






This Is Why The Central Is Number One Across The Region

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Keeping You Informed





Christmas is coming

By Dale Jodoin  
Columnist

Christmas is coming again, and every year it hits me a little differently. It feels heavier now. Not only in the wallet, though that part hurts all of us. Not only in the stress, though you can see it in tired faces everywhere. The bigger weight is the sense that the heart of Christmas is slipping out of sight. The lights go up earlier. The music starts before the leaves finish falling. Stores push sale after sale. Yet the quiet truth of the season gets harder to hear. Somewhere between the noise and the shopping carts, people stopped saying what Christmas is. It is the birthday of Jesus Christ. That is the reason for the day. You can celebrate something else. You can ignore the story. That is your right. But the day comes from one place and one place only.

You can see the shift in schools, stores, and even in government offices. Schools call it winter break. Employees are told to say happy holidays. Some folks look offended if you say Merry Christmas, as if speaking the word Christmas is forcing a belief on them. It is not. It is just being honest about the history of the day. The first Christmas did not take place in a mall. It happened in a stable, while a young couple tried to get through a night with no room to sleep. The first gifts were not toys or gadgets. They were given to a baby who people believed would bring hope into a broken world. You do not have to believe in that baby. But it is unfair to ask others to pretend that the story is not the foundation of the season.

All of this would be easier to shrug off if life today was not so hard for so many people. Rent is climbing. Groceries cost more every time you walk in the door. Parents are juggling bills and wondering which one can wait another week. People who used to donate to charities are now the ones standing in line at food banks. Yet at the same time, the pressure to make Christmas perfect keeps growing. Bigger gifts. Bigger meals. Bigger everything. But the first Christmas was not big. It was small and plain. It was a night where hope arrived quietly and without comfort. It was a moment where tired shepherds finished their shift and heard news that changed them. That simple story feels more real than anything you can buy.

Joseph is a part of the story that gets pushed aside. The man who raised Jesus was not wealthy or powerful. He was a carpenter. He worked with wood. He had calloused hands and a steady heart. He stepped into a difficult situation and stayed, even though the child was not his. He taught Jesus how to work, how to treat people, how to be a good man. He is proof that quiet love can shape the world more than any rich king ever could. Today many kids grow up without that kind of steady man in their lives. Many parents never saw it themselves. Christmas could be a time to rebuild a bit of that strength and kindness. People inside the church sometimes forget the point too. We argue about tiny details. We split into groups and fight about who is right. Meanwhile the main teaching of Jesus is simple. Love God. Love your neighbour. That is it. He did not say win arguments. He did not say prove your faith online. He did not talk down to people who believe differently. He said help. Help in real ways. Help with food when someone is hungry. Help with company when someone is alone. Help with kindness when someone feels ashamed. Help does not need money. It only needs attention.

So what do we do now? The world has changed. The government has its own plans for the season. Stores will keep pushing hard for bigger sales. But none of that removes our choice. We can still decide what the season means. We do not need to win a cultural fight to honour Christmas. We do not need to shout louder than anyone else. We just need to live the story. If you believe it, show it. If you honour it, let your actions carry it. Be patient with people. Be gentle when someone is struggling. Be decent even when it feels like the world has lost its grip on decency.

Christmas does not have to be complicated. This year you can choose something small and have it matter. Call someone who has not heard their phone ring in a while. Drop off a meal to a neighbour who is having a rough time. Shovel a walkway for someone who cannot do it. Bring a warm drink to a person working outside. None of these gestures cost much. They stick with people longer than anything that comes wrapped in shiny paper. These moments are the real gifts.

The noise of the season will keep trying to tell you that you need more. More stuff. More decorations. More money spent to show your love. But the truth is simple. The heart of Christmas is not loud. It sits in the quiet. It sits in the story of a love that came in the most humble way. It sits in the idea that ordinary people can carry hope into each other's lives.

So when you say Merry Christmas, say it without fear. Say it with a smile. If someone answers with something else, let them. There is no need to fight over greetings. You know what you mean when you say it. You are talking about hope and peace. You are talking about a kind of love that does not back down, even in hard times. You are talking about a story that has been told for more than two thousand years and still means enough for people to argue about it.

Then make it real. That is the purpose of the season. It pushes us to look up from our routines and notice the people around us. It reminds us that the best things in life are not things at all. They are moments of care. They are small acts of courage. They are the choice to be kind in a world that often forgets how.

The true heart of Christmas is not hiding in any store. It is sitting right in your hands. It is waiting for you to reach out. This year, let that be your gift. Let that be your way of celebrating. Let that be your way of keeping the old story alive. Because the truth is still the truth. Christmas began with love coming into the world in a simple way. Our job now is to pass that love on.

That is what Christmas is for. And that is enough.



My 2026 Job Market Forecast

By Nick Kossovan

Take a deep breath.  
Exhale.  
Repeat a few times.  
A relaxed mind is the best tool against your challenges.  
While I don't have a crystal ball to predict what the 2026 job market will look like, I do have insights from numerous conversations with recruiters and hiring managers, coupled with a strong gut feeling that leads me to believe the following factors will continue to influence the job market:

- Geopolitical self-interests causing economic friction between countries.
- Companies investing in AI productivity tools, data processing technology, and automation instead of hiring new employees.
- Employers will continue to lay off employees who don't contribute measurable value to their profitability or whose roles can be automated, outsourced, or performed by AI.

The job market implications:

1. Technological advancement—economic conditions are a distant secondary factor—is the single most significant macroeconomic trend shaping job markets, and it's not going to slow down or reverse anytime soon.
2. As technology improves productivity, companies find themselves with a surplus of redundant, 'do the bare minimum,' and underperforming employees. Therefore, employers are trimming payroll fat; consequently, I expect payroll growth in 2026 to slow down further or, at best, remain unchanged.
3. Tension between job seekers and employers will escalate further.

Needs to be said: AI isn't on track to create enough jobs to replace the ones it's displacing. AI is a 24/7/365 digital employee that employees and job seekers are competing against, an employee that never gets tired, sick, takes a holiday, or demands more (read: is easy to manage), and works much faster—all for no salary, perks, or ongoing overhead costs.

AI isn't a productivity enhancement tool; it's a human replacement tool.

The job market is reorganizing around revenue, efficiency, new technology that offers to increase productivity, and onboarding technological skills. Hiring booms or busts will not define 2026—there won't be a January hiring spike—it'll be defined by employers not willing to keep on payroll employees who don't deliver visible, measurable outcomes that contribute to their profitability. Choosing to be a 'good enough' employee is choosing to risk termination.

A September 2025 article from Staffing Industry Analysts reported that 58% of US companies expect layoffs or cutbacks in 2026.

2026 will have job seekers contending with fewer job opportunities, along with a shift in hiring practices: employers increasingly relying on referrals, processing applications more slowly with greater due diligence, and using AI to determine which candidates are worth interviewing.

The new hiring mantra: Smarter, not faster.

Moreover, skill-based hiring is replacing degree requirements, with companies prioritizing certifications, project portfolios, and proven outcomes over job titles. Internal mobility is also gaining importance, as employers recognize that retraining existing staff for new roles is quicker and more cost-effective than hiring externally.

As employers prioritize revenue and productivity improvements, they'll only be hiring for essential positions. Job seekers who've established themselves as top performers in their fields and industries—visibility is a job seeker's most valuable currency—and don't feel entitled, have unrealistic expectations, and most importantly, can clearly demonstrate how they'll contribute to an employer's bottom line will be the ones who succeed in their 2026 job search.

Furthermore, return-to-office mandates will continue as companies transition their employees from remote work and flexible schedules to more stringent office attendance policies. Productivity data, promoting collaboration and engagement, and strengthening company culture are influencing employers' decisions about where the work they're paying for is done. Job seekers who are willing to work onsite will have a shorter job search compared to those who insist on working from home.

In 2026, the growth of interim and project-based hiring, known as fractional work—offering your skills to multiple companies or clients on a part-time or project basis, often in strategic, high-impact roles—will continue. Full-time employees without a steady workflow are seen as a financial burden, prompting employers to leverage contract professionals who provide flexible talent solutions—especially at the leadership level—for time-limited projects such as implementing an enterprise system or a cybersecurity initiative, or as a part-time Product Manager.

Employers expanding their use of fractional workers instead of hiring full-time staff means that in 2026, more employers will freeze their headcount while increasing service agreements to take advantage of the financial benefits of:

- No long-term salary commitments
- No benefits packages
- No onboarding cost
- No managing employee risks

How can an employer not love fractional workers? They're a straightforward P&L line item, a strategic service when needed. From a job seeker's perspective, fractional work is easier to secure than traditional work (40-hour workweek, benefits, PTO); however, fractional workers are self-employed, which requires an entrepreneurial mindset that most job seekers don't have. In 2026, job seekers need to prioritize showcasing their intent and providing evidence of the impact they've had on their previous employers. View your resume and LinkedIn profile as strategic tools, not afterthoughts. Cultivate professional relationships long before asking for referrals.

Know your career story and value-add to an employer. More than ever, employers want to hear value stories with quantifying numbers and specific outcomes. Above all, remain flexible—whether that means working onsite, doing fractional work, or taking a step back. The mindset I'd bring into 2026: a paycheck is better than no paycheck.