People of the Abyss*, his chronicle of industrial-era London? In Duluth,

these often constitute the choice, as opposed to the bookends of a robust spectrum.

While outside, also note the volume of smothering throughout the day. (Smothering = smoking + loitering. Is Rich Hall still accepting Sniglets?) For example, it's probably no coincidence that, from the street, most telemarketing shops in town could easily be confused for smoking research centers. One in West Duluth often features more smokers out front than all of the bars on the block combined.

Sadly, I don't think this means that working there is that much more fun than hanging out at a bar. It does suggest that, given the option of tarring the lungs or the soul, these employees choose the former at every opportunity.

Thus, a word of advice for would-be newcomers: Before you take the plunge, gaze at the local job listings—not just the lake. The strongest rip current in town runs not under its rolling waves, but rather along I-35 South. So bring a life vest along with that kayak or canoe.

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TEATRO ZUCCONE

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