

Workforce Demands

Background

We are currently experiencing demands from our employers that outstrip the local supply of talented workers. This includes not only hourly employees, but professional and technical level employees. This is not new to our area or to Florida and the nation as this was experienced several years ago, and our future predictions show an ever-increasing shortage as the boomers retire.

The lack of a workforce supply created the emphasis for our Great Places to Work (GPTW) program that focused on issues that affected employee retention and productivity. A number of firms throughout the three county workforce area, with the majority being in Marion County, participated in the effort and CFCC established a number of classes focused on the elements of GPTW.

As in the past, the lack of a workforce supply is impacting economic development initiatives through reluctance in some business sectors to support bringing in new businesses when existing business is having difficulty filling its workforce vacancies. While understandable in one sense, this reaction fails to take into account several data.

- The three-county (Citrus, Levy and Marion) population is becoming increasingly “retirement-driven”.
- It fails to account for the regional nature of today’s workforce, where workers’ travel to work time has increased and where workforce mobility is increasing.

Comments heard from employers that they “pay a good wage for Ocala” and other, related comments that tend to look only at the immediate area for workforce solutions fail to grasp the statewide, if not national, competition for a trained workforce. This approach is based upon the ideas that an area can “grow its own” future workforce with limited outside recruitment. This element of workforce development is essential, but is no longer a primary direction that communities can take in meeting their workforce needs.

Some Florida communities have the ability to “infuse talent” into their workforce through some key businesses within their community. Jacksonville has a talent infusion from its relationship with the Navy. It creates a ready source of new worker potential for business from both the active military (limited enlistment) and the young retired military personnel. Orlando has the synergy initially created by Disney-Universal Studios and now expanding into a number of technology and transportation industry related businesses. Other areas’ reputations for a diverse, active business and living climate (Miami, Tampa Bay area, Space

Coast) also energize their ability to infuse a young, talented worker into their workforce.

The CLM workforce area competes with these areas for a talent labor supply. It competes not only for new talent, but for all talent. The medical industry has been among the leaders in developing statewide, competitive compensation and flexible work programs to entice talent into the state/area. Talent recruitment, however, is not just a CLM problem. Recently a group of technology industries that ranged from the east coast to the Tampa Bay area along the I-4 Corridor took a "recruitment trip" to the northeast to contact major northeastern colleges and universities to talk about the IT industry in their area of Florida.

CLM Workforce Connection, along with other local workforce boards, petitioned Workforce Florida, the State's workforce board, in August 2003 to connect with the State's institutions of higher education to make a clear and distinct linkage between the tax-paying employers in Florida and the graduates of its university system. While an Invitation to Negotiate (a form of bid document) was issued to replace Florida's "blue collar job listing service", no clear connections have been made to the university career placement offices. Much of what has been done in this area has been through the efforts of local workforce boards in the cities of the colleges and universities.

Projections show that 35% of our workforce will be retiring in the next 10 years with only an 11% gain in youthful employees. Add these projections to our already tight labor market and a critical period is upon us.

A Need for a Community Plan: Get Aggressive!

If we are to meet the needs of our local companies and provide for expanded economic growth, a concerted plan between the Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development agencies, CFCC and CLM should be developed to promote the area, our employers and their opportunities.

CLM has been working on several "internal capacity" efforts to support this endeavor.

- *Professional and Technical Recruitment Staff:* CLM has employed a professional to lead a segment of our business services in the area of professional and technical recruitment. In addition, CLM and WWDA, our contractor for one stop and business services, are budgeting to strengthen business services over the coming year.
- *Tiered Services:* For too long, the public employment service has promoted the fact that it "screens" job order referrals. This implies that we have enough staff to effectively screen for qualifications for over 31,000

job applicants annually. CLM has revised its services and promotions to only screen on job listings above \$9.00 per hour. Other “value added” services that connect to CFCC’s assessment services are also included on upper end job listings.

CLM has also started to move on other initiatives that will require creative partnerships to accomplish. There are also other initiatives that must be started if we are to effectively support our business community and expand our area’s economic development programs:

- *College and University Recruitment:* CLM is in the process of developing a “recruitment cooperative” that will utilize the talents of technical professionals in human resources and specialty career fields to assist local companies in recruiting on state college and university campuses. IN addition to the use of part-time consultants (retired or others) that will augment the Professional Services staff, CLM is working with several sources to obtain an internet-based career opportunity –resume posting site to support an advertising program directed at students in major state universities through the student newspapers.
- *Out-of-Area Recruitment Support:* CLM is establishing a research/marketing assistant position. This position, working with our business services staff, and the EDCs, can research “labor availability” for certain businesses/career areas that may be viable recruitment targets for our current employers. CLM could then assist those employers through the website (above) and an advertising/marketing campaign that could be a joint effort with the Chambers/EDCs. This effort will take company support as well as support from other institutional partners and our media.
- *Regional Marketing:* The “Heart of Florida” campaign that was recently announced could be a focal point for a marketing effort that conveys a broader sense of the opportunities within our region. Gainesville has, for a considerable period of time, experienced one of if not the lowest, unemployment rates in the state. Collaboration with the Chambers and workforce in Alachua County may identify shortages that are shared.
- *Workforce Florida:* a combined effort needs to be directed to Workforce Florida to establish an appropriate web-based connection to the career placement offices of the state’s university system. At the present, these offices are focused on national and multi-state firms with recruitment budgets that support their offices and assist in promoting the high wages that their graduates earn. Letters from our chambers and economic development partners, both local and statewide are essential to support the efforts of local workforce boards.

- *Competitive Wages*: For too long we have “sold” ourselves on an available workforce and low wages. We must begin to talk about a competitive workforce and competitive wages and benefits. Using our research/marketing position, we need to look at broad regional wages for industries throughout the three-county area and make a concerted, cooperative effort to inform our employers.
- *A Great Place to Live and Work*: CLM has budgeted for a “second” GPTW effort. The initial GPTW was focused on employee turnover/retention. Perhaps the second version should focus externally and become a theme for our recruitment efforts. This will require the development of a common, workforce-related “slogan”.
- *Incentives for Recruitment*: Developing “incentives” for new recruits that can be used by area businesses to “lure” young talent to our area could capitalize on who and what we are as well as deal with some other, common issues such as limited rent and utilities subsidies for newly recruited talent.