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Introduction I am Gary Bender-the financial and HR executive at Abec Inc. Abec is a privately owned company that has been in the Lehigh Valley for 37 years. We design , manufacture, install and support the ongoing operations of equipment used to produce cell based drugs such as vaccines, insulin and biotech drugs. Our customers are the production scale pharma and biotech companies around the world-in fact, our export business represents about half of our activity. We employ over 150 employees and are working hard to add over 35 employees in the Lehigh Valley this year. Our strategy is provide a turnkey or integrated solution for our clients which requires us to have the broad spectrum of well trained, diverse technical employees.

I will quickly summarize the positions and skills that we need and the problems we encounter almost every day. Since we are hiring, I will summarize what has been successful and suggest areas where communication, training and other efforts from Harrisburg and Washington could be an asset.

They fall in three areas-how to promote the opportunities to potential employees, how to recruit them and how to train them. I will try to summarize and identify ways that state and federal programs can assist in our joint success.

Early entrants to job market:

Technical assemblers-technical school training at the high school level with potential candidates identified, exposed to us via tours, training and co op opportunities.

Draftsman/ designers in electrical, mechanical and piping field using state of the art 3d "smart" drawings. Programs with high school and community college/ associates degree level programs.

Project technicians-associates degree level individuals with technical, organization and communication skills.

In every case, these positions are in demand and not enough parents, administrators and students understand that these positions do NOT require a four year degree and that local companies exist with good jobs that are clean, safe and represent the "new manufacturing". The "world" has to understand that the manufacturing that will remain in the U S will be these types of jobs and they will continue to offer solid career opportunities. Career and technical programs need to receive the press, attention and funding AND they need to be developed in areas beyond healthcare, warehousing and green energy positions. Each of those areas has plenty of attention but there are other vocational technical areas that would benefit from attention.

Abec is not unique in these requirements-I am competing with other companies and well trained, technically oriented candidates with an aptitude to learn are hard to find.

We have been "growing our own" by working with advisors to technical programs-at the high school technical level, guidance counselors, administrators, school boards and parent groups. We have paid intern and co op and other programs for hands on training, at our expense.

When we meet with them, they all embrace the opportunity however they have funding limitations and perceptions to overcome. I think perception solutions might be easier to show progress since they are not funding driven/ limited.

We have other positions-quality inspectors, documentation technicians, process engineers, project engineers, project managers, software engineers, buyers and instrumentation technicians. These require a combination of a two or four year degree and either industry or related/ transferable experience. In every case, our training investment is very significant in cost and timelines required.

Recruiting:

My number one recruiting channel via Careerlink staff and their offshoot efforts such as LV Professionals. Their dedication is beyond words (I get many emails evenings, pre dawn and Saturday mornings) and they have taken the time to understand my needs, my business and are constantly quietly helping me in my search for Pa employees. They help employers and employees who want to work!

My observation is that their funding has been cut back or not kept pace with the demands. I would rather see funding directed to helping employees who want training and search assistance AND to help employers find employees-at the unpopular consequence- of reducing unemployment to people who are "living in the past, not willing to be trained or milking the system for the maximum number of weeks".

My compliments to the decision to tie unemployment for newly unemployed workers to active job search. I think the CWDS model needs some "intelligence" using key word association so only "qualified" candidates can apply to my postings. I have stopped using CWDS for my postings because the applicants clearly understand they must post for 3 positions per week. I swear they do it alphabetically because Abec got a lot of useless resume postings. The keyword association technology exists in all the amazon, facebook, and search software-copy some and improve the inbound quality control and then, I believe, more employers would use the CWDS system. Every dollar I save using CWDS and not paying recruiters can be used to create jobs and improve training.

We would really like to hire veterans and we have been unable to find a local pool of technically oriented vets. We have worked with local reps and specialists and have not found a way to find them. We have so little experience I don't know if we would be successful in hiring them.

Additional skills/ training:

Even if when we find the above candidates, they need training in the demands of the life science industry, the process that our clients use and the precision of our equipment-whether in designing, procurement, assembling, installing or servicing. We make a considerable investment in training-200 to 700 hours per person-even if they join us with a good education and some transferable experience. On the Job Training programs are invaluable-as much as I support the current program for candidates to receive unemployment while on a trial period-OJT programs can be used in concert with incumbent worker training programs to create an ongoing training program. This allows an employer to develop the program and use vignettes to review or reinforce training, use team brainstorming sessions and incorporate existing employee training with new employee onboarding or complete training.

Here is the problem-WedNET funding is two years on and one year off. That makes NO sense for development of a work force. I lose momentum, lose the trainer and have gaps in programs. It limits the training I do to certain years and that creates a problem as we are upgrading design or ERP systems, expanding an application or bringing new employees on board. We are a small company-5 to 10k in WedNET funds make a difference on the training we do each year.

Our second problem is the timing problem with state budgets. I have recently hired employees and delayed their start date because of uncertain OJT funding for the current fiscal year. It is unfortunate to an unemployed person, who is collecting unemployment, to continue to collect unemployment and not be working while waiting for a state budget year to commence. It is actually much cheaper to pay the OJT than to pay the unemployment and the person would much rather be working-more compensation, less stress, benefits, etc.

I am glad to give you examples-good and bad- and to answer any questions.

