

BC Skills Force Initiative

June 8, 2005

Kamloops, BC

AGENDA

1. Introduction of facilitators Paul Wiest & Ron Trepanier
2. Introduced the BC Skills Force Initiative
3. Introduction of participants
4. Overview of project
5. Background research
6. Focus Group discussion
7. Next steps
8. Wrap up

Comments and Discussion

Employer Labour Needs:

- Approximately 60% of employers present had vacant positions
- Consensus of the group is that there is a serious labour shortage
- Highly skilled positions are available in professional fields such as engineering
- Employers are looking for graduates with experience (i.e., a combination of practical experience and academic knowledge)
- There are individuals looking for work but do not have the appropriate skill levels or experience
- Employers can't find skilled, trades people
- There is a need for skilled installation people, glazers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters
- Trades programs are producing individuals with entry level skills, but it is difficult to find higher-end skilled, trades workers
- Small business owners are stealing each other's workers
- Employers are willing to train apprentices. New Industrial Training Authority (ITA) is working
- Some employers did not know about the ITA
- Kamloops location is a barrier for attracting high skilled employees
- Expectation level regarding compensation is an issue. Small businesses can't afford to compete with urban centres' pay levels
- Targeted Wage Subsidy program does not work for attracting higher skilled employees
- Older workers want higher wages
- Employers have difficulty hiring seasonal employees and part-time employees
- There are highly skilled employees available off-shore
- Some employers have used the Provincial Nominee Program to attract immigrant workers
- Immigration process for hiring skilled employees is difficult. The government system is too bureaucratic and puts too much liability on the business owner
- Federal Immigration is not working
- Kamloops has lost workers to the oil patch

Skills and Education:

- Employer are willing to train, but only those employees with the right attitude and work ethic
- Some employers have developed vigorous training programs for recently hired younger workers; but this is costly to the business
- Higher level training vs practical training is needed by employers
- Post secondary education teaches the wrong skills
- Recent graduates have skills and good initiative but often not the right skills for the work that is available
- Local college provides the wrong skill training for local employers
- College has good trades program
- Too much push on university vs trades in schools and in the home
- The European model is much better; they get youth into trades, earlier in school
- We need to increase the profile of trades in high schools
- Youth need more work experience programs
- Employers are willing to participate in co-op programs
- Youth need a broader experience with different types of work
 - o more real life experience
 - o they need to test out with what they might like to do
- We need a training subsidy for employers to participate in co-op programs
- There is a need to promote life-long learning especially with older workers

Attitudes:

- Younger workers lack basic life skills for the work place:
 - o Initiative
 - o Common sense
 - o Attitude
 - o Dress code
- There are a lot of challenges for youth today
 - o parental issues
 - o lack of understanding of the real world
 - o peer pressures
- The expectation level of youth in terms of pay and type of work is unrealistic
- There is a need for a reality check for youth. Universities and schools need to get the message across that "not all kids make the NHL"

- There is a gender difference amongst workers. Many employers prefer to hire women. They tend to be more focused and skilled - more detailed oriented than male worker
- The attitude of younger workers is an issue
- Many employers prefer the mature worker vs younger worker. However, mature individuals are often set in their ways and not willing to change
- The pace of work is often too much for younger workers
- Older workers are reluctant to try new things
- Older workers do not have a culture of life-long learning
- Wage level of older workers can be high. This can cause employers to hire "green" employees, and then teach them proper skills
- Co-op programs are much better in producing good employees
- Employers prefer to hire foreign employees where possible
- Youth have a poor understanding about small business

Infrastructure:

- Immigrants with their credentials need to be allowed to work
- Provincial Immigration program is working better than the Federal program. There is too much bureaucracy with the Federal program
- English as a Second Language training is needed for immigrants
- Immigration is a challenge for small businesses. They have difficulty working through the bureaucracy
- Parental leave programs are adding to the problem

Hiring Practices/HR Strategies:

- There is a lack of employee loyalty to small businesses
- Programs are needed to help build loyalty within a small business
- Employers don't have the time or resources to attract employees with high skill levels
- Employers need to be better at attracting and retraining employees
- Too much small business start-up assistance is available rather than business growth and expansion programs
- When attracting workers from outside the area, employers often need to find a job for the spouse as well
- Employers often invest in training and then lose their employees
- Employers need to take better care of their employees
- Subsidies are needed for employers who invest in employee training
- Skilled employees in Canada are less willing to move

Succession Planning:

- Businesses are concerned about the aging of their workforce
- Businesses need a timeline for fixing the problem. They need tools to measure success
- Perception is reality - we need to change our perception about older and younger workers
- Most employers do not have a succession plan in place

Final Comments:

- We need to increase trades training
- We need to be able to measure if we are making progress or not
- We need to better prepare our youth for what they will, in fact, earn for entry level jobs
- Employers need to develop ways of finding higher skilled employees
- Businesses are prepared to train employees but need tax incentives for employee training
- We need to change our immigration policies - make them more accessible to small business
- Employers need to develop employee recruitment strategies