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## Their Pay Goes Up When Economy Goes Down

By SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN

Shoe cobblers aren't the only professionals seeing an increase in business as a result of the economic downturn. Service providers who cater to the needs and desires that people develop in recessions are also busy.

It might sound surprising, but massage therapists are reporting a spike in demand for their offerings. Terri Sandusky says her calendar is so packed with appointments that she doesn't have any openings until May. "I've been practicing for 13 years and Saturdays are usually filled up (only) one or two weeks in advance," says Ms. Sandusky, who charges \$75 for one hour or \$110 for 90 minutes of massage therapy. She's even seeing clients who've lost their jobs come in for treatments. "When times are stressful, people are still willing to spend money on massage," she says.

Many financially strapped Americans are also willing to pay for greater peace of mind or an ear to bend, filling the schedules of psychologists. "A lot of new clients are coming in due to stresses connected to finances and the economy," says David Ballard, an assistant executive director at the American Psychological Association.

Kathryn Smerling, a New York psychologist who charges around \$200 an hour, estimates she's seeing 20% more clients than she did a year ago. Most are seeking help dealing with mental anguish caused by a job loss or layoff fears. "They feel so disconnected from a lot of the things that were able to support them last year at this time," she explains.

Meanwhile, auto mechanics say a growing number of customers are looking to better maintain their vehicles so they can put off purchasing a replacement. At Forest Hill Auto Service Inc. in Pacific Grove, Calif., heavy duty maintenance jobs -- which generate fees about 20% higher than minor repairs -- have become the norm in recent months, says Bob Constant, owner of the four-person shop.

An increase in layoffs is helping to boost business for resume writers, says Frank Fox, executive director of the National Association of Resume Writers and Career Coaches in St. Petersburg, Fla., a trade group with roughly 800 members. "It's a natural extension of our current employment situation," he says. "Job seekers recognize that in a competitive market, they benefit from having the best possible resume." Resume writers' fees range on average from \$50 to \$200 an hour or more, adds Mr. Fox.

The rash of corporate downsizings has also been a financial boon for equity partners like Robert Benowitz at Rick Steiner Fell & Benowitz LLP in New York. "It's generating a steady stream of work," he says, noting that the number of clients seeking advice on employment issues -- such as severance pay, age discrimination, noncompete agreements and new employment contracts -- has doubled since December 2007. "It's somewhat of a silver lining."