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## BA Haller's new book



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Sunday, March 16, 2008

## Forbes: Blind people in the workplace

In media terms, a significant aspect of David Paterson, who legally blind, ascending to the NY governor's job is the flurry of news and feature stories about life with blindness in general. *Forbes* looked at the business angle of blind people in the workplace in a [March 14 story](#), talking to some corporate executives who are blind.

But the story also lays out the specifics of the high unemployment rate for blind people. The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) reports a 70% unemployment rate among blind adults of employment age. However, AFB explains in the *Forbes* story what accounts for some of this. For example, many people become blind later in life and decide to quit working because they aren't too far from retirement. "It's hard to persuade people who are newly blinded in their 50s and 60s to get back into rehabilitation and training so they can go back to work," Carl Augusto, AFB president, says in the article.

However, for young blind people the future is rosier. "The younger generation of blind workers is different than their older counterparts," says Augusto. They are employed at the same rate as sighted people. Schools are preparing them better for careers, and they're taking advantage of technology."

But discrimination against blind people in hiring still exists and accounts for the high unemployment rate. "The single largest factor is discrimination and bias," says Steven Rothstein, president of Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts. "There's a belief among employers that people who are blind can't do jobs."

The story also included the experiences of Barry Honig, who is blind and president of Honig International, a Manhattan-based executive search and management consulting firm, and Al Gayzagian, a blind Harvard graduate who struggled for three years to find a job, but found one as a typist and then rose to the level of senior financial officer at John Hancock.

The *Forbes* story, by Tara Weiss, does a good job of giving a nuanced report about the positive and negative aspects affecting blind people who try to obtain employment.

Posted by BA Haller at 7:36 PM

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