



Sandy Mico works just across the street from her former home in the First Interstate tower.

Photo by John Kicker

Bank workers' skills often transfer over to new jobs

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vironments are very different," Thomas says: OPB runs on creativity, with little sense of a corporate hierarchy.

Angela Hull, also involved in community relations at First Interstate, rode out the downsizing wave at Wells Fargo. But she left just six months after the takeover to take an investor relations post with utility PacifiCorp. With Wells in a cost-cutting mode, merit increases in pay were likely to be small, she says. PacifiCorp had plans to grow aggressively—as demonstrated by its recent bid to buy The Energy Group PLC—and employees that performed well there could expect to be rewarded, she says.

Many employers are specifically trying to hire people leaving the banking industry, says career counselor Beck, whose firm provided outplacement services to First Interstate/Wells Fargo and will do the same for U.S. Bancorp's pending round of job cuts.

Health insurer PacifiCare, for one, has targeted former bank employees for both hourly and executive-level positions, says Bruce Preston, personnel director for the company.

"Their skills have transferred very well from their industry to ours," Preston says. By happy coincidence, the computer systems PacifiCare uses for managing large data bases match or closely parallel those used by large banks, he says.

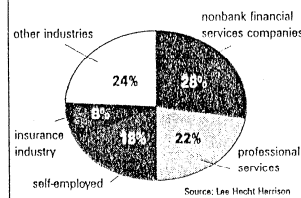
One of PacifiCare's senior managers, Majd El-Azma, came there round-about from First Interstate. El-Azma, a former loan officer, left the bank in 1990 and soon after enrolled in Portland State University's MBA program. He joined PacifiCare in 1993 as a market analyst and now directs business development.

The analysis he's provided PacifiCare has its roots in the work he did at First Interstate, El-Azma says. It still boils down to understanding a company, its market and its competition.

Former bank employees also have found a smooth fit at CFI ProServices Inc., says Laura Martin, spokeswoman for the Portland maker of software that serves the

Early Withdrawal

Bank employees who left the industry in 1994 and 1995 set up shop in a variety of new professions



banking industry. Over the years CFI has hired several people who departed banks, she says.

Given the ease with which people can transfer skills from one industry to another, few U.S. Bancorp employees will move from Portland, predicts Ron Ennis, principal in Pathways Through Career Transition, another Portland outplacement service. "I'll be shocked if there is any population decrease as a result of this," Ennis says. Senior-level bankers intent on staying in the industry may ship out of state, but the rank-and-file, along with most high-level managers, will find satisfying work right here, he says.

Although the road to those satisfying jobs increasingly leads out of the industry, Julie McMorris' path simply came full circle. Returning to First Interstate in February 1996 from three months of maternity leave, McMorris, an administrative assistant, soon found herself accepting a Wells severance offer. After nine months at home with her infant daughter Caitlan, McMorris took a new job at the start of this year with Wells as an accounting specialist in its international department. She regained her pre-existing benefits, obtained more vacation days and returned to work on the 12th floor of the First Interstate Tower—at a cubicle 10 feet away from her former desk. Now, with a July 1 promotion in hand, she demurely says, "Things worked out pretty well for me." □