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Be an appraiser: Earn lots of money?

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My daughter, who has made a conscious decision not to enter the appraisal field, forwarded a CNN.com article to me the other day entitled "Want more money? 15 jobs that pay \$60,000." According to the article and based on a survey conducted by CareerBuilder.com, 83% of workers are living paycheck to paycheck. More than 50% of the survey respondents said that they could use an additional \$250 to \$1,000 per paycheck to live comfortably. The article stated that the current national median salary is \$40,690 per year and listed 15 jobs that provided at least \$60,000 of annual income. To my surprise (perhaps shock would be a better word), appraiser was listed as job number one.

According to the article, an appraiser has an annual mean income of \$60,689, the projected employment in 2016 will be 118,000, and the increase between 2006 and 2016 is estimated at 17%. The annual mean income was provided by CBSalary.com and the employment projection was based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics data. After finishing the article, I had to ask myself what planet the author was living on.

To be fair, the author may have been using 2006 information. Even I must admit that 2006 was a very good year for the appraisal industry, and 2007 was almost just as good. However, what a difference two years can make! Compared to 2006, this year is extremely challenging for our industry.

In 2006, banks were lending, owners were refinancing, infrastructure was being improved, sellers were selling, buyers were buying. In 2008 much of this activity has slowed down considerably or even stood still in certain areas.

In my discussions with appraisers within New England, business is definitely down. In an informal survey at our recent Appraisal Institute chapter meeting, I asked attendees how many members were at the same billing level now as they were at this time last year. Less than 10% of the room answered positively. At the Appraisal Institute regional meeting this past October, members were comparing notes and discussing how slow business is, how fees have dropped and how competition has increased. Our industry is no different than many others that are suffering through this downturn.

One of the problems with articles such as the CNN.com one is the false hope that may be given to someone who reads the article and decides to pursue the appraisal field without a thorough understanding of the profession. The mean income may be \$60,689 but one year income may be significantly less and another year significantly more. What the article doesn't mention is the time commitment and educational requirements needed to become an appraiser or the entry barriers to becoming an appraiser such as finding a certified appraiser to train under.

One of the phrases appraisals often use in discussions with each other is, "It's either feast or famine." Another is "You have to make hay while the sun shines." These statements are bantered

about as we tell each other about how we had to work late into the evening or over the weekend. Although trite, these phrases ring true in the appraisal field. Maybe in another two years the pendulum will swing back in the opposite direction and we will be wondering how we are going to get all the work done.

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