

## Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

December 17, 2015

**Article: "ONCE HOMELESS, HE'S NOW GOT THAT \$100,000 TECH JOB"**

**Wednesday, December 16, 2015** in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, Main page A1 and A7

### Pre-Reading:

Before reading the article, read the title and look at the photographs. How do you think a man who was once homeless was able to secure a \$100,000 tech job?

### Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today's article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the "context," or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

*stemming*

*optimistic*

*white-collar*

*stint*

*conviction*

*overturned*

*auditor*

*preliminary*

*compliance*

*logistics*

*poverty*

*hackers*

*deluged*

*hubbub*

### **Comprehension:**

1. What is James Simmons' new job title?
2. At what type of company and in what city is Simmons' new job in?
3. How long was Simmons homeless for?
4. Why has Simmons struggled to get jobs even though he technically doesn't have a criminal record?
5. What certification does Simmons have which has helped him score Skype interviews and job offers?
6. What was one major difference in the two job offers Simmons received last week?
7. How did Simmons secure funds to start in a new city with no money?
8. What group of professionals saw Simmons as one of their own and also offered to help?
9. What does Compass Washington say will be the hard part for Simmons?
10. When shopping for clothes in Macys, why did Simmons have to sit down and just talk with someone from Compass Washington?

### **Post-Reading:**

**Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:**

**“It's a second chance for his life, that's how he sees it,' says Walter Washington, the program manager for Compass Housing Alliance's 60-bed men's shelter near Seattle Center. 'It's a huge risk, to go from forgotten and homeless to such a high-demand field. But his view was, it's now or never.'**

**The logistics were difficult. How do you start in a new city with zero money? Compass pulled together donations to give Simmons a train ticket, three weeks in a Travelodge motel and \$15 a day in meal money, all until he gets his first paycheck.”**

What challenges do you think Simmons will experience in transitioning from homeless to working in a white-collar, six-figure job? What logistics, in addition to housing and a train ticket to Portland, would have been top of mind for Simmons? What concerns, other than housing and transportation, might Simmons have in preparation for his first day on the new job? What helpful words and suggestions would you offer?

### **Building Language Skills:**

**Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:**

**“Some help came from United Way's 'Navigators' program, which is specifically designed to give the homeless a lift up out of poverty.”**

What other organizations offer assistance to those who are homeless? Research both local and national organizations. How can you and your family support these organizations? How would Simmons' situation have been different if he hadn't received assistance from Compass Alliance and United Way? Summarize your thoughts in a short essay.

### Comprehension Question Answers:

1. James Simmons new job title is Sr. Analyst/ IT Audit & Security Compliance.
2. Simmons new job is at a global technology services firm in Portland.
3. Simmons was homeless for seven years.
4. Simmons' conviction was overturned after the arresting King County officer was fired for lying. So while technically Simmons has no record, he has struggled to get jobs as the arrest still dogs him on the Internet and in background checks.
5. Because he's a certified information systems auditor, Simmons was able to score Skype interviews as well as preliminary job offers with national corporations.
6. One offer was a "get-back-on-your-feet" offer doing low-paid office work. The other — which he accepted — is in Portland doing security compliance work.
7. Compass Housing Alliance pulled together donations to give Simmons a train ticket, three weeks in a Travelodge motel and \$15 a day in meal money, all until he gets his first paycheck. Some help also came from United Way's "Navigators" program, which is specifically designed to give the homeless a lift up out of poverty.
8. Simmons' story also made the rounds in "InfoSec" — information security professionals who saw Simmons as one of their own.
9. The hard part for Simmons will be "in about 15 days, when all the hubbub dies down," Compass' Washington says.
10. After the checkout clerk recognized Simmons from the paper, Simmons had to sit down and just talk.