



Professional / Business Services 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.

Professional & Business Services Employers met on 6/28/17 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 Professional/Business Services Employer Roundtable Meeting on 6/28/17.

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. What issues within your industry keep you up at night?

- a. **High employee turnover rate.**
 - i. **At entry-level and part-time positions.**
 - ii. **Both older and younger generations.**
 - iii. **High turnover rate within the first 6 months.**
 - iv. **“The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” mentality.**
 - v. **20s (age) high rotation, even with upward mobility.**
 - vi. **Hiring manager want longevity.**
 - vii. **For one employer, Snohomish/King has the highest turnover in their statewide banking region.**
 - viii. **Lack of employee loyalty to companies due to layoffs.**
- b. **Half of employees are woman, but the job isn't 8am – 5pm, which negatively affects child care options.**
- c. **There is not upward mobility when people just work part-time.**



- d. Entry-level type jobs are hard to fill.
- e. Certain industries (such as technology), have a better reputation than others. This can make it hard to pull people into the professional services field.
- f. This region has higher rotation rate and lower unemployment rate.
- g. Businesses feel that public servants have an attitude for certain industries, generally negatively towards this industry.
- h. Not a lot of young people are interested in human resources. Most people within this field are 30+ years of age.
- i. It is difficult to deal with the baby boomer retirements.
 - i. One employer said 50% of people in her department will retire soon.
 - ii. 29% from the library system.
 - iii. Departure of baby boomers is hitting multiple business pretty hard.
- j. Hard to find a case manager with a Master's Degree and retain them.
- k. Mandatory retirement at age 62 for some of the businesses. This is pushing out some of the higher leadership.
- l. Rural areas.
 - i. Rural areas don't have the capacity to attract people and maintain the operations.
 - ii. Lack of reliable internet connection.
 - iii. Lack of transportation.
 - iv. Blue collar workers generally don't have a car and bus routes aren't frequent enough.
Libraries are able to fill positions in rural area.
- m. Commute is awful in our regions, and a lot of people don't want to spend that much time commuting.
 - i. Businesses have seen people leave their positions because of the commute time.
 - ii. Employers have had to close branches because of the local commute.

2. What keeps your business from growing and expanding?

- a. Lack of affordable housing.
 - i. Younger / entry-level staff have to move far away or outside the area if they want to buy house.
 - ii. Most have to rent a place.
 - i. This means they can switch jobs once their leases are over.



- a. This is identified as why the younger generation has less long-term employment or loyalty to employers.
 - b. Traffic and commute.
 - i. Jobs may not require to be on site, but some businesses want to have face-to-face interaction.
 - ii. Distance to travel for contract work is challenging.
 - c. People are leaving for Seattle jobs.
 - i. The \$15 per hour wage is attractive.
 - ii. There are fewer options to grow professionally in Snohomish County compared to Seattle.
 - d. An employer in Snohomish County had to also raise entry-level wages, to be competitive with King County; especially when it was right along the county border.
 - e. It is hard to pull people to this area.
 - i. College grads want to live closer to the city, but that opinion changes as one gets older.
 - f. Housing is too expensive.
- 3. What are your hiring challenges? (e.g. Quantity of workers, certain skill gaps, missing technical training?)**
- a. Soft skills.
 - i. Having good communication and critical thinking skills.
 - b. Sales skills.
 - i. How to sell products and services.
 - ii. One bank has a 5-step sales process.
 - c. Coaching and technology assistance have become a huge part of the job; mentoring and auditing may not be easy.
 - d. Millennials.
 - i. Two types of millennials: One group works hard and connects to their work. The other group doesn't have those traits.
 - ii. Millennials are talented and smart, but they have different work ethics. Baby-boomers don't use sick days that often.
 - iii. Many of the millennials don't have job experience before leaving school.
 - iv. They have hard skills and knowledge, but lack soft skills and work ethic.



- v. Millennials want different things like having fun in the work environment; not just the salary and wages. They also want to work for an organization that they can connect to.
- vi. The fact is that millennial will be the future of workforce. We need create a work environment that can accommodate them.
- vii. Millennials have passion for servicing people, they want to make community better.
- viii. Find a way to keep the people by having a “fun communities”.
- ix. Employers need to rethink – “What can we do for you?” not “What can the job seeker do for them”.
- x. Work-life balance is important to millennials.
- xi. Does the industry represent the individual’s values (connected to the community is important).
- xii. Seeing delayed adulthood versus being ambitious.

Top Identified Issues

The employers were asked to each identify their top three issues. The crosses indicate the number of times this issue was brought up by the group.

1. Transportation. ++++

- i. Some people it takes three or four bus transfers to get to work.
- ii. The cost and lack of transportation.

2. Housing. ++

- i. Both rent and buying is cost-prohibitive.

3. Baby boomer generation is retiring. ++

- i. Need to fill the gap. Training is critical.
- ii. Succession planning is vital.

4. Takes a long time to fill a position +

5. We need to accommodate the diversity within the system. We have strong diversity in the county, but the public systems don’t really show it.

6. Many non-profit organizations can’t compete with big companies, especially when they don’t offer upward mobility.

7. Attracting millennials.

8. One employer found that it is easier to recruit people in Everett compared to the Seattle region.

9. High employee turnover.

- i. IT industry can pay a lot more.
- ii. Mandatory retirement allows companies to change and prepare for transitions.



Prioritized Solutions

The employers were asked to identify the desired solutions to the above concerns. These were grouped and then voted on. Each person was given three votes numbered 1, 2, and 3, these represented their priorities. One's are weighted with 3 points, two's with 2 points and three's with 1 point. The following order is from top priorities to lowest voted priorities. After they vote on priorities, the other identified solutions are listed in no particular order.

- 1. Road expansion infrastructure, (22=(1)x6, (2)x2)**
 - i. Road expansion in the county, particularly I-5 north in the north end as the county grows.
 - ii. More money and taxes needs to be used towards roads.
 - iii. Tolls and taxes need to be used for road expansions and improvements.
 - iv. Focus investment in modern infrastructure:
 - i. Roads
 - ii. Light rail
 - iii. Airports
- 2. Retain/recruit young generation, (13=(1)x2, (2)x2, (3)x3)**
 - i. Employers support modifications to work environments that attracts and retain millennials.
 - i. Consultations could be needed for this.
- 3. Vocational training (non-4-year worker training) (9=(2)x3, (3)x 3)**
 - i. Employment courses (i.e. basic sales skills courses).
 - ii. Non-college track for high school aged kids.
 - iii. More grants and funding for training opportunities.
 - iv. Goal training that is focused around understanding that "work" is really work.
 - v. Increase vocational training at school districts, too focused on college track.
 - vi. Customized employer specific training.
 - vii. Community colleges and k-12 focus on teaching work ethic and practical money management.
- 4. K-12 training on work ethics and career paths, (7=(1)x1, (2)x1, (3)x2)**
 - i. Realistic job preview for school / education institutions.
 - i. Course should be instilling what it is like to go to work and have work ethic.



- ii. Specifically more focus and education about career and work ethics for elementary and middle school age children.
- iii. Early learning and literacy.
- iv. High school workshop class.

5. Bi-language and diversity training (5=(1)x1, (2)x1)

6. Healthcare pooling (3=(2)x1, (3)x1)

- i. Create an association to share benefit packages for non-profit and small business.
- ii. Pooling for small business and non-profits for medical/dental, insurance, and retirement to provide competitive benefits.

7. Social Net (3=(2)x1, (3)x1)

- i. Create a way to prevent the loss of public benefits with the increase of wages for parents when they cannot cover family needs.

8. Childcare (3=(1)x1)

- i. Preschool.
- ii. Flexible, affordable, quality childcare is needed.

9. Market Snohomish County, live and work in Snohomish County

(1=(3)x1)

- i. Marketing "Live and Work in Snohomish County".
- ii. "Forever in Everett".
- iii. Market the vacant business spaces.
 - i. Incentives for employers to move into vacant building.

10. Mentorship

- i. Teaching that there are many career paths that pay well.
- ii. Mentorship between millennials and aging workforce.

11. Interpersonal Communication training

- i. Learning to communicate in the workplace between co-workers.
 - i. Myers Briggs testing.
 - ii. Generational.

12. Carpool / Community transportation

- i. Commuting / Transportation subsidies for small employers to attract employees.

13. 4-year education degree in the Snohomish county

- i. Increase 4-year CPA-eligible degree program at community colleges.
- ii. Focus on investment in the four year universities and grad research.

14. Affordable Housing



- i. Needed throughout the county.

15. Access to computer

- i. Internet in rural areas.
- ii. Access to computer 24/7 so applicants can use them to apply for jobs.
- iii. Virtual workspaces accessible to low income individuals.

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