



Hospitality and Tourism Employer Roundtable Notes

Workforce Snohomish, in collaboration with Snohomish County and Economic Alliance Snohomish County, has been convening monthly industry-focused employer roundtables to gauge and assess our region's workforce challenges. These roundtable events have identified issues that are industry-specific, as well as those seen across all types and sizes of employers. Each quarter, Workforce Snohomish shares the results with all interested community partners to help align and focus community resources.

Hospitality and Tourism Employers met on 1/25/17 and identified multiple issues that they are facing within their workforce. The workforce community partners will continue to realign the community resources to address the deeper and more systemic issues facing the pipeline, retention, and development of the retail workforce. While solutions are being developed and implemented, the community of partners would like to make sure that current solutions for many of the issues raised currently exist and can help the engaged businesses.

The Following are the takeaways from the Hospitality and Tourism Employer Roundtable Meeting on 1/25/17.

How to Read: underlined are the Different Sections, the red text are the **Gaps / Needs Improvements**, the green text are the **Possible Solutions / Recommendations**, and the black text are the general comments that apply to the section.

1. Key characteristics that Employers are seeking:

- a. Great communication skills and presentation to the public.
- b. Bi-lingual.
 - i. **Especiallly Japanese and Chinese.**
 1. One organization will bring in interns from China to work and help visitors from around the world.
- c. Trusted individuals.
- d. High School Students. Businesses wish to get young people started in the career field and hope that they will stay and grow within in it.
 - i. Self-initiative, accountable and work ethic.
- e. Logistical thinkers.
 - i. Trying to find individuals that can look at the end project (i.e. events) and work out the steps that it will take to get there.
- f. Confidence.
 - i. **This is often missing from individuals coming from Worksource.**
 1. For various reasons, (retraining, layoff, Long-term unemployed).



- a. WorkSource should be looking for a mechanism to build this within its clients.
- g. Functional resumes rather than traditional.
- h. Applicants need to read the full application directions.
 - i. Often times they apply and are missing 1-2 items requested.
- i. Have a Linked-In account.
 - i. Shows employers that you have some knowledge about the workforce.
- j. People with passion.
- k. Customer service attitude.
 - i. Skills can be taught, but an attitude cannot.
- l. Work ethic.
- m. They hire for the personality; not the skills.
- n. Good communication skills.
- o. One employer has a different approach.
 - i. They will hire most people who are authorized to work and will work with the individual to gain skills.

2. What skills are generally missing from job applicants?

- a. Customer service skills.
- b. Problem solving skills.
- c. Passion (especially in younger generation).
- d. Hard time keeping employees at the job.
- e. Follow through.
- f. Time management skills.
- g. Basic computer skills with office software.
 - i. Can't do spreadsheets.
- h. Basic phone etiquette.
 - i. Email etiquette is important too.
- i. Applicants need to be timely for interviews.
 - i. Need to show up.
 - ii. Return calls.
- j. Ability to compartmentalize personal problems and issues from work.

3. Retention of employees

- a. Trying to instill an ownership mentality.
 - i. Treating this job as if it were their own company.
- b. Employees who know how to follow-up with customers, have goals and objectives.



- i. Finding the employees that will not only check things off a task list, but can think beyond that and fill in gaps. Basic problem solving.
- c. Employers need to be educated in the differences between generations.
 - i. They need to understand what is important to employees and how it affects advancement.
- d. They want to retain employees that are career-driven.
 - i. Employees will do the job they were hired for, but ones who are also willing to grow and develop in the career.
 - 1. That they show initiative.
- e. Mentoring is very important to both the employees and employers.
- f. When people are hired they are told that the schedule is flexible.
 - i. But one employer asks that change requests be made in writing.
- g. Some of the businesses will push for education.
 - i. They will help with scholarships.
 - ii. Many housekeepers are in ESL classes and their class time changes as they move up in school. The hotel is flexible, especially if the employee is a good worker.
 - iii. They will reimburse up to \$2,000 a year for tuition.
 - 1. They also have scholarships for sons and daughters.
 - iv. Some businesses encourage staff to attend the University/College hospitality program.
- h. Lots of turnover in entry-level positions like housekeeping.
- i. Part-time “operations staff” who set-up and take-down of events, but can’t guarantee hours for them.
- j. Seasonal workers - There are ebbs and flows in industry so it’s hard to keep good staff during the off-season.
- k. Retention is important.
 - i. It would be nice to work with other locations and “piece together” seasonal work.
 - ii. Many staff are part-time and seasonal .
 - 1. Big push is winter and the events taking place during that time.
 - a. One employer wishes he could “share” employees with other locations during the off season, so the employee would come back in winter.

4. Specific occupation/position that are in constant need?

- a. Housekeepers.
- b. Food service.
- c. Event managers.



- d. Valet workers.
- e. Retail sales associates.
- f. People to work the floors at hotels, restaurants, and casinos.
- g. Small vendors can't afford to hire.

5. What attracted you to your job and keeps you there?

- a. Enjoyment of working with people and having fun doing that.
- b. Working a job that is multi-faceted.
 - i. It allows you to wear different hats on different days.
- c. Working for the betterment or enjoyment of a community and getting local businesses engaged.
- d. Knowing that you have the skills and knowledge to do your job and do it well.
- e. Passion for what you love and being able to do this every day.
- f. People who "stick with it" usually have a passion for customer service and feel compelled to stay.
- g. Organizational culture can play a big part of why people stay.
 - i. Supervisors that know how to coach and mentor.
- h. Culture begins at the top and filters down. "Say what you mean and mean what you say."
- i. Some companies have internal training programs, which provide employees with gateways to other jobs with better earnings.
- j. A hotel treats guests as families. There are have a lot of "return" guests and have a less of a corporate environment.
- k. Each day is different, which keeps it fresh and exciting.
- l. Want guests to have a good time and come back.
 - i. We do see a lot of returning customers – this is a "warm and fuzzy" feeling for staff.
 - ii. They also have partner hotels that they refer customers to go to.

6. What type of life skills are desired?

- a. Something that indicates commitment, e.g., school extracurricular activity, scouting, and held a job for some length of time.
- b. Confidence.
 - i. Even if they aren't actually confident, but just portraying confidence. "Fake it until you make it."



7. Advancement Opportunities.

- a. When interviewing, managers are looking to see if a candidate could eventually be a supervisor or manager to build the workforce pipeline.
- b. Employees who take the initiative and “step-up” are typically made supervisors.
- c. Cross-training is important and can help keep good staff during the slow periods, e.g. train housekeepers in food & beverage.
- d. One employer will change the responsibilities, but not the title to help a person grow.
- e. One employer wants to be a “Champion of Market” – They value internal growth. They have many new hotels and want to grow managers. They created “lead positions,” which were added to their job titles with an addition \$1 an hour.
- f. All employers want to grow employees.
- g. We grow employees who want to learn and have initiative.
- h. For employees to move into supervisory or management they must demonstrate good communication skills, people skills and customer service skills.
- i. Attitude and work ethic will advance an employee more than anything else.

8. Does the Seattle hourly wage attract your staff to leave?

- a. The \$15 an hour wage has been so broadcasted (even though Seattle previously paid more) that it does make staff want that salary.
- b. Training is expensive and it is easy to lose staff.
- c. Employees don’t want to commute to Seattle. They live here.
- d. Most employees live in this area.
- e. Hospitality is a low wage career so people leave to make more money in other industries. A \$15/hr minimum wage in Seattle/King County makes it very hard for businesses in south Snohomish County to retain good employees.

9. Gaps in hiring positions.

- a. Need new job descriptions.
- b. We want a breath of experience in multiple departments and varied experience.
- c. Also want previous supervisory experience.
 - i. It is hard to teach someone to manage people.
- d. Where we post our job openings depends on what position we are posting
 - i. Often we use Craigslist.
 - ii. ZipRecruit (for hospitality).
 - iii. We get good candidates from Indeed.
 - 1. We are looking for front desk people and maintenance.
- e. We need skilled maintenance because it takes a lot of time and cost to train new people



10. WorkSource system useful?

- a. Some employers hold hiring events at WorkSource Everett.
- b. Others use labor ready for housekeepers and operations staff.
- c. Some use agencies that contract with foreign students.
- d. One employer did not even know about WorkSource.
 - i. Just received an invite to this meeting.
- e. One employer said that referrals from Work Source have not been good.
- f. One employer has used Work Source for job fairs but do not have a contact there.
 - i. They have had zero hires from the job fairs though.
 - 1. They then use Indeed, H-Careers and LinkedIn for managers.
- g. One employer's Corporate Office has accounts and discounts with hiring sites, so they use them a lot.
- h. One employer stated that WorkSource has too much information on their WorkSourceWA site.