

Benefitting From Mature Workers

Schoolhouse Partners ultimately helps young people by assisting educational, non-profit and community agencies with obtaining grant funding. Doing so, in part, with experienced workers has earned it recognition for its hiring practices.

The Aging Worker Initiative, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, provided paid internships for three workers at Schoolhouse Partners. The West Lafayette company went on to hire all three on a full-time basis, leading to receiving the 2011 Maturity Matters Employer award from the Region 4 Workforce Board (covering 12 West Central Indiana counties) and the Tecumseh Area Partnership.

Anita Schafer, who co-founded Schoolhouse Partners in

2003, says, “We have a specialized market and training can be extensive. The funding provided necessary resources during the training.” She adds that all three interns/future employees “arrived with a strong work ethic in place. Their balance of writing, editorial and technology skills has made them valuable assets at Schoolhouse Partners.”

The Indiana Chamber and BizVoice® have touted the importance of companies preparing for the upcoming loss of knowledge in the workplace through employee retirements. The Workforce Wise initiative has included research studies and a year-long magazine series in 2011.

Resource: Learn more about Workforce Wise at www.workforcewise.com

States Responding to Hiring Bias Against the Unemployed

It seems that most everyone knows at least one person who has been out of work but looking for a job for an extended period of time. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics backs that up: It now takes 11% of workers more than a year to find new employment. That’s 11% of the nearly 14 million unemployed in this country – or approximately 1.5 million people.

The uneven economy of the last few years has increased the number of job seekers and further complicated their searches. At the same time, the trend of “it’s easier to get another job when you already have one” is becoming increasingly accurate.

In fact, some employers have gone so far as to openly recruit only those who are currently or recently employed. That translates to one giant problem for those out of work long term.

Several states are starting to take action. In March of 2011, New Jersey became the first state to pass a law prohibiting employers from discriminating against the unemployed – including barring advertisements that restrict applicants to those already with a job. Earlier this year, more than 10 states were considering comparable measures. Oregon’s law went into effect March 27 and fines employers \$1,000 if they post a job ad telling unemployed workers to not apply.

Shorts written by BizVoice® staff

Evaluating Congestion Levels on the Nation’s Highways

If you have a proverbial “need for speed” in moving your products, you might be in trouble if utilizing these roads.

An annual report published by the American Transportation Research Institute and the Federal Highway Administration examined 250 highway locations throughout the United States to gauge the impact of congestion on freight mobility.

Each site was assigned a “congestion index” ranking based on weekday traffic flow (all hours of the day) in 2010, primarily on urban interstate interchanges. Average speeds under a free flow of 55 miles per hour indicated congestion.

The nation’s worst freight bottleneck was Chicago’s I-290 at I-90/I-94. Next were areas in Fort Lee, New Jersey (I-95 at SR 4) and Houston, Texas (I-45 at U.S. 59, I-10 at I-45 and I-10 at U.S. 59).

The Hoosier highways containing the most significant traffic chokepoints:

- Gary (No. 6) – I-65 at I-80
- Indianapolis (No. 21) – I-65 at I-70 (North)
- Indianapolis (No. 30) – I-65 at I-70 (South)
- Indianapolis (No. 95) – I-465 at I-69
- Indianapolis (No. 163) – I-465 at I-865

Resource: American Transportation Research Institute at www.atr-online.org



The Power of Six in Manufacturing

Despite an economic evolution, manufacturing remains vital to Indiana's future. The key is to not only completely recover from the recession but develop a game plan for greater success.

The 2011 *Next Generation Manufacturing (NGM) Study* – a product of Indiana's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (part of Purdue University's Technical Assistance Program) and the American Small Manufacturers Coalition – surveyed 800 U.S. manufacturers. Among other findings, the study reports the manufacturers identifying six critical strategies:

1. Customer-focused innovation
2. A system for recruiting, developing and retaining talented employees
3. Annual productivity and quality gains that exceed competition
4. Supply chain management and collaboration
5. Sustainability
6. Global engagement

Of those strategies, sustainability was notably mentioned with 60% saying it was important to their future – an increase from just 35% the year prior.

NGM lauded many manufacturers in the report for already implementing some of the strategies, although it qualified that with concern about an “execution gap” for those unable to implement these practices.

Another takeaway from the report is that many manufacturers claim they are seeking outside help to meet needs in several key areas:

- 67% - Regulatory/compliance issues
- 64% - Operations improvements
- 64% - Workforce skills development
- 52% - Strategic planning
- 52% - Innovation/research and development
- 52% - Business development

Resource: NGM study at www.smallmanufacturers.org

The Old Stop and Go

The message is not new, but unfortunately true: Gasoline is consuming more and more of Americans' personal budgets.

While electric and other alternative-fueled automobiles have been slow to hit the mainstream, manufacturers are working harder to make their vehicles more fuel efficient. One of the latest technologies in this arena is a stop/start system that shuts down a car's engine at stoplights and then reignites it when the driver pushes the gas pedal.

Already widely used in Europe, this technology is estimated to cut gas usage by 3% to 6% for city drivers. BMW is working to make the feature standard on its newest line of cars.

The company's web site explains that the Auto Start Stop function is coordinated by a central control unit that monitors data from sensors, the starter motor and the alternator. If necessary for comfort or safety, the control unit will automatically restart the engine. Examples include: if the vehicle begins to roll, the battery charge falls too low or condensation forms on the windshield.

The system can also make the distinction between a temporary stop and a permanent one, and BMW claims the engine will not restart if a driver's seatbelt is undone or if the door is open. Additionally, the Auto Start Stop function can be completely deactivated with the simple press of a button.

Resource: BMW at www.bmw.com



Cracking the (Supply Chain) Code

Every industry has its share of acronyms and specific terminology. A comprehensive reference guide, now in its fifth edition, breaks down the voluminous supply chain lingo.

The *Glossary of Supply Chain Terminology: A Dictionary on Business, Transportation, Warehousing, Manufacturing, Purchasing, Technology and More!* covers 6,000-plus key words used by system integrators, industrial technology staff, consultants, executives and others.

Terminology encompasses 24 areas that apply to multiple industries. Topics range from barcodes, computers, conveyors and currency to dialing codes, ergonomics, forklifts, legal, pallets and standards, among others.

Curious about the meaning of acronyms such as EDI, MSDS, EDIFACT and RFID? The *Glossary of Supply Chain Terminology* can spell it out for you – literally.

The guide is published by Oklahoma-based consulting firm Industrial Data & Information.