

Work Force Summit 2007 Survey Opinions Summary

Survey Review

The survey was completed by 192 respondents and of those, 31 responded that they were unsure or did not know of any solutions. Because the survey allowed only a specific number of characters to be input, the raw data on the attached sheet will show unfinished sentences. Keep in mind that many respondents had more than one idea when providing their opinion of potential solutions for the work force shortage. Therefore, there will be more than 192 solutions brainstormed and tallied from the survey. Finally, there were several respondents that replied they did not believe there really is a shortage of workers as they personally did not have a problem recruiting and retaining workers. If the respondent believed there was not a workforce shortage due to workers that did not want to work, that was included in the category of soft skills gap.

Response Summary:

Overwhelmingly, recruitment of workers was seen as the best option with 39, or approximately 20 percent, responding that they believed we needed to promote our area either in-state or in other regions of the country experiencing higher levels of unemployment than here in Idaho. These same individuals believe our quality of life and lower cost of living are the primary motivators for people to move to the area and should be highlighted in some formal recruitment campaign, job fair or national advertisement.

Training was another hot topic and was broken down into secondary and post secondary education. There were 24 respondents commenting that additional energy needed to be devoted to training our labor pool with job specific skills or vocational-technical training. Along that same vein, 17 of those answering the survey believed CSI should continue to expand their programs and a couple of individuals even mentioned CSI should develop into a four-year university. Soft skill training, or promoting pride in work and a strong work ethic including reduced absenteeism, was mentioned by four of the survey respondents.

Increased emphasis on career-focused training and/or offering a more solid education at the high-school and middle-school levels was important to 13 of the respondents. This correlates with the break-out sessions where this topic was listed as a priority and discussed in-depth by most groups. There were at least 12 respondents that believe we should do different things to keep our kids and 'brain trust' from leaving the area. If they provided a solution, they are compiled in the table at the bottom of page 2.

Another common issue is the need to increase wages with 18 respondents stating the area wages were too low, another 9 believed we need to recruit companies paying higher wages and a different 9 respondents stated they would like to see more mid-level or professional jobs created in the

region. There is a void of middle management or white collar jobs due to the agricultural and manufacturing base of the region. A few respondents commented that there are not quality jobs sufficient to keep their grown children in the area and working. Others commented that those relocating to the area lament the lack of jobs for their spouses. These mid-level positions would have a career ladder within their current company, and other companies also, since their skills are transferable. These jobs would pay well and require at minimum some college or on-the-job training. Examples of these jobs currently in our communities are management positions at Dell, bank and finance officers, and human resource professionals with hospitals, school districts and larger manufacturing companies. With future population escalations, the Magic Valley will start growing the number of business establishments in the service industries therefore, creating more careers opportunities such as stock brokers, financial planners, advertising professionals, bidders for large construction companies, leasing agents, back room administrative staff, middle managers, network technicians, as well as, regional and international sales staff.

The challenges were diverse and many of them cannot be solved without federal or state legislation. Six respondents stated the use of drugs was a major problem in the work force. Ten respondents believed affordable housing is a deterrent to those wishing to relocate to our area and puts additional strain on the financial resources of existing workers in the area. Immigration reform is considered to be a black cloud looming over industries that hire a lot of seasonal labor; it was mentioned by five respondents. Water, and the lack thereof, was mentioned only twice. One respondent answered the survey by saying transportation was a problem and possibly a light-rail service to the Wood River Valley would be a potential solution. It is unlikely public transportation will be a viable option for an under-populated region such as ours. Five individuals would like more incentives, government or private-sector, for a wide range of topics from attracting workers to relocate to our area to allowing folks to keep their public assistance while working to housing and educational assistance. Three respondents wanted to stop recruiting new companies to the area, which runs contrary to the 9 mentioned previously that wanted more companies paying higher wages.

Recruitment of work force	39	Lessen drug problem	6
Job skill training	24	Immigration reform	5
Increase wages	18	Incentives	5
CSI expansion	17	Soft skill training	4
High school training	13	Improve quality of life	3
Keep the youth from leaving	12	Stop recruitment of companies	3
Affordable housing	10	Solve water woes	2
Recruit firms w/higher wages	9	Transportation - public	1
Create higher level jobs	9	Did not know	31