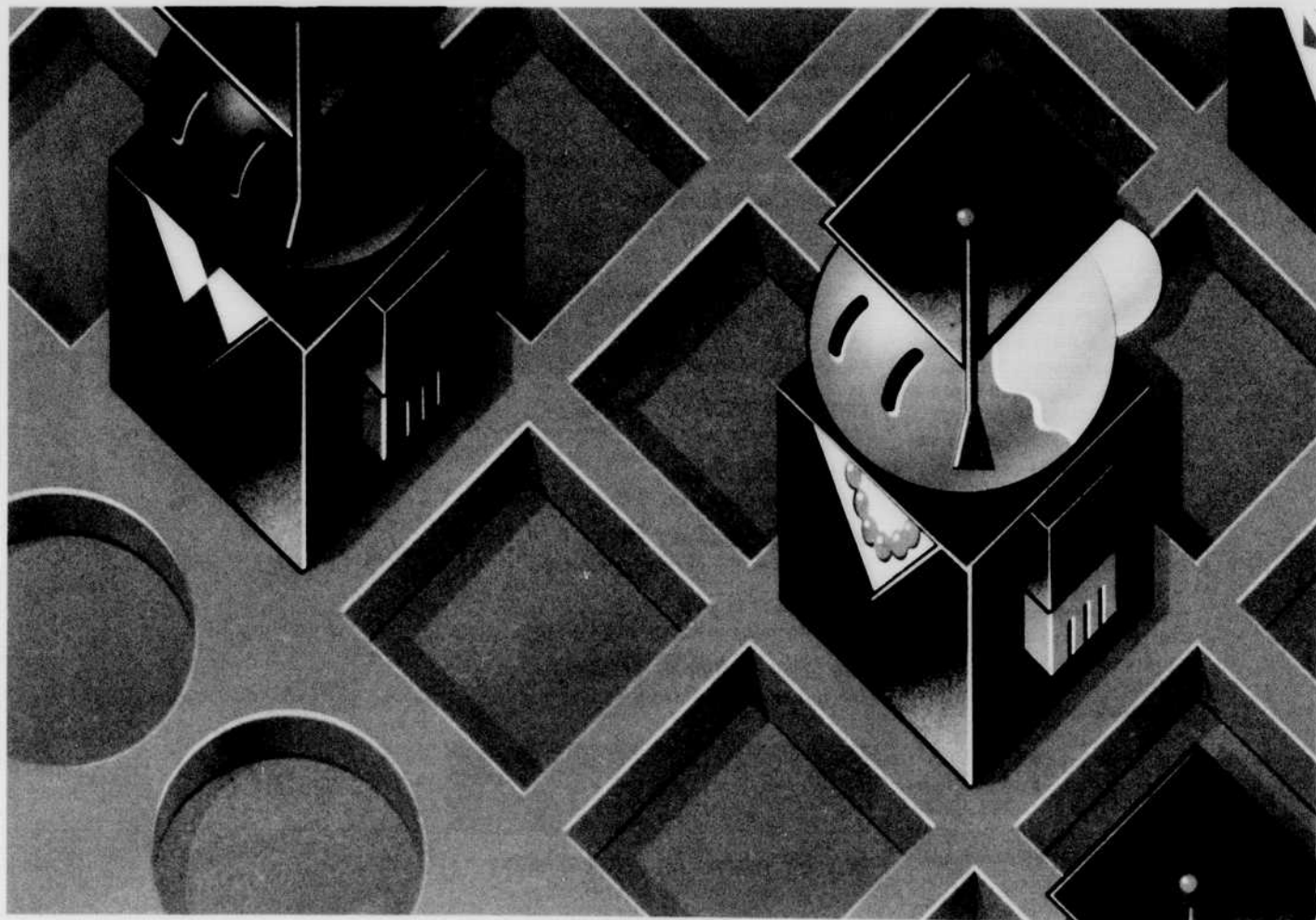


THE NEW JOB MARKET

By Vasil J. Pappas



From a student's perspective, the workplace may seem pretty stable—a world of nine-to-five, button-downs, sensible shoes and leather attaches. Corporate recruiters make their annual campus pilgrimages to ask the same timeless interview questions. Demand for new grads remains high for the eighth straight year and starting salaries are up again.

But be forewarned, the landscape on which you'll plot your career path has changed radically. The assumptions you've made about your career—how you picture your future, your workplace, co-workers, employers, competitors and personal life—may already be outdated.

Consider, for example, Deborah Gaeta, a 27-year-old marketing coordinator at Pacific Data Images in Sunnyvale, Calif. Ten years ago, neither her company nor her industry existed. Twenty years ago, Sunnyvale was a patchwork of orchards and truck farms between Palo Alto and San Jose, not the heart of Silicon Valley.

Today her company produces computer animation and graphics, including the spinning network logos on ABC and NBC. In the last two years, PDI has doubled its workforce to 35 and has created animation for commercials in Japan, Korea, Australia, Brazil and throughout Europe. Engineers and illustrators tend to arrive late in the morning—and leave late at night.

Is this another California, new-wave trend? Hardly. Deborah Gaeta's workplace experience embodies many of the major transformations that have occurred in American business over the past 20 years. And like millions of other young job holders, she sees a working world markedly different from the one her parents faced when they started their careers.

"We're going through a revolution as profound as the industrial revolution," says Ian Mitroff, professor of business policy at the University of Southern California Graduate School of Business. "You have all these changes taking place at once. Companies have restructured, not always for the better. There are more career changes and greater uncertainty about everything."