

Look Who's Talking

Rob O'Brian comments on job training and hiring incentives:



“The Career Center is a great partner in Economic Development. The Career Center helps local companies with their job training needs when they're expanding. They help bring new companies in by providing screening, a place to do interviews, and of course, training dollars to help them train the right employees.”

Rob O'Brian, Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce

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DOL, VETS Update USERRA, VBIA Regulations

A final rule issued in late December helps both employers and service members clear up the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights of 1994 (USERRA) through the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). USERRA provides employment and reemployment rights for members of the uniformed services, including veterans, reservists, and National Guard members.

Under USERRA, service members who leave their civilian jobs for military service are able to return to their jobs with the same pay, benefits, and status they would have attained had they not been away on duty. USERRA also protects against discrimination in employment because of military service.

The newly issued regulations specifically address service member and employer obligations regarding issues such as

employee make-up contributions to pension plans, employer contributions to pensions, continuation of employment-based health plan coverage, statutes of limitations, and USERRA's relationship with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

VETS also issued a final rule concerning the notice required under the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 (VBIA). The act requires that each employer shall provide to persons entitled to rights and benefits under USERRA, a notice of the rights, benefits, and obligations of such persons and such employers. This mandate can be met by distributing the notice or posting the poster version of the notice. Two downloadable posters, with identical text, are available online for use and distribution by employers. One of the posters is for federal agency employers and the other is for use by private and state employers.

The USERRA elaws Advisor has been updated to reflect the new rules. Additional compliance information is available at DOL's website online at www.dol.gov/vets.



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Workforce ZONE

News you can use
from the Business
Services Team
at the Missouri
Career Centers of
Joplin and Monett
www.workforcezone.com

Workforce Group Receives Grant to Address Local Labor Skill Shortages



As part of Governor Matt Blunt's commitment to improve Missouri's business environment, the state's Department of Economic Development has awarded a \$175 thousand grant to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) of

Southwest Missouri. The grant will help fuel the region's economy with a high quality workforce as part of a statewide effort, known as the Missouri Regional Skills Gap Initiative.

"In order to create jobs and expand our economy, we must reduce skill shortages in our workforce, and this funding will go a long way in addressing those shortages," Blunt said. "By providing regions with additional resources

we can make Missouri more competitive by developing work skills needed to improve the quality of life for all Missourians."

Businesses in Southwest Missouri have identified gaps in soft skills, according to research in the Opportunity Outlook/State of the Workforce report from the Workforce Investment Board, released at the Summit on the Workforce event last July. These skill gaps cost time, money, and lost opportunities for the region's economy. Businesses want a standard for quality and they want their applicants and incumbent workers to meet higher standards for the workplace.

To meet the needs of the region's businesses for enough qualified entry-level workers in advanced manufacturing and healthcare, the Southwest Workforce Investment Board will receive \$175,000 to initiate the Work

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Partnership and Pilot Project Prepares Youth for the Workforce

A pilot project between the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce and the Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri is putting job-ready soft skills in the hands of dozens of students from Joplin High School. The program is targeted towards at-risk youth, ages 17 and 18, with the emphasis on work habits and the importance of attaining their high school diploma.

The Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce Youth Outreach Workforce Partnership program is providing the "soft skills" training. The skills identified as missing in today's workforce came to light through a survey conducted by

the Southwest Missouri Workforce Investment Board. Job hunting skills, such as application do's & don'ts, interview behavior, and appearance are among the outcomes of the program. Other areas include customer service skills such as greetings, thanking the customer, and making change. Job retention rounds out the approach and focuses on worker qualities in high demand by businesses, like good work habits, avoiding tardiness & absenteeism, conflict resolution, interacting with team members and supervisors, and being a good employee.

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NEWSLETTER INFO

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Skills Development Grant (From Page One)

Readiness Credential program. This program provides a national, portable assessment-based certification that affirms a jobseeker has demonstrated the foundation knowledge and skills, including soft skills, which are needed for successful performance as entry-level workers. Overall, the skills gap project in Southwest Region will assess and/or train 2,100 job seekers through the Career Centers located in Joplin and Monett.

The credential is based on the skills identified by more than 600 businesses as critical for performance of entry-level work. Nationally, field testing of the work readiness assessment is underway with the goal of rolling out the credential in the Spring of 2006. Part of the value the WIB identified locally for the project is its emerging nationwide acceptance and prominence as the premiere work readiness standard. This nationally validated standard enables businesses with offices across the country to achieve the same high quality workforce in every location. Southwest Missouri also benefits from the increased competitiveness of its workforce in attracting new commercial investment and job creation for the region.

The success of the Work Readiness Credential depends on wide-scale participation from area business leaders. Over the coming weeks, the WIB will be seeking endorsements from local business associations and chambers of

commerce in Southwest Missouri. Funding will be provided to businesses in the form of pilot training grants to upgrade the skills of incumbent workers as well.

The Missouri Regional Skills Gap Initiative is a cooperative effort between the Department of Economic Development's Division of Workforce Development and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Division of Career Education. Funding for the initiative is being provided through employment and training programs authorized by the Workforce Investment Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act.

This highly competitive grant was awarded to only five of the thirteen local workforce regions statewide that applied for the funding. Southwest Missouri's effort is among a group of high profile, progressive workforce boards that include the Kansas City area, Eastern Jackson County, Northwest Missouri (Trenton/St. Joseph), and the South Central Region (West Plains).

Participating businesses that recognize the credential would provide fast-track, expedited hiring processes for the qualified applicants to encourage job seekers and students to beef up their work skills for the future. Business leaders that are ready to raise the bar for Southwest Missouri's workforce can contact Jasen Jones at the WIB for more information. Call (417) 629-3000 or contact the WIB by email, ceo@workforcezone.net. ■

Youth Workforce Project (From Page One)

The Chamber constructed the program and jump started the effort with a grant from the Workforce Investment Board. Input was received from several area businesses, Joplin R-VIII schools, the Workforce Investment Board, and area professionals each with a unique perspective on the condition of today's young workforce.

Able Manufacturing & Assembly, LLC, Southwest Missouri Bank, Missouri Career Center, JC Penney, Inc, and Rock-Tenn all assisted in the development and are providing the training for the pilot program consisting of 50 students. Three out of six sessions

have been completed and the results are overwhelmingly positive, according to Cary Beasley, Workforce Development Coordinator for the Chamber.

Businesses participating in the program, along with several others identified by the Chamber, have agreed to fast-track and grant interviews to any applicant who successfully completes this program. All the applicant has to do is attach a copy of the Certificate of Achievement to their application. A copy of the certificate is available to view on the JACC website, www.joplincc.com. If you would like more information about this program please contact Cary Beasley, JACC Workforce Development Coordinator at (417) 624-4150, or send an email to: cbeasley@joplincc.com. ■

Local Healthcare Careers Consortium Advances Strategic Priorities

A consortium of businesses, educators, and employment groups devoted to the future of healthcare careers across the four-state region has set its sights on development opportunities in three strategic areas. The overall effort is designed to boost the number of students, both youth and adults, into the pipeline for careers in the healthcare field and for instructors to prepare students for future healthcare careers.

The Four State Health Professions Consortium dates back to May of 2000 and was originally focused on Southwest Missouri. During their history, the consortium expanded into a broader four-state geography as members discovered that healthcare employers in neighboring states were facing the same challenges in recruitment and retention of workers. Now, the overall mission statement of the consortium is to provide a sufficient number of qualified healthcare professionals

and support personnel to meet the current and future workforce demands of the four state region to include Southwest Missouri, Southeast Kansas, Northeast Oklahoma and Northwest Arkansas.

Demographic changes in the region have increased the demand for healthcare services, and thus, the need to expand employment in the sector. Emerging retirements of the existing healthcare workforce across the area further compounds the need to recruit more workers into the field. In the southwest region of Missouri, for example, state Department of Economic Development researchers project that the increased growth percentage in the demand for Registered Nurses will surpass both statewide and national growth trends.

Supporting the mission is the pursuit of resources to fund three strategic priorities for the consortium. To place the region's youth into the pipeline for healthcare training and employment, the consortium's outreach to the K-12 educational system targets high school teachers, guidance counselors, and students. To

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Ongoing GreatHires Improvements Make 2006 Even More Promising for Online Recruitment

HR professionals could never have dreamed twenty years ago of the proliferation that the internet would have on the field of finding and keeping good employees. Job matching sites have come and gone and some have stayed with success. GreatHires is one that has responded to the demands of businesses and employers and evolved into Missouri's chief workforce resource.

Next to having Missouri's largest hiring pool, the greatest advantage that Greathires touts over national job sites is the personal touch of customer service that only comes from having a human being behind the scenes of GreatHires at the local Missouri Career Centers. Businesses have instant access to a professional staff and a wide array of

resources through the Career Center locations in Joplin and Monett. Personal assistance for a company's hiring needs comes from workforce specialists that are just a phone call, email, or office visit away. In fact, specialists from the Career Center's Business Services team will even come to your location to help troubleshoot or provide training to get the most from GreatHires.

GreatHires has streamlined its job-posting process into five logical steps, translating into



a quicker access to candidates and less time that employers spend entering job orders. The ability to select the level of accessibility to the labor pool puts you in control of job matches through qualified, desired, and staff assisted job order modes. GreatHires helps easily screen out unqualified candidates and gives you search results, ranked by skills and experience, that better match your business needs.

You don't have to be an expert in juggling job titles that may not be relevant to your business. GreatHires allows you to enter free

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Joplin Business Leader Named to MTEC

Herb Schmidt, president of Contract Freighters, Inc. of Joplin, has been appointed to the Missouri Training and Employment Council (MTEC) by Governor Matt Blunt. Schmidt's term runs through August of 2007. MTEC serves as the state Workforce Investment Board for Missouri on the web at www.mtec.ded.mo.gov.

Local Reps Named to State SHRM Council

Susan Waugh, Employer Advantage, and Tracy Lemmons, Division of Workforce Development, will be representing the local area by serving on the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Missouri State Council for 2006. Susan will be serving as the Director for Diversity and Tracy will be representing the local SHRM chapter, as the Director for the Tri-State Human Resource Association.

Job Shadow Day Set for February 2nd

The National Job Shadow Day initiative kicks off on Thursday, February 2, 2006 - Groundhog Day - and will continue throughout the year. Job Shadowing allows young people to "job shadow" a career mentor in his or her place of work. A new website for Job Shadow Day 2006 provides online resources for job shadowing efforts for businesses and educators. In 2006, as many as 1 million students and 100,000 employers are expected to participate in Job Shadowing.

State Chamber Projects Employer Issues as Top Priority for 2006 Legislature

With the 2006 Legislative Session upon us, it is clear that employer issues once again will move to the forefront of debate. "But the devil is going to be in the details for Missouri employers this legislative session," said Missouri Chamber President Daniel P. Mehan. "That's because the business issues that likely will see debate - eminent domain policy, the rising costs of health insurance, workers' compensation and unemployment insurance reforms - are as complex as they are controversial. How the 2006 Legislative Session ultimately will play out for Missouri employers will depend upon lawmakers' understanding of the details and their commitment to Missouri's jobs and our state's economy."

Embarrassing Moments

Sitting in a dunk tank may be business as usual for a circus performer, but how about a corporate executive? Strange but true, some managers have made a splash - literally - in front of colleagues. In fact, in a recent survey, sitting in dunk tanks, performing in office skits and falling prey to clothing calamities were among survey respondents' most embarrassing moments at work. The survey was developed by OfficeTeam, a leading staffing service specializing in the placement of highly skilled administrative professionals.

Healthcare Employment Consortium (From Page Three)

date, the consortium has held two successful Career Day events to expand the awareness of specific healthcare careers and training opportunities and the educators' capacity to guide prospective students into those opportunities.

Another strategic priority for the consortium involves promotion of healthcare fields to adults that are returning to the workforce. This source of workers may be in a transition to a new career as a result of layoffs or economic shifts in declining employment sectors.

The third strategy is actually a necessity to support the other two. The demand for training in healthcare is meeting or exceeding the capacity that local educators can currently provide. Educators face additional challenges in recruiting faculty and matching the wages

for advanced professionals in the highly competitive healthcare field.

The Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri shares in the goals of the healthcare consortium and has identified healthcare as a targeted industry for the region. The target sets a priority in resources from the Board for employment and training programs it oversees in the region. Collectively, consortium members are in pursuit of federal and philanthropic resources to expand its activities in the three strategic areas. The Workforce Board has offered its interest in promoting or administering programs for the consortium as needed.

The Four State Health Professions Consortium meets on a monthly basis. The next meeting of the group is set for 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 26th at the Freeman Business Center in Joplin. More information about the consortium is available online at www.fourstatehealthconsortium.com. ■



GreatHires Upgrades & Online Recruitment (From Page Three)

form lay titles that will associate behind the scenes with industry-standard titles. It does the work for you to determine tasks and skills that are accurate and specific. These innovations bring you a quicker, better match with more flexibility in the job descriptions custom-tailored to your company.

Together with Workforcezone.com, GreatHires offers more information for career exploration and direction for hiring decisions. Local Employment Dynamics (LED) puts valuable HR intelligence at your fingertips with an arsenal of fresh labor market statistics and occupational data that is unique to Southwest Missouri.

A messaging system can be activated by you as the hiring pro that provides handy communication with job seekers and Career Center staff without the hassle of extra emails. All of the features of GreatHires are conveniently packaged on a home page individualized to your account. This consolidated list of all job postings, searches, and messages gives you a helpful record of your hiring activities.

Better quality candidates and more efficient hiring processes means your company can enjoy a lower cost per hire and savings of time in your HR functions. To learn more about GreatHires and other services available through the Missouri Career Center, contact Tracy Lemmons at (417) 629-3000 Ext. 237 or send an email to: tracy.lemmons@ded.mo.gov. ■

Check out our demonstration of GreatHires and discover other Career Center services at our booth during the Joplin Business Expo January 17th & 18th at the Hammons Trade Center or the Mt. Vernon Business Expo January 28th at 822 W. Mt. Vernon Blvd.





New Years Resolutions Suggested for HR Professionals

I realize that New Year's resolutions are about as popular as puns – both provoke the same brand of groansmanship among those who like to think they're beyond such antics. I, for one, like resolutions so much, I make the exact same ones every year. There's a kind of comforting familiarity to addressing the same problems.

The same problems seem to haunt the HR community as well. For the last two decades, the list of things that need to change never changes: a certain dearth of respect from the organization at large; frustration that leadership doesn't want to walk its talk; exasperation at how the employees seem to be "calling it in." Absolute rage at the ever growing amount of administrivia and accountabilities that really should be someone else's problem. The chronic anxieties that come from a general agreement that HR in its current iteration is an endangered species, with no clear idea what general shape it's evolving toward.

Okay. So, with the birth of a new year, we have a fresh set of opportunities for greatness. How are we going to take advantage of them? Here is my proposed list of resolutions designed specifically for HR. They may or may not obliterate the chronic bugaboos that have plagued HR for years. But follow these resolutions and you'll certainly have a more rewarding and fulfilling 2006.

■ I will assume the role of CPO. Not Chief People Officer. For the year 2006, your assignment is to become Chief Passion Officer. That title is available to you no matter where you are in the HR organization. All you have to do is achieve the competency of understanding how your company's mission-critical objectives intersect with individual employees' personal sense of meaning, fulfillment and drive. High-quality employees want to know that their efforts are doing more than just pulling in a paycheck. They want to know that what they're doing is helping to make the world a better place. Be the one to connect those dots for them.

■ I will sell what people want to buy how they want to buy it. Some people traffic in passion. Others prefer a different commodity: statistics, P&L, demographics, probabilities, stock prices, the numbers stuff. Okay. So give it to them that way, in just the form that will make them reach out to embrace it. You're still about passion. And that will be our little secret.

■ I will make my office Destination Yes. Cultivate an HR culture that thrives on finding great solutions to creative challenges. There are some terrific consultants and trainers who will come in for a day or two and teach your team the skills and intellectual habits that foster creative problem-solving. Make each individual on your HR team personally responsible for delivering creative solutions, and then celebrate a job well done!

The list of things that need to change never changes. With the birth of a new year we have a fresh set of opportunities for greatness

■ I will stay true to my personal ideals. How do you want people to feel consistently when they work with you on a large project or merely run into you in the hall? What can the company's leadership know they can count on you for? Authenticity? Integrity? A merry, unpretentious disposition? A deeply sensitive talent for

understanding subtleties? A worth ethic that values the spirit of service and stewardship? A clear head for business? Decide what characteristics you want to be known and respected for. And then stay consistent with those values and behaviors regardless of fleeting moods or the daily storms of doing business in uncertain times.

■ I will steal ideas. Great solutions to tired old problems are all around you. Open your mind to bolts of inspiration from a variety of sources. Your counterpart from a completely different kind of company. Best practices from different departments. Want some hints on how to sell your initiatives? Ask the best salesperson in your organization to coach you on cutting edge presentation techniques. Your HR friends around the country. (Naturally, always give credit where credit's due!)

■ I will share ideas. Give away your best advice to your counterparts – both internally and externally. Don't even worry about sharing a best practice with a competitor.

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SBDC Announces HR Workshops

The Small Business Development Center at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin is bringing back a popular series of seminars for HR professionals. The first module, *How Can I Motivate Employees*, is set for Wednesday, February 8th. *How Can I Discipline Employees Effectively*, the second module, is planned for one week later on Wednesday, February 15th. Module Three: *What's My Leadership Style*, will be held February 22nd. Each workshop runs from 1:30 to 4:30 in Matthews Hall on the MSSU campus. Individual workshops are \$55 each, or the entire series can be grouped together for \$135. To register or obtain more information, contact the SBDC at (417) 625-3128 or visit their website at www.mssutrain.com.

Executive Job Seekers Optimistic

The quarterly executive employment outlook survey, conducted by TheLadders.com, an online service for \$100,000+ jobs, demonstrates that 65% of job seekers in this category think now is a better time to be in the job market in contrast to this time last year. The survey results also reveal fourth quarter sector-specific hiring trends, such as sharp increases in telecommunications/technology and industrial job openings in contrast to fewer jobs in the consumer and services sectors since the first quarter of 2005.

Mind Maps Save Time in Reading Business Books

Mere reading is not learning. Nor is deep reading the only correct way to gain knowledge. When an abrain simulator like a Mind Map technique is combined with reading, information becomes a wellspring of knowledge. That is what BusinessBookMindMap.com has embarked on with its new service of offering Mind Map Summaries of Business Books. Unlike the conventional linear method of using long, running sentences, the Mind Map technique employs a non-linear method by using key words and illustrations that have high recall value. Currently, an estimated 300 million people worldwide are avid users of the Mind Map technique.

Productivity Found in Email Improvements

Businesses looking to improve productivity in 2006 should look no further than their email inbox. A survey conducted by Harris Interactive® for Fortiva reports that more than half of employed U.S. adults who use email at work (59%) admit to wasting a lot of time searching for lost email, while 31% admit to having to re-write or re-construct these 'lost' emails. Over one-fourth (28 per cent) acknowledge that the volume of email they receive causes them to fall behind in their work. Many organizations are turning to email archiving to solve these problems.



Exit Interviews Reveal Truth Behind Employee Turnover

When pressed for a reason, many employees say that they are leaving their job for a larger paycheck. While compensation most likely figures into the decision, dollars are typically not the only reason an employee will terminate their relationship with an employer. Oftentimes, employees leave due to a lack of professional development, dissatisfaction with supervisors or co-workers, or lack of career advancement.

If predictions are correct, employers may be hearing "I received a better offer" more often in 2006. Trends in the new Working in America: The Disgruntled Workforce Survey, show 77% of the more than 1,000 workers polled in the online survey are unhappy in their current position and are either actively or passively looking for a new job. The survey also revealed that 46% of those polled would consider leaving their current employer if the economy continues to improve.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, each employee who leaves a company generates a significant cost. Con-

servative estimates place that cost at 50% of an employee's salary. The potential cost, however, can be up to 300% of an employee's annual salary. Besides the monetary impact, it's important to remember that every time an employee resigns, they not only walk away with their valuable skills and knowledge, but also may leave unfinished projects and lowered morale in their wake.

All is not lost for a company, however. Employers have a chance to gain insights on ways to improve their workplaces and lower turnover by establishing an exit interview process for departing employees.

"Employees who have resigned may be less hesitant than current employees to speak the truth on organizational issues. Plus, their exposure to other organizations may provide them with additional insights that could be valuable to the company," explained Jennifer C. Loftus, SPHR, CCP, CBP, GRP, National Director, Astron Solutions.

Follow through is the most crucial element of the exit interview process. "If management chooses not to address discoveries unearthed during exit interviews, lower employee morale

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New Years Resolutions (From Page Five)

By the time it's absorbed into the other company's culture, it will have changed significantly. In the meantime, you'll enjoy both the personal satisfaction of being resourceful and an improved reputation in the wider world as being the go-to HR pro.

■ I will be eager to serve but not eager to please. There are so many quick, easy, and cheap things you can do to help your company on a daily basis. Dumb little stuff that just needs some attention. Or major projects that can be completed more quickly with more focus. A conversation that needs to be had. A sales comp program that needs an ever-so-slight tweak to skyrocket the sales numbers. A coffee pot that keeps burning the morning brew. A squirrely light fixture that needs an engineer's attention – to be had with just one phone call. You have the power to make it happen. Pick a department a month, ask them what's going on that's especially irksome, distracting, or counterproductive. And then fix it. But also remember that you're nobody's servant or scapegoat. Carry out your day with

dignity and backbone. And your coworkers will know to come to you for help, not for a time- and spirit-vacuuming vent session.

■ I won't fear the reaper. As per usual, business is expanding and contracting all over the country, all the time, all at once. And it's not uncommon for the HR person who has been tasked to prepare lay-off packages to then be asked to prepare one last package before turning out the light, if you get my drift. Pour heart and mind into the work at hand. But reserve a bit of your energy and intellectual bandwidth to make sure you're building your competencies and contacts in such a way that you're consistently presented with new opportunities well before you're called into your boss's office "for a chat." Knowing that you always have options will give you the personal power you need to always be your most effective and innovative for the year coming up.

Martha Finney is an HR career coach and employee engagement consultant. She is also the co-author of the book, HR From the Heart: Inspiring Stories and Strategies for Building the People Side of Great Business. Contact her at martha@marthafinney.com. ■



2006 Ushers In "The Perfect Labor Storm"

Now that the New Years celebrations have ended the real work for 2006 is setting in. Hayley Mills, Sally Fields and Patty Duke turn 60 this year. So do Presidents Bush and Clinton, Donald Trump and Cher. Joining them will be the front edge of millions of aging Boomers who are anticipated to retire or change careers in unprecedented numbers. This is the leading edge of a series of events and workforce trends that author-workforce expert Ira S. Wolfe has called The Perfect Labor Storm.

Wolfe, founder and president of Success Performance Solutions, recalls six years ago when he first warned about skilled worker shortages. "I received many comments like "interesting" and "thought-provoking," he recalls, "but many executives and business owners chose to ignore the warning." Today, stories about skilled worker shortages are front-page news and time to fill open critical positions is growing longer and longer.

The number of U.S. workers between ages 55 and 64 will grow 51 percent to 25 million by 2012, meaning the fastest-growing portion of the work force is the one at most risk of retiring soon. At the same time, the number of workers between ages 35 and 44 is expected to shrink by 7 percent.

While many workers continue to use skills learned in an Industrial age, consumer demands have changed. Jobs now require skills for service and knowledge, not manual labor. In 1955, 40.5 percent of the U.S. workforce was engaging in manufacturing, construction, and mining. By the end of 2005, those industries employed only 15.8 percent of the workforce. Service-producing industry sent paychecks to 41.8 percent of workers.



Exit Data (From Page Six)

may result. Word can spread about the impact of employee comments on organizational change. Without some management action, time, money and effort spent in gathering data may cause a negative reaction from current employees," added Loftus. Even if management cannot institute necessary changes right away, it is crucial that issues are noted and addressed.

Nearly every industry is predicting severe employee shortages, including manufacturing. Despite over 2 million layoffs, 500,000 vacancies exist for manufacturing jobs. Why? The available worker, including the employed, doesn't have the right skills. The same forecast holds for healthcare, construction and technology.

For the first time in history retirees are living longer after retirements than they worked for the company or paid into social security. Many organizations including the government are facing huge funding shortfalls. The rules about retirement haven't kept up with life expectancy. As a result, public pension and health benefits for the elderly are on track to double while at the same time the old-age dependency ratio (nonworking older person per workers) will double.

Shifting responsibility for health care to the consumer may be the right thing to do but employers and the government are asking a lot when lay people are expected to shop for a provider, decide when to seek care, wait weeks or months to get an appointment, juggle the appointment time with the demands of working, and navigate a complex system of bills and payments.

Losing experienced workers is only part of the problem. Replacing them comes with a high cost. At a time when the cost of doing business is rising and profits are squeezed, the average "cost-to-hire" and "time-to-fill" in 2005 was \$7,123 and 37 days, respectively. The number goes up exponentially when recruiting and hiring knowledge workers. (Source: 2005 SHRM Human Capital Benchmarking Study)

For more workforce facts and demographic trends, visit Wolfe's internet site at www.perfectlaborstorm.com. ■

Although it is easy to simply dismiss former employees, smart employers understand that feedback can provide a wealth of vital information imperative to overall organizational success. Exit interviews put this information within your grasp. Take hold of the facts before the negative aspects of turnover take hold of you.

Career Center Booth Goes on the Road

The Winter season offers several opportunities for networking through local business expositions and trade shows. In the month of January alone, the Business Services team from the Career Center will have a booth at the upcoming Joplin Business Expo January 17th and 18th and the Mt. Vernon Business Expo, January 28th. The Joplin event will be held at the Hammons Trade Center. The Mt. Vernon location is set for the Family Life Center at 822 W. Mt. Vernon Blvd.

Sources of Leaders for the Future

The biggest source of an organization's future leaders has become their own high-potential employees. Companies are more frequently developing their own fast-track employees into future senior managers than they are promoting their current executives into upper management or recruiting leaders from outside their organizations, according to a survey by Right Management Consultants, the world's largest career transition and organizational consulting firm. Check out their report online at www.right.com.

Don't Pay for Posters

Resist the urge to respond to that junk mail you've been getting. Download your required worksite posters from the resources online at www.workforcezone.com/postings.htm. The website also contains contact information to order posters from state and federal agencies at no cost.