



HERE TO STAY

Tips & Tools
to Hire,
Retain & Advance
Hourly-Wage
Workers

Carol Clymer

Laura Wyckoff





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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Turnover is costly. One half of all new hourly supermarket employees leave their jobs within 97 days of starting. One quarter terminate employment within the first month. The average cost of turnover for each hourly employee is \$3,752.

New Ideas for Retaining Store-Level Employees. A Study by The Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council, 2000.

What This Guide Is About

Here to Stay: Tips & Tools to Hire, Retain & Advance Hourly-Wage Workers grew out of a project undertaken by Public/Private Ventures with the help of The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The project's purpose was to examine the policies and practices of businesses that value their hourly-wage workers, want them to stay and want them to become long-term assets. The businesses studied are diverse: public and private, large, medium and small, and from a range of industries. They approach their goal of retaining their entry-level workforce in many ways—sometimes intentionally through well-thought-out policies, sometimes in a hit-or-miss fashion, at times through the doggedness of an owner and occasionally with the help of outside employment and training organizations. What these employers have in common is a sense that what's good for their lowest-paid employees is good for business—and the wisdom to identify the problems that plague hourly-wage workers and to take action.

Who This Guide Is About

Here to Stay is about retaining hourly-wage employees, many of whom have limited incomes, benefits and other resources. As with many people in today's workforce, these workers often deal with work/life conflicts, including unstable child care arrangements, poor transportation, health issues exacerbated by inadequate healthcare, financial and legal issues and too little support for managing family responsibilities. Such conflicts can affect their attendance and job performance. In addition, some hourly-wage workers possess fewer job and social skills, which can also sabotage their workplace success.

Why It's Useful

Hourly-wage workers are the frontline producers of products and servers of customers. When they are tardy, absent, lack skills and quit their jobs prematurely, they directly affect the profitability of businesses that struggle to compete in an economy where investors expect high profits and where low-cost foreign producers of both goods and services abound. Amidst all these pressures, many employers who hire and manage hourly-wage workers have adopted a fatalistic attitude—the attitude that people in lower-wage, lesser skilled positions will not stay and little can be done about their leaving. This fatalism—and the assumption that it is cheaper to replace people than to try to retain them—is a costly and crucial factor in businesses' profitability and, in some cases, their survival. With all this in mind, *Here to Stay* is useful for three reasons:

1. It acknowledges commonly held attitudes.

Here to Stay invites a reexamination of attitudes and beliefs about low-wage jobs and low-income people. These attitudes have historically held some businesses back from developing human assets and finding solutions to retention problems for their lower-paid workers.

2. It offers effective practices focused on hourly-wage, low-income workers.

Advice about retaining employees is abundant, but it's most often aimed at keeping the high performers and upper management in larger companies. Small or medium-sized employers, or the human resources staff and managers at smaller facilities of larger corporations, have much less relevant information about employee retention available to them. *Here to Stay* includes some of the same practices used with any valued employee; however, these practices are presented with the perspective of retaining people for whom keeping a job may be especially challenging. In addition to these proven practices, *Here to Stay* also provides innovative ideas for effectively managing hourly-wage workers.

3. It offers information on finding partners to help.

Not-for-profit and employment and training organizations with a goal of helping businesses find and retain entry-level workers exist throughout the country. This guide provides information on assessing and tapping the resources of these organizations, resources that are often free or nominally priced for employers.

Briefly, *Here to Stay* offers fresh ideas—and simple tools to implement them—that are oriented toward the hourly-wage worker.

What's Included

Here to Stay contains five sections:

1. NOT JUST A WARM BODY,
BUT A REAL MATCH
2. WELCOME TO OUR WORLD
3. STAYING MADE EASIER
4. THEY LEARN, YOU BENEFIT
5. PARTNER FOR RETENTION

The sections are arranged chronologically from recruiting to hiring, orienting, retaining and asset building. Cumulatively the information can help you create a work environment that encourages—and allows—your hourly-wage workers to stay on the job, increase their productivity and become assets to your business.

Each section in *Here to Stay* includes these elements:

- **Common Attitude**
Mindsets that influence how hourly-wage jobs and low-income people are perceived and treated.
- **What Needs to Change?**
Information about the circumstances of hourly-wage workers.
- **Think About This**
Information about hourly-wage jobs and those who perform them.
- **What You Can Do**
Actions that can help you retain your hourly-wage workers.
- **The Benefits**
Rewards for taking each action.
- **Tips and Tools**
Ideas and examples to be used by small business owners, human resource staff members and/or managers or supervisors to help keep hourly-wage workers on the job.
- And finally, **Information** about partnering with employment and training organizations that can assist you in retaining your employees.

The guide also includes descriptions of how businesses are benefiting from a variety of approaches to reducing turnover and increasing worker productivity. A list of the companies referred to throughout the guide can be found on page 9.

Who Might Use This Guide and for What Purpose

If you own a small or medium-size business or you're a human resources staff member in a larger company, or if you're a manager, a shift foreman or a business consultant, you will find useful resources in *Here to Stay*. In other words, the guide is for both those who set policies and those who "make the practices" that affect the environment and create the culture in which hourly-wage employees work.

Information and tools in the guide can help businesses—especially those without professionally trained human resource staff—infuse easily-adapted practices into effectively managing hourly-wage workers. In addition, *Here to Stay* can inspire owners and managers to better understand the circumstances of their hourly-wage workers, to rethink policies/practices affecting retention and to develop skills in supervising employees with limited resources and support. The final section also outlines ways businesses can find help with hiring, retaining and training their workers.

How to Use This Guide

Read it. Decide what resonates. And then implement the most relevant and affordable changes that could alleviate work/life pressures for your employees, improve their productivity and retention and increase your business's profitability. Use the tool on pages 86-87 to help you assess and plan for action.

For example, begin to conduct job interviews that give applicants a true picture of what the work requires. Welcome them and provide a sponsor to guide them through their first weeks. Conduct casual and frequent check-ins on their progress, and learn about their personal situations and what could make coming to work easier. Act on this information with more flexible scheduling if that would do the trick, or arrange a bus pass, a free lunchtime workshop on managing debt or legal assistance with immigration issues. Rethink, if necessary, common attitudes that blame poor people for their circumstances, and, instead, consider ways to extend the privilege of flexible schedules to the hourly-wage workers, or make the jobs more satisfying by providing opportunities to use their innate talents and learn new skills.

Of course, it would be an excellent idea to set up a tracking system to assess whether the changes you make increase productivity and reduce turnover. But many of the tips provided here are common sense, and implementing them will help people better manage work/life conflicts and create an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, more satisfied and more likely to stay.



The Cost

Many suggestions in *Here to Stay* require only a change of attitude. Others are tweaks or enhancements of what you may already be doing: cross-training individuals or using the services of employment and training organizations. Some suggestions require time; for example, managing flexible scheduling, learning about your employees through routine check-ins, helping people set goals and then following up on their progress. A few can be more costly, such as providing skills training. However, when reduced turnover and increased productivity result, the resources you expend become more a smart investment than an expense.

The following symbols indicate the relative cost of taking the actions suggested in the tips and tools throughout *Here to Stay*:

0 = no cost

\$ = minimal cost

\$\$ = incurs some expense

\$\$\$ = could require a budget

Additional Thoughts

First, while *Here to Stay* may challenge certain preconceived beliefs about lower-income people employed in lesser-skilled jobs, it is understood that being poor is not the sole reason workers are absent, leave the cash register unattended or resist learning new skills. And even when inexperience or a lack of personal resources contributes to problems on the job, employers cannot be expected to continuously tolerate substandard performance or magnanimously provide all remedies.

That said, *Here to Stay* does not condone paying poor wages when businesses could afford better. Nor does it suggest substituting kindness and a little flextime for decent health benefits and paid vacation. However because small or medium-size businesses – which employ many of the country’s hourly-wage workers – must maintain a tenuous balance between labor cost and profitability, *Here to Stay* seeks to maintain its own balance. It offers guidance that can 1) benefit businesses with constraints on what they can realistically afford to pay their lesser-skilled workers while 2) advancing the interests and well-being of low-income people employed in these jobs.

In the end, even if wages and benefits cannot be substantially increased, businesses may be able to introduce practices that allow working people to better handle personal obstacles, stay on the job, increase their skills, advance and be part of what makes a business successful.

The Companies

The developers of *Here to Stay* interviewed almost 100 companies but highlighted those for whom employee retention was central to their business strategy. The information found in this guide on how to reduce turnover and improve the productivity of hourly-wage workers is based in large part on the policies, practices, strategies and determination of the companies listed on the right. These companies pay hourly wages from approximately \$8.50 to \$17.00 per hour depending on the industry and location; they offer a variety of benefits.

Cascade Engineering

3400 Innovation Court SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49512-2085

A privately held plastics manufacturing company with a workforce of over 1,100, including many former welfare recipients.

First Horizon National Corp.

165 Madison Avenue
Memphis, TN 38103

A national financial institution with more than 13,000 employees, First Horizon offers products and services to upwards of a million customers. The company's lower-paid staff include tellers, data-entry clerks and statement processors.

Graniterock

350 Technology Dr.
Watsonville, CA 95076

Founded in 1900, Graniterock supplies construction materials and landscaping supplies to both contractors and retail customers and builds roadways, airports and private commercial and residential projects.

The Johns Hopkins Hospital

600 North Wolfe St.
Baltimore, MD 21287

One of the largest employers in inner-city Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Hospital operates the Skills Enhancement Program for all interested employees, although the program's focus is the Hospital's lesser-skilled workforce, including its environmental and food service workers.

Marriott International, Inc.

Marriott Dr.
Washington, DC 20058

Marriott operates and franchises hotels and resorts worldwide. Entry-level employees eligible for its Career Advancement Training program include housekeepers, food and beverage workers, kitchen, front office and maintenance staff.

My Grandma's Coffee Cakes

1636 Hyde Park Ave.
Boston, MA 02136

A privately owned wholesale and retail bakery that ships its products nationwide. Hourly-wage production jobs include box making and preparation work. Hourly-wage office and administrative jobs include fulfilling web and catalog orders and handling walk-in customers.

Phillips Restaurant

Phillips World Headquarters

1215 E. Fort Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21230

A family-owned business that includes seven restaurants, a hotel and a seafood packaging plant, Phillips Restaurants hire dishwashers, food preparation staff and servers.

Ryla Teleservices, Inc.

2120 Barrett Park Dr. N. W.
Kennesaw, GA 30144

A call center located outside Atlanta whose hourly-wage employees contact business clients for sales, sales lead generation, customer service and data collection.

Triad Speakers, Inc.

15835 NE Cameron Blvd.
Portland, OR 97230

Triad Speakers, Inc., employs 45 process operators to produce the company's factory-customized, high-end speakers.

University of California,

San Francisco/Community Partnership Program

3333 California St, Suite 102
San Francisco, CA 94143

Through its own community partnership program, the University hires local, low-income residents recruited and prepared for employment by a wide range of community-based organizations. Many of the hourly-wage jobs are for administrative assistants.





HERE TO STAY

Section 1
**Not Just
a Warm Body,
but a
Real Match**



ATTITUDE, REALITY
CHECK AND WHAT
YOU CAN DO TO
MAKE A REAL MATCH



Common Attitude

Jobs that pay lower wages are simple. Anyone can do them.

We don't need to spend too much time and money on recruiting and interviewing people to do these simple jobs.

What Needs to Change?

“When ideas are discussed about how to attract and retain the best employees as a means of reaching business goals and benefits are developed to work toward these goals, hourly and lower wage employees are usually in line behind higher-paid, technical and professional employees who are perceived to be at the core of the business. While no one would debate the importance of employees who are higher up in the company, the value of hourly and lower wage employees in many organizations seems to be underestimated.”

Increasing the Visibility of the Invisible Workforce: Model Programs and Policies for Hourly and Lower Wage Employees. Boston College Center for Work and Family, Carroll School of Management, April, 2004.



Think About This

In fact, what were once considered simple jobs may no longer be so simple. Customers demand exemplary service; businesses have high expectations for their workers' output. Employees, even those with fewer job-specific skills, must be good communicators, team members and problem solvers in order to help their employers gain an edge. As opposed to the typical "cattle call" for unskilled applicants who are hired if they meet minimum qualifications, employers who want to increase productivity and retain their hourly-wage employees must consider what it really takes to do a job.

It may take patience with elderly clients, a cheerful attitude when guests are demanding or the ability to speed up to make the day's final delivery pickup. As with hiring for better paid, professional positions, you can benefit if you take time to find individuals with the aptitude for particular positions who will fit in at the workplace and who are likely to stay.

What You Can Do

Involve
Coworkers ▶

Be Realistic
About the Job and
Open-Minded About
the Applicants ▶

Do Dual-Decision
Interviews ▶

Tryout Before
Hiring ▶



INVOLVE COWORKERS

THE BENEFITS: For employers, knowing what the job really requires can help secure a good match. Use your current successful employees to identify the personality, attitude and skills needed for the position. The time required to involve them can be offset by a reduction in turnover costs.

Involving the Coworkers

Graniterock, a materials supplier for the construction industry and a heavy engineering contractor in Watsonville, CA, has had a team interviewing process in place for over 10 years. Following an initial screening by human resource staff and the hiring manager, applicants are interviewed by coworkers and internal customers. The team develops questions that determine “TEC” – or Talent, Experience and Chemistry. For example, in order to help determine a match of chemistry – the willingness to embrace the company culture and contribute – team members ask questions that reflect the company’s values. “When was the last time you helped a teammate?” Or “Have you given safety or other suggestions to make a job better?” Applicants are rated on a simple scale of small/medium/large for each TEC component. The team then recommends candidates for a second interview, which is conducted by the manager and centers on employment experience. Managers are not under obligation to hire those recommended but must offer reasons to team members if a different choice is made. Graniterock management believes the process promotes pride in the company and its employee contributions.

Tips on What Coworkers Can Do

1. Help identify specific labor needs and key competencies and develop interview questions addressing the real essence of the job.
2. Act as interview models to determine the best interview responses.
3. Refer people for the job.
4. Review applications.
5. Participate in interviews.
6. Answer questions applicants might be reluctant to ask management.
7. Provide feedback on tryout visits, internships or temporary hires.
8. Help make hiring decisions.
9. Be a sponsor, role model, coach or trainer to newcomers.
10. Give management insight into problems faced by new employees and offer practical ideas on how to deal with these.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Have coworkers complete the questionnaire. Use their responses to better identify the personality/attitudes/skills desirable for their jobs. Draw on this information to develop accurate job descriptions, job announcements and interview questions. Examining their job duties creates consensus and team building among current employees and promotes coworker buy-in and “ownership” of new hires.

COST

\$ for your employees’ time to give input and your time to receive and act upon it.

COWORKER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What type of person will fit in best?

Someone who likes elderly people. Reliable. Someone who knows what they are getting into and has a really positive attitude, because some of this is unpleasant work. Someone who’s going to pitch in.

2. What job skills does he or she need to have? (Does our job description accurately describe the skills we want?)

Maybe we need this new person to be certified to give meds.

3. What people skills are needed? How can we find out if the person has those skills?

Professional but friendly. Someone who will get along with patients and their family members. We could ask during the interview how they would handle someone who continuously complains.

4. What skills, attitudes or personalities could we use that we don’t currently have on our team?

We could use someone who speaks Russian because now we’re getting Russian and other Eastern European patients.

5. What did you wish you had been told during the interview?

That we are often shorthanded, and I’d get called at the last minute if someone can’t make it.

6. What are some of the personal challenges a new employee might have making it to the job? How could they be addressed during hiring?

Transportation, if they’re on 3rd shift and don’t have a reliable car. Need to tell them during the interview about carpooling.

7. When we find the right person, how can we make certain he or she takes the job?

Have the CNA that helped interview call them and encourage them.

8. Other thoughts about hiring the right person?

Someone with a good sense of humor — not too serious all the time.

BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE JOB AND OPEN-MINDED ABOUT THE APPLICANTS

THE BENEFITS: The workforce in the US has become increasingly diverse. Available applicants willing to take entry-level jobs may not be the people employers are historically predisposed to hire, and a quick assessment based on race, culture or social background can rule out those who can bring skills and desirable personal characteristics to the workplace. Basing hiring decisions on the skills and attitudes of current successful employees — as opposed to preconceived ideas, for example, of how minority males or former welfare recipients might perform — can result in good matches that can allow you to retain your workforce and better serve diverse customers.

REALITY CHECK

The Demographics

Although Department of Labor statistics show that 68 percent of those entering the workforce are women and people of color, some employers still look for the elusive white male breadwinner. Employers have cited a lack of interpersonal skills as reason for not selecting certain applicants, especially African American and Latino males. In a study of race in the marketplace, researchers sent out fictitious resumes, some with African American sounding names, others with white sounding names. Both sets of applicants had the same qualifications; but the “white names” received fifty percent more callbacks for interviews than did “minority names.” Preconceived ideas based on race, gender or ethnic background can exclude qualified, available job seekers.

Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal?: A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination. National Bureau of Economic Research NBE Working Paper Series no. 9873, 2003.

The Face

The “game face,” a stony look adopted by many men who live in tough neighborhoods, undoubtedly influences hiring decisions. Organizations, such as STRIVE in East Harlem, NY, teach men as part of their job seeking efforts to drop “the face” during interviews. Roderick Watts, an associate professor of psychology at Georgia State University, points out that “when focusing purely on these guys as the source of their own problems, you don’t get the whole picture.” Understanding why people have developed “the face” may help employers put it in better perspective.

“‘Game Face’ Provokes Frowns in Job Market.” *Crain’s New York Business*, April 11, 2005.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Use the example application to consider whether promising applicants might be overlooked based on preconceived ideas of who can do the job. Ask similar questions as you review job applications and decide who to interview.

COST

\$ for time to read the example and apply the information to your application screening process.

Do certain names trigger preconceived ideas of who applicants are and how they might perform or behave? Do you toss these applications immediately?

Do you assume that African American men, for example, are likely to have poor “soft skills?”

Or women applicants are likely to miss work because of child care issues?

Is a conviction a disqualifier regardless of the circumstances or what the job entails?

When you suspect that applicants have received assistance or been in special programs, do you make a judgment about their willingness to work and keep a job?

APPLICATION REVIEW

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name Washington First Tyrone Middle Deshay

Type of work you will accept: Full time Part time Temp

Shift Preferred Day Evening Night

Are you legally eligible to be employed in the U.S.? No Yes
(Proof of identity and eligibility will be required upon employment)

Have you ever been convicted of a crime (other than a minor traffic violation)? No Yes
If so, please indicate the nature of the offense, date, state and disposition.
will explain

Education High school GED College degree

Describe any skills or specialized training: money handling

List equipment and computer software you can operate:
cash register, photocopy machine, billing software, email

WORK HISTORY

Employer: <u>Lacy's Shoppe</u>	Employer: <u>Water Bureau</u>
Job Title: <u>Sales Associate</u>	Job Title: <u>Intern</u>
Supervisor: <u>Lacy Grogan</u>	Supervisor: <u>Margie Eng</u>
Dates Employed: <u>8/02-1/03</u>	Dates Employed: <u>June 2002</u>
Work performed: <u>sales</u>	Work performed: <u>sort mail, copying, phones</u>
Reason for leaving: <u>business closed</u>	Reason for leaving: <u>internship ended</u>
May we contact? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <u>owner moved out of state</u>	May we contact? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

REFERENCES

1. Pastor John Waits, JC Comm Church, 111-1111
2. B. Wells, Counselor, TYT Assoc., 222-2222
3. Martha Biggs, Friend, MO 333-3333

DO DUAL-DECISION INTERVIEWS

THE BENEFITS: Offering a realistic idea of the job, the workplace culture and your expectations can reduce turnover by assuring that you hire employees who know they can do the job and who will stay with you because they want what you have to offer.

INTERVIEWING TIPS

FOR FINDING THE PERSON WHO WILL STAY

No Shock, No Awe

You'll get a more realistic idea of people if they are not petrified when you meet them. When scheduling the interview, tell applicants what to expect. Let them know whom they will speak with, what to wear, what types of questions they will be asked and how long the interview will last. Tell them if they will be tested.

Share, Don't Grill

Help applicants put their best foot forward. Make the interview more conversational than adversarial. Instead of trying to find flaws, try to identify strengths.

Acknowledge Challenges

Be sensitive, but upfront, about aspects of the job that could challenge some individuals. This might include job duties, drug testing, pay schedule, work scheduling, benefits and transportation options. Also state the ways your business helps its employees deal with these work/life issues.

Make the Job Real

Provide a written, realistic description of the job. Larger companies might show a video of people doing it. Make sure applicants have an opportunity to ask questions. Be as specific as possible as you answer them. In fact, make a preemptive strike against a bad match by offering information—whether or not it is asked for—that can help applicants make good decisions about taking or turning down the position. This information could include:

- Skills and personality necessary to meet your expectations.
- Aspects of the job that are challenging or not so pleasant.
- Advancement opportunities and ways to make more money.
- What could get an employee fired.

Use a Partner

Let the employment and training organizations—as you would a staffing firm—know about openings. Provide information about skills, expectations and working environment.

(See Section 5: Partner for Retention.)

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Use the examples in the left-hand column to develop interview questions that allow both you and the applicant to make a good decision about the job. Aim for the outcomes in right-hand column. You will gain a better understanding of what it takes to do your hourly-wage jobs and those who apply for them by carefully crafting interview questions and offering as much information as the applicant needs to make a good decision.

COST

\$ to rethink/rewrite your current interview questions.

INTERVIEW PLAN

- 1. Describe the job and your expectations, and ask the applicant whether he or she has questions.**

SO THE APPLICANT CAN:
Learn about specific job duties and ask questions based on what really takes place on the job as opposed to making assumptions or being clueless.

- 2. Ask questions that help you determine a “cultural match.”**

“One thing we really value here is a helping attitude. Describe a time when you went out of your way to help a coworker or neighbor.”

“Our business puts a lot of emphasis on learning skills that can help us be competitive. Tell us about how you learned something that was useful to you or to an organization you belonged to or a company you worked for.”

SO THE APPLICANT CAN:
Get a realistic idea of how you want the job done—as opposed to being told to deliver “exemplary customer service,” for example.

- 3. Ask situational or behavioral questions based on what really happens on the job.**

“As an associate you need to do three things well. First, always be polite and helpful to both customers and coworkers. In the past, how have you managed to stay polite and helpful when things got hectic?”

Second, you’ll need to work quickly. Tell us about how you’ve responded to pressure to finish a task quickly.

And third, you’ll need to handle information accurately. Tell about mistakes you’ve made and what you did afterwards.”

SO THE APPLICANT CAN:
Begin assessing his or her personal situation against the realities of working for your business. Decide whether he or she can do the job.

- 4. Offer information that helps people with limited resources make an informed decision about the job.**

“We pay twice a month. However we make certain that new employees receive a check at the end of their first week.”

“A downtown bus can get you here 10 minutes before either shift, just in time for a cup of coffee in our break room.”

“We try not to switch hours, but if it’s necessary, we give you a day’s notice and, usually, a choice of making the change.”

SO THE APPLICANT CAN:
Decide whether he or she wants to come to work for you. Begin making personal plans in case the job is offered.

TRYOUT BEFORE HIRING

THE BENEFITS: You can reduce turnover if job applicants get an actual feel for the work environment, meet potential coworkers and try out the job before taking it. They can make an informed decision of whether they want to work for you – and you'll have a good idea of whether you want to bring them on.

VISITS WITH A PURPOSE

Attitude Test

Before being offered an operator's position at **Triad Speakers, Inc.**, candidates spend a day getting a feel for the workplace, meeting potential coworkers, observing and being observed. Because the company needs employees who want to learn and aren't fearful of making mistakes, candidates who "jump right in" when offered the opportunity to try their hands at a task are more likely to be hired.

The Reality of Working Here

The **Community Partnership Program at University of California, San Francisco** arranges visits for participants from local job training programs. Before applying, prospective employees get a close look at the work environment to better understand the reality of the job. For example, in order to learn the system, administrative/clerical workers at UCSF spend their first two months filing records in a room by themselves. Other entry-level jobs require heavy lifting in equally unglamorous

surroundings. In addition to these initial visits, UCSF also uses six-month internships and temporary employment to train and try out potential employees.

Wish List for Those Who Didn't Try Out the Job

Employer: I wished I'd known that my new employee:

- ▶ Can't stand for long periods of time
- ▶ Has no aptitude for details
- ▶ Is afraid of computers
- ▶ Is allergic to latex
- ▶ Is too shy to speak to guests
- ▶ Is uncomfortable working with women
- ▶ Can't take a friendly joke

New Employee: I wished I'd known that:

- ▶ The workplace would be noisy
- ▶ I'd have to wear a dust mask
- ▶ I wouldn't have my own workspace
- ▶ I'd be inside all day
- ▶ The only place to smoke is six stories down and out on the street
- ▶ I'd have my hands in water all the time
- ▶ My supervisor can't take a friendly joke

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Use the tipsheet as a guide to arranging job tryouts. By providing tryouts you demonstrate to both applicants and current employees that you are determined to hire the right person. (You should also check your state's labor laws governing job simulation. To make sure your tryout conforms to all laws and does not expose your company to any risk of liability, consult an attorney.)

COST

\$\$ for staff time to arrange visits or internships and debrief coworkers.

TRYOUT TIPS

1. Invite applicants to visit one at a time, see what the job involves and meet potential coworkers—while you observe them.

- ▶ Have visiting applicants arrive at starting time and spend the whole day—so they experience the rhythm of the work.
- ▶ Have the visitor wear the required uniform/safety equipment (bunny suit, steel-toed shoes, safety goggles, gloves, hairnet)—so they'll know how the job feels.
- ▶ Assign coworkers to show what the job involves, explain expectations and answer questions—so applicants and coworkers get a sense of whom they would work with.
- ▶ Offer hands-on opportunities to actually do the job (make a saw cut, ring up a sale, sort the laundry, enter data)—so applicants can decide if they can/want to do it and you can assess their attitude/aptitude.
- ▶ Ask coworkers—who are comfortable doing so—to describe their own transportation, child care and other arrangements—so applicants can consider options for meeting work/life challenges involved in working for you.
- ▶ Have a conversation at the end of the visit and be open to the feedback—so you both can ask questions and discuss concerns.
- ▶ Talk with coworkers—so you can get their impression/input on potential hires.

2. Try out potential employees through internships.

- ▶ Contact One-Stops (local centers providing employment-related services for businesses and job seekers), staffing agencies, community colleges and employment and training organizations that train and place applicants in positions similar to the ones you want to fill. Many nonprofit organizations seek internships that can be part of their training programs. Arrangements for paying the intern differ: Some organizations provide a stipend; others ask the employer to pay the wage, or part of it.
- ▶ Expect to sign a written agreement that spells out your responsibilities and those of the organization and intern, including how potential problems will be handled. Anticipate that a staff member from the organization will check in with both the intern and his or her supervisor to make certain the job is going well.
- ▶ Orient, train and mentor the intern as you would a new employee.
- ▶ Invite a staff person from the organization to visit the worksite—to meet the intern's supervisor and learn about the job and expectations.
- ▶ Offer feedback on the intern's performance, whether or not you offer the person a job.

AVOID PITFALLS TO MAKING A REAL MATCH



Overlooking Good Candidates

Base hiring decisions on the skills and personal attributes of successful employees, not on preconceived ideas and unconscious prejudice that could affect who you consider and hire for jobs.



Failing to Provide a Realistic Picture of the Job

Offer information and a close-up look at the work environment, culture and job duties so candidates can make their own informed decision about coming to work for you.



Ignoring Legal Issues

Make certain that coworkers involved in reviewing applications and interviewing job applicants understand the need for confidentiality and the type of information that cannot legally be elicited during the hiring process.

Know the difference between trying out/job shadowing and actually doing a paid job. Observing how a job is done and/or briefly trying out a task under supervision should not constitute a breach of the Fair Labor Standards Act, but make sure to consult an attorney if you have any questions.







HERE TO STAY

Section 2

Welcome

to Our World



ATTITUDE, REALITY
CHECK AND WHAT
YOU CAN DO TO
**OFFER A
WARM WELCOME**

▶

Common Attitude

A perfunctory introduction to the workplace and the job is all that's needed for hourly-wage workers.

What Needs to Change?

A Dallas-based human resource tracking firm conducted a survey of 70 companies with low-wage hourly workers. It reported companies spending more than four hours on orientation had an 86 percent turnover rate compared to a 120 percent rate for companies that devoted only one or two hours to orientation.

People's Report. Gale Group, 2003.



Think About This

Turnover rate – the ratio of the number of workers who had to be replaced in a given time period to the average number of workers – can reach triple digit figures in some industries and for some jobs. For busy managers, time spent orienting hourly-wage workers beyond the basics of their job duties may seem burdensome – especially when they are not expected to stay long. On the other hand, expressing appreciation that they are on board and making them feel valued sets the stage for longer tenure.

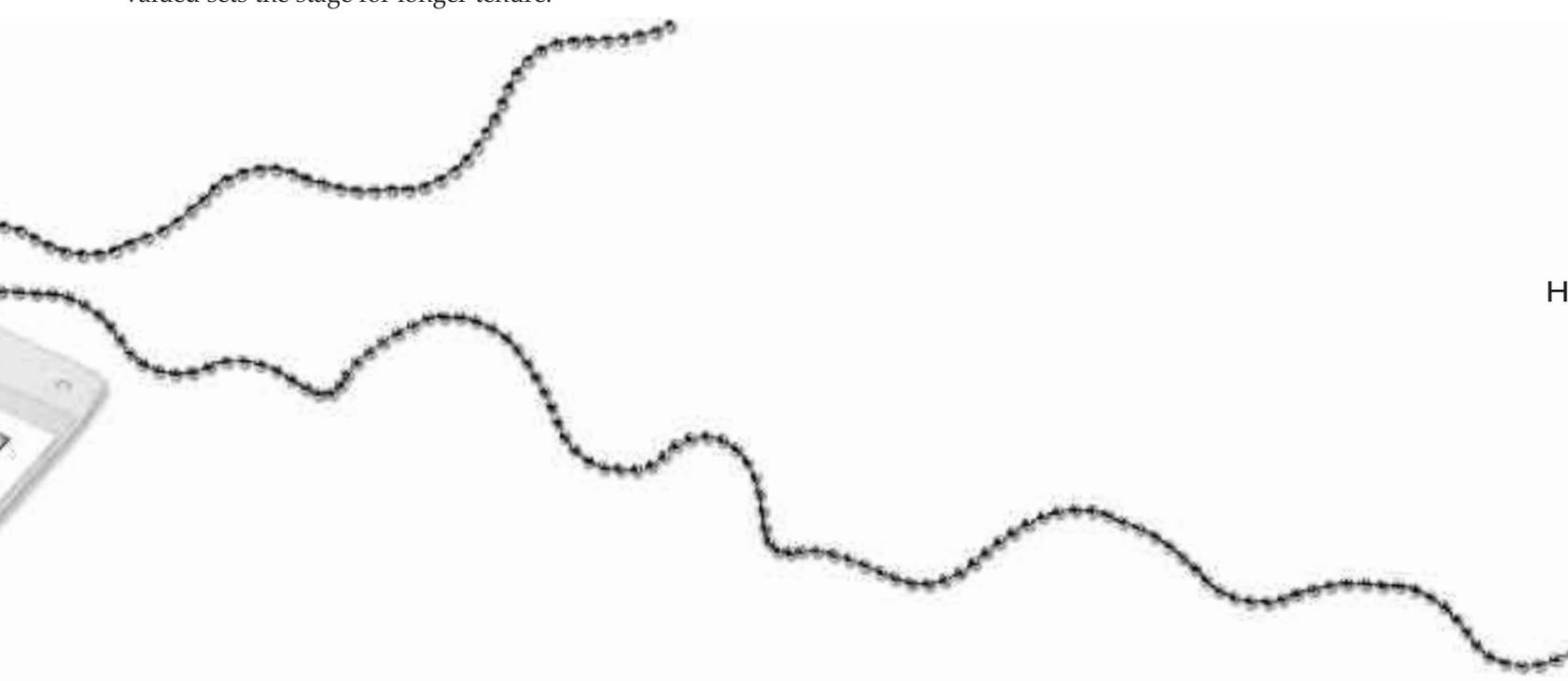
Newcomers will have a favorable first impression, feel good about their choice of employer and want to prove themselves worthy of working with people who have made an obvious effort to include them. In addition, a sincere and thorough welcome demonstrates immediately how your business expects its employees to relate to one another – and how they should treat your customers.

What You Can Do

Include and Engage ▶

Provide a Sponsor ▶

Have Frequent Check-Ins ▶



INCLUDE AND ENGAGE

THE BENEFITS: Businesses are likely to feel grateful when a new officer, administrator, or other upper-level employee comes to work for them, and they often go out of their way to welcome the newcomer. Fewer recognize that a warm welcome for hourly-wage employees can go a long way toward reducing turnover – especially because these workers may be less likely to feel sure of themselves and more likely to face personal challenges to working.

A Bit Like Ellis Island

“New employees can be compared to immigrants. They need to learn the history, rules, people, language and culture as well as performance expectations. It’s understanding things like company values that helps people feel like part of the organization . . . This increases their sense of belonging and commitment.”

Howard Klein, assistant professor of management and human resources at Ohio State University, quoted in Workforce, Nov. 2000.

More Than the I-9

It’s someone’s first day on the job. Forms need to be signed and the procedures manual distributed. But getting a good start also includes:

1. A sincere welcome;
2. An introduction to the workplace culture;
3. An understanding of how the job contributes to the business; and
4. An introduction to what’s expected, how to do it and who to go to for help.

Ways of Waging Welcome

Greeted by the Boss

The owner and CEO of **My Grandma’s Coffee Cakes** takes new employees on a tour of the facilities, making certain they notice the microwaves, refrigerator, toaster, free coffee machine, private lockers, private dressing rooms and suggestion box. He explains that during December, the company’s busiest month, the price of soda from the machine drops to 10 cents and the monthly free massage becomes two free massages.

Dined by the Owners

Once a temporary worker is officially hired at **Ryla**, an Atlanta-based call center, the couple who owns the company takes the new employee out to dinner.

“Personally! They didn’t send some other manager. They took me themselves.” Ryla employee

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Use for generating ideas about welcoming your new employees. Read and decide which ideas you can implement.

COST

0 to \$\$, depending upon the activities, time and staff members involved.

IDEAS FOR A WARMER WELCOME

Before the First Day

About a week before I was supposed to show up, I got a note from the owner welcoming me. Then I got a letter with the mission statement, an article about our company and the procedures manual. And then, listen to this, my supervisor called to tell me they were looking forward to meeting me. She told me what time to arrive, where to park, what room to go to. Asked me if I had a nickname or just wanted to be called Derrick.

On Arrival

So I get there and there's a welcome sign with the names of all the new people on it and a guy greeting us with our ID cards and a schedule. I could see exactly what I'd be doing for the next two weeks. Turns out the guy is one of my coworkers. Worked there only a couple of months himself. In fact, it seemed like everyone was expecting us.

Right Away

First thing they took us to the lunchroom, which is a lot neater than my kitchen at home. Anyway, there's a bulletin board with photos of people that work there, their kids, their grannies, their pets, like a big photo album. Even pictures of customers. One showed the whole group at a company picnic. Our guide pointed out some of the people and told us about them. There's a dude that rides his bike to work and a woman who raises Bengal cats for extra income. Met them later, and I sorta felt like I knew them already. Oh yeah, they took our picture and put it up on the board.

Sense of History

Yeah, well, then they toured us all over the plant and they brought out the oldest employee in the universe who told us how Mr. McNulty invented paint that would stick to plastic and how his son took over and sold to a larger company that merged with a Dutch company that sold it back to the McNultys. The Nuttys, that's what everyone calls the owners, encourage employees to come up with product ideas, like decals for downspouts that look like grapevines.

Expectations Made Easy

We filled out forms and, of course, went over the procedures manual. We've got a test coming up on that, but it's open book. Matter of fact, I can ask my sponsor for help. He said that the company wants me to be learning new stuff all the time. A little bit of chemistry, how to use the computer, English for the people who don't speak it.

Someone Who Cares

Yep, Ted's my sponsor's name. He's answering questions and clueing me in on stuff liking getting the paperwork in a little early on Fridays and not getting Melvin started talking about the wonders of vitamin E. Ted took me to lunch my first day. He's been with the company four years and likes it all, except when it gets hectic in February trying to fill orders for the big box stores. I will have been there four or five months by then, got my forklift certification, got my raise. I'll do fine.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Customize a fact sheet similar to this example and discuss it with new employees. Update the information from time to time by identifying questions newcomers ask during their first weeks on the job or by asking them for suggestions on what to include.

COST

\$\$ for time to produce, discuss and update the fact sheet.

NEW EMPLOYEE FACT SHEET

Industry Terms/Vocabulary

ASN: Advance Ship Notice; notice sent ahead of the shipment listing its contents and shipping information.

Dunnage: fill material, such as packing peanuts, paper, bubble wrap, foam and air pillows.

SKU (Stock Keeping Unit): a specific item in a specific unit of measure (we distribute mineral spirits in quart and gallon containers; both are mineral spirits but have different SKU numbers)

Notes:

Company Terms/Vocabulary

Big Joe: our explosion-proof lift truck

Zappers: laser scanners that read bar codes

Splorch: accident involving liquids

Notes:

Your Paycheck

Pick up every Thursday after 1pm

Expect deductions from your gross earnings for Federal Withholding Tax, FICA (Social Security), Medicare and health insurance

Getting Help/Information/Supplies

Jessica: help using the phones/fax; help ordering supplies

Stan: questions about paycheck/benefits

Doug: problems with machinery and equipment; advice if your car breaks down

Javier: knows how to fix the color copier, or who to call when he can't

Estelle: she's Mary's retired mother, willing to take care of kids in a pinch to supplement her income

Others:

Places to Know About

Short Stack Cafe: cheap breakfast place across the street

Community Credit Union: all employees eligible to join; automatic deposit; car loans; debit cards

Nearest bus stop: two blocks west at 182nd and Highway 2

More places:

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Make certain that new employees understand expectations and are adjusting to the workplace culture by having them complete a similar form and then informally discuss their responses with you, their sponsor (see page 34) or an experienced coworker who can answer questions, clarify misunderstandings and provide helpful feedback.

COST

0 to \$ depending on whether the form is completed and the discussion takes place during working hours.

EXPECTATION LIST

Accepted Appearance

Clothes/uniforms

regular clothes, nothing too short or low cut, nobody shows their armpits

Shoes/socks/stockings

no athletic shoes

Hair

neat but doesn't have to be a certain way

Body Decoration

tattoos okay, jewelry okay, but told not to wear my lip ring

Make-up

it's okay, I think, but no one does anything really rad

Hygiene

deodorant, clean clothes, no one looks too funky

Other things I've noticed about the personal appearance of people here:

management likes to appeal to young customers, so it's pretty loose

Questions I have about acceptable appearance:

no, nope, none

Personal Use of Equipment/Supplies

Telephone

if it's fast, less than 2 or 3 minutes, I was told

Computer/Internet/Email

no, it's off limits, just for business

Copy machine

people use it if they have a few copies, but we ask first

Company Supplies

nothing here to take

Other stuff I've noticed about using our company's resources:

It's okay to make any coffee drink you want, but you have to have it on a break. After 3, you can have whatever from the pastry case.

Questions I have about using equipment or supplies:

Is it okay to drink bottled water while on duty?

Behaviors on the Job

Starting work

on time all the time, unless you call in, which you wouldn't want to do too often

Calling in late or sick

you can, but need to do it the day before or as soon as manager opens

Getting time off or changing schedules

if you arrange it early

Taking breaks/lunch

if we're busy, we work on through then take one

Using the break room/other spaces

sit at empty table but get up if customer needs it

Eating/drinking on the job

only on breaks/at lunch

Conversing while working

stop personal stuff when there are customers nearby

Listening to music

no, nope, none

Other observations about how people behave here:

if they don't fit in, they leave pretty quick

Questions I have about behaviors on the job:

some customers get special treatment — why?

PROVIDE A SPONSOR

THE BENEFITS: You can help newcomers make early, positive connections to your workplace by assigning willing, experienced employees as their sponsors. By providing these friendly, informal links, you show hourly-wage employees – who often don't receive such attention – that you are interested in them and want them to succeed. With help from their sponsors, they are more likely to adjust to the work culture, become productive as they learn the “ins and outs” of the workplace and stay on the job because they are comfortable and have made personal connections.

Feeling Supported Means Feeling Good About the Job

In a study that looked at critical incidents, both positive and negative, that made impressions on new employees in the hospitality industry, researchers concluded that building supportive relationships is more important to newcomer adjustment than orientation and training programs.

“Creating a Good First Day on the Job: Allaying Newcomers' Anxiety with Positive Messages.” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Dec. 1996.

What's in It for a Sponsor?

In order to provide an immediate supportive relationship, consider recruiting coworkers as sponsors for newcomers during their first few weeks or months on the job. Sponsors are friendly guides who help the new employee learn the ropes, who answer questions that newcomers may be reluctant to ask management and who supply the support that gets people off to a good start. In return, the sponsor gets:

- Satisfaction from helping out their employer and their new coworkers;
- Pride from being singled out and trusted;
- The opportunity to influence newcomers in a positive way;
- Skills and experience that can be used on the job, cited during performance reviews and added to résumés; and
- Possible reward and recognition.

Try ►►►

THIS TOOL

USE

Prior to bringing on an employee, use the Selecting a Sponsor list to choose a coworker to coach/guide/mentor the newcomer. Prepare the sponsor by discussing tips from Prepping the Sponsor. Finally, use the Supporting the Sponsor list to consider what type of support your business will offer the sponsor.

COST

\$ to \$\$, depending upon the amount of time the sponsor and newcomer spend together “on the clock,” and the support and reward offered to the sponsor for taking on the responsibility.

SPONSOR'S GUIDELINES

SELECTING A SPONSOR

- ▶ Businesses have different ways of recruiting/assigning sponsors to their new employees. If there is someone who always seems to take the newcomer “under his/her wing,” you might just acknowledge and reward the effort. If sponsorship is a new concept at your worksite, ask for volunteers and rotate the responsibility, have coworkers nominate a sponsor or select the person you feel is most qualified. Look for someone with these qualities:
 - Takes pleasure in being helpful and gets satisfaction from watching people succeed.
 - Has a positive attitude about work and the company.
 - Has a wide range of friends and contacts in the workplace.
 - Is a good listener who encourages questions.
 - Models and discusses appropriate behavior on the job.
 - Is patient, objective and slow to judge.
 - Builds the newcomer's confidence.

Hint: You can't go wrong choosing a person who gets along with everyone—coworkers, managers, vendors and customers.

PREPPING THE SPONSOR

- ▶ Take newcomers to coffee/lunch soon after they have been hired. Ask them about their families, interests and life experiences.
- ▶ Introduce them to the people in the workplace. Help them make connections. *“Lorna's kids are about the same age as yours.”*
- ▶ Include them in activities and casual conversations. *“Join us. We're talking about what we're going to do over the weekend.”*
- ▶ Model and discuss appropriate behavior on the job. *“It probably seems harmless, but we don't discuss anything that personal in mixed company here.”*
- ▶ Offer insight into how things operate around the workplace. *“Boris seems sort of gruff, but it's because he's just getting a handle on English.”*
- ▶ Be ready to answer questions they might feel reluctant to ask management. *“The first week on the job seems a little early to ask for a day off.”*
- ▶ Point the newcomer in the right direction to get help or training. *“Check with Hal in security if you have any questions about how to lock up.”*
- ▶ Help them gain confidence. *“You've been here two weeks, and I've heard only good things about your work.”*

SUPPORTING THE SPONSOR

- ▶ Have a modest budget so the sponsor can pay for the newcomers' coffee/lunch the first time they get together.
- ▶ Allow the sponsor time during the workday to touch base with newcomers.
- ▶ Respect the relationship as a potential work-related friendship; don't ask the sponsor to break confidence, tattle or serve as an employer representative.
- ▶ Expect the relationship to take a natural course. The sponsor is a touchstone and support for the newcomer during the first few weeks on the job—not all relationships will flourish.
- ▶ Show that you value those who serve as sponsors by publicly acknowledging them and offering a token of appreciation.

HAVE FREQUENT CHECK-INS

THE BENEFITS: Periodic check-ins about what keeps hourly-wage employees on the job, what affects their productivity and what causes them to quit can help you create a supportive environment and job satisfaction. Benefits of check-ins also include receiving suggestions that might have a positive effect on sales/revenue.

Try a Simple Personal Conversation

Virtually all Fortune 500 companies and most mid-sized businesses conduct employee satisfaction surveys to gain perspective on issues of importance to employees, increase loyalty, assess training needs and improve customer service. A casual check-in with your hourly-wage workers can accomplish some of the same goals and allow you to identify challenges that plague low-income workers and cause them to leave the job.

Or Maybe Early Performance Reviews

Many businesses, especially smaller ones, do not hold formal performance reviews for hourly-wage workers. Or, if they do, the review does not take place until six months or a year after hiring. In an effort to hire the right people and keep them, the **University of California, San Francisco**, filled positions in its mail department on a temporary basis with applicants from a community-based organization. The University then gave formal performance reviews at three months and again at six months. The reviews were attended by the employees' supervisor, a human resources staff member and a representative from the community-based organization who was in a position to help the employees deal with personal issues affecting their job performance. The first round of temporary hires met expectations and were offered permanent jobs.

Exit Check-In

Many businesses conduct exit interviews, but they don't always address the issues that cause low-income workers to resign. Here are some sample questions that could help you identify problems and then seek solutions to prevent future departures.

Did child care/elder care issues cause you to quit?

No Yes

If yes, what would have allowed you to solve the problem and keep working here?

Are transportation problems causing you to leave?

No Yes

If yes, what would have made a difference?

Did financial or personal problems cause you to quit?

No Yes

If yes, could we have done something to assist and keep you on the job?

Are you quitting because you feel your efforts were not appreciated?

No Yes

If yes, how could your employer/manager have shown that you were valued?

Was your wage or benefits a factor in your quitting?

No Yes

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Add the suggestions to your “to do” list or calendar as a reminder to routinely check in with your hourly-wage employees.

COST

\$ for the time it takes for the supervisor or sponsor and the employee to chat about the job and the supervisor to follow up on questions or problems.

CHECK-IN STRATEGIES

1. Early Check-In

- ▶ Do it at the end of the first week on the job.
- ▶ Make it a friendly conversation.
- ▶ Be encouraging.
- Reinforce the welcome. *“I’m really glad you decided to come to work with us. And it looks like you’ve almost mastered the registers.”*
- Ask generally about how it is going. *“How are you feeling about your first week on the job? How are things going?”*
- Ask questions that could improve your welcome/orientation. *“What have you learned so far that’s been most helpful? How did you learn it? What could we have told you that you really needed to know? What questions haven’t been answered yet? Do you have suggestions on better ways to welcome new people and get them started?”*
- Confirm that people are learning the basic aspects of their jobs. *“Do you know what to do when you have problems with the equipment? If you can’t answer a customer’s question? If you suspect someone is stealing?”*
- Get a feel for what you can do to retain particular individuals. *“So far, what do you like best about the job? What’s your least favorite thing about it? Anything coming up that could cause conflicts or problems getting to work or doing the job?”*
- Ask about personal goals and then follow up. *“Have you got your driver’s license yet?”*
- Acknowledge any issues, offer solutions and keep the door open for further communication. *“We’ve got a uniform allowance. I’m pretty sure you can use it since we require slacks, not jeans. I’ll check and let you know.”*

2. Routine Check-In

- ▶ Do it every two weeks after the employee has settled in. Continue to check in with long-term employees too.
- ▶ Do it casually.
- ▶ Be encouraging.
- Ask generally how things are going so people can share what’s on their mind. *“You’ve been here, what, a month now? How’s it going?”*
- Show appreciation. *“Thanks for staying late on Thursday and getting those banners strung up.”*
- Identify what individuals like about the job so you can facilitate job satisfaction. *“Am I right that you like working over in the annex? That crew over there is a lot of fun. I’ll arrange for you to cover their vacations if you’d like to do that.”*
- Identify what individuals dislike about the job so you can reduce frustration. *“You mentioned that you don’t like working sales. Is it figuring the various discounts that’s getting to you? There are a couple of shortcuts I can show you.”*
- Be personal and caring. *“I heard that your mom fell. How’s she doing?”*

AVOID PITFALLS TO OFFERING A WARM WELCOME



Leaving Hourly Wage Workers to Figure Out Their Own Jobs

Although loading the dishwasher, sorting the laundry or greeting customers may seem like simple tasks and explaining how to do them may seem a waste of time or patronizing, don't assume that newcomers will know how these are accomplished at your workplace. Help new employees meet expectations and quickly become productive by explaining, demonstrating, allowing mistakes, encouraging questions and offering constructive feedback from day one.



Failing to Initiate Newcomers into the Workplace Culture

Learning how to do the job is often straightforward; figuring out how to fit in at a new job is more complex. Don't leave it to chance that new employees will recognize the unwritten rules of your workplace. If cranky Bill always parks his pickup in space 3, let the newcomers know so they won't pull in there. If the supervisor has set aside Thursday afternoon for paperwork, inform the newcomers so they won't disturb her. If everyone from the CEO to the part-time receptionist attends the holiday party, inform the newcomers and tell them to expect to be introduced.



Choosing the Wrong Sponsor

Expect all coworkers to be friendly and helpful, but make certain that you select the right people to be the special guides and supporters for your new employees. Choose employees who have the best interest of your business in mind, who are innately helpful and nonjudgmental and who know the ins and outs of the workplace, including who to go to for information. Querulous, cliquish or overbearing people and those who are antagonistic toward management are obviously bad choices.



Checking In Infrequently

Workers with limited income, resources and support—especially those with family responsibilities—often straddle a tightrope between coping and calamity. For example, parents with adequate child care arrangements when they start work may have these disintegrate quickly, especially if they are relying on family, friends or neighbors. You may be able to keep a good employee by offering a schedule change, a loan, a bit of training or simple empathy—but you need to know what’s happening. Check in with them frequently.







HERE
TO
STAY

Section 3

Staying

Made Easier



ATTITUDE, REALITY
CHECK AND WHAT
YOU CAN DO TO
MAKE STAYING EASIER



Common Attitude

We can tolerate the turnover of low-wage workers. It's always been a cost of doing business.

What Needs to Change?

A recent Gallup Poll found that almost two out of three people receive no workplace recognition in a given year.



Think About This

A large privately owned manufacturer of molded plastic components for the automotive, computer and telecommunications industries no longer accepts turnover as the price for employing hourly-wage workers.

Analysis showed that:

- ▶ Turnover was costing the company in excess of \$5,000 for each worker who stayed at least three months;
- ▶ High turnover rates resulted in disruption to productivity;
- ▶ As the technology requirements became more complex, more time was required before workers became productive; and
- ▶ Quality standards were hard to maintain when employee turnover was high.

What You Can Do

Have
Knowledgeable
Supervisors ▶

Be Fair,
Not Punitive ▶

Be Flexible ▶

Make the Job
Satisfying ▶

HAVE KNOWLEDGEABLE SUPERVISORS

THE BENEFITS: Knowing what can affect the success for hourly-wage employees gives their supervisors insight into how to retain, train and develop them as assets to the business.

Working Doesn't Mean Making a Living

According to a May 2004 Business Week article, roughly a quarter of the workforce – more than 28 million people – between 18 and 64 years of age earned a wage less than \$9.04 an hour, or about \$18,800 a year for full-time work. For a family of four, this is a poverty wage.

Management Basics+

Most management books, periodicals, videos, CDs and consultants contend that “people don’t leave their jobs, they leave their managers.” These resources also offer remarkably similar practices for employee retention: clearly defined expectations, coaching and mentoring, supportive feedback and goals for continuous improvement. In addition, many experts offer subtle twists on basic management techniques to account for the generational differences between, for example, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. Businesses that have decided that their frontline is important to their success also recognize that, in addition to using widely accepted management practices, they can better retain their hourly-wage workers by understanding and responding to their backgrounds, values and economic circumstances.

Poverty and the Workplace: A Clash of Cultures

Privately owned **Cascade Engineering** of Grand Rapids, MI, successfully employs former welfare recipients in its plastic injection-molding facilities. According to Ronald Jimmerson, manager of community partnership and workforce diversity, it does so by helping its lower-income workers recognize the “hidden rules” of the workplace. Using *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby Payne as a resource, employees spend half their one-week training exploring cultural and diversity differences that could lead to misunderstandings. Equally important, Cascade’s managers develop insight into employee behaviors that could be misinterpreted as being irresponsible. Cascade works with partners to support employees, including a coalition of agencies that provide transportation and help parents find suitable child care. An arrangement with the local Department of Human Services places staff on-site who coordinate with supervisors to head off problems that could result in employees quitting or being terminated.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Use the checklist to assess efforts for hiring, training and supporting supervisors who can successfully retain hourly-wage workers.

COST

\$\$ as most suggestions can be infused into your existing supervisors' hiring and training.

SUPERVISOR SUPPORT CHECKLIST

1. Preparing Supervisors

- Have a thorough description of the position, including skills required to supervise hourly-wage employees
A description might contain the wording: "able to successfully address issues resulting from employees' lower income and limited resources and support outside the workplace."
- Hire people who are knowledgeable about or demonstrate success in retaining hourly-wage workers
At the interview, ask questions such as "What do you think are the challenges for employees making lower wages, and how might a supervisor help them address challenges that affect their job performance?" "Tell us about a time you were able to retain a good hourly-wage worker who was having issues outside the workplace."
- Train newly promoted supervisors in profitability, time management, delegation and managing lower-skilled, less-experienced and/or lower-wage employees
"It cost the business almost \$2,800 to replace an aide who quits in the first two weeks, which is an important reason to get people off to a good start. We've learned that it's really important to learn people's names and to check with them frequently in case they have questions. One way to stay on top of this is to have a list of the people you supervise printed on your weekly calendar and then try to check in with everyone at least once or twice a week."

2. Supporting Supervisors of Hourly-Wage Workers

- Offer supervisors good positive/corrective feedback that they are expected to give their workers
"I just overheard you describing to your team what they have to do to move to Level 2. The way you explained the process was very clear, and I also liked how you handled their questions about the wage increases."
- Have quantifiable measures that indicate supervisor's success—or need for improvement
Measures could include percentage of retention, percentage of cross-trained workers and percentage of people who could be promoted.
- Recognize and reward supervisors who treat hourly-wage workers in ways that encourage them to be successful
"Before we get started, we want to thank Vong for connecting us with volunteers who are tutoring some of our aides in English. People already have more confidence communicating with the patients. Vong, here's a little something for all your hard work."

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Take a look at the tips and then consider whether current supervisory methods take into account the background and needs of hourly-wage employees.

COST

\$\$-\$\$\$ for the extra time to better explain expectations, train, offer feedback and set goals.

SUPERVISION TIPS

What good supervisors do	How supervisors might do it	How supervisors might do it better for inexperienced, less-confident and/or low-income employees
Explain expectations	As the handbook states, you need to call at least an hour before your start time if you've had an emergency and will be late or absent.	<i>"If you need to come in late or will be absent, schedule that several days ahead. Your job is important, so I'll need to arrange for someone to cover for you. If you have an emergency, call at least an hour before you're supposed to be here. If you can't do that, call as soon as you can."</i>
Train to do the job	Mark down anything that's been on the rack over a month.	<i>"We sell anything for 25% off that's been here over a month. Your job is to check the date on the tag and put a mark through the price on items we want to discount. It's June 3rd today, so anything dated before May 3rd is discounted. Here's one that needs to be marked. Here's another. Questions? Okay, give it a try. I'll watch until we're sure you've got the hang of it."</i>
Provide positive feedback	You're doing a good job.	<i>"I have something good I want to share with you. One of our regular customers told me that you made his day when you found him a shirt that fit. And my boss commented on your beautiful smile. He and I really appreciate your efforts to be friendly to everyone."</i>
Provide corrective feedback	Who didn't lock the watchcase? Jenel?	<i>"A reminder, Jenel, you need lock the watchcase before you turn around to ring up a purchase. No, I don't suspect you of taking the watches. You just made a mistake. Everyone makes them. Try keeping that elastic bracket with the key on your wrist. That will remind you."</i>
Seek feedback/encourage questions	Looks like it's going okay, right? Any questions?	<i>"Any ideas why this line of jewelry isn't popular with our younger customers?"</i>
Set goals for improving/advancing	Write down the actions you'll need to qualify for the position, and set a deadline for doing each one.	<i>"I'm not sure how often a buyer's position comes open, but here's a suggestion. Make an appointment with Cheryl to talk about her job and one with Pat in HR to see what skills and experience are required. You and I can talk again on Tuesday to figure out your next step."</i>

BE FAIR, NOT PUNITIVE

THE BENEFITS: Being tardy, being absent, coming to work in a dirty uniform or being unable to focus on the job is often interpreted as having a poor work ethic. That may well be true in some cases, but for low-income workers these behaviors could result from insufficient child care, fragile support systems made up of friends and family who are low-income too, unreliable transportation and other inadequate living conditions—circumstances that don't affect employees in better-paid positions. By being aware and, when feasible, helping employees deal with these problems, you may be able to increase their productivity and lower their turnover.

FYI

In interviewing 97 low-income working parents, researchers for the Across the Boundaries project discovered that nearly half had experienced some kind of job sanction, including terminations, lost wages, denied promotions, and written and verbal warnings as a result of trying to meet family needs.

Keeping Jobs and Raising Families in Low-Income America: It Just Desn't Work.
Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.
Harvard University, 2002.

Make Room for Reality

Maintaining a professional distance aside, managers can best manage when they know something of their employees' individual situations. For example, do employees hold down two jobs? What sort of transportation do they use? Are their child care arrangements stable or changeable from day to day? With this type of information, managers can be aware of challenges some employees face in order to be at work on time and focused on the job every day. Of course, managers of large numbers of employees know less

about individuals, and even those in smaller companies cannot tailor many aspects of the job to accommodate individual circumstance. But a manager who knows that an employee shares child care responsibilities with a spouse who works a different shift may not casually assume that unscheduled overtime is a welcome bonus. Or a manager who realizes that an employee's teenager is at home alone after school may be less likely to discourage a quick, telephone check-in. Managers who are aware that a lack of resources can affect work and who encourage good employees to be upfront about what affects their productivity may be able to facilitate workable solutions.



Problem Solving, Not Punishment

Phillips Restaurants uses two of the most common retention strategies recommended in industry publications: flexible work schedules and involved, supportive managers. Staff working back-of-the-house—dishwashers and food preparers, whose starting wage is \$7.00—report that managers know their names and go out of their way to understand their needs. When problems occur, managers inquire whether something has changed in the employees' lives, and rather than firing workers, they try to help solve personal problems that affect their job performance. For example, managers routinely accommodate the schedules of employees who must hold down two jobs to make ends meet. And they have helped people avoid eviction and pay their bills. The seasonal nature of the restaurant business means that in low-volume times, the company needs less staff, but only temporarily. Some employees prefer a break, especially those going back to school or pursuing another vocation; however the company tries not to lay off full-time employees who depend on Phillips for their income.

It moves those employees to other locations, especially to its food production plant. The fact that Phillips pays its workers competitive wages and offers benefits undoubtedly contribute to the low turnover of 20 to 30 percent yearly, less than half the current industry rate of 73 percent for entry-level employees, as reported by the company. However, the way Phillips and its managers treat hourly-wage workers has much to do with their loyalty.

"It's easy to feel loyal to a place that tells you how great you're doing." Employee, Phillips Restaurants

Try ►►►

THIS TOOL

USE

Use the chart to reexamine policies and practices that can cause unwanted turnover and poor job satisfaction among your hourly-wage workers. If you have the policies and practices described in columns 1 and 2, consider implementing the ideas in column 3, making certain that all employees are treated equitably.

COST

\$\$\$ depending upon the policies/practices you choose to implement. Allowing a quick phone call to check on children or elders costs very little time, but the payoff in employee peace of mind, focus and productivity can make it worthwhile. Offering paid personal days off is more costly, but the reduction in unscheduled absences and increase in loyalty could be significant.

POLICY AND PRACTICES CHART

1. Common Policies ▶	2. Problematic Practices ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶	3. Other Possibilities
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Three strikes and you're out.

A strict three-strikes policy makes your expectations clear, but leaves you no flexibility. Good employees may have reasonable cause for being late or absent, but are sometimes more afraid to reveal it than to be terminated. They may have come to expect little support from employers, feel that an explanation will make no difference and be accustomed to losing their jobs.

Let people know that being on time and at work is important and, because you will work with them to resolve attendance issues, you need to know the reasons they are late or absent. Then consider how you can help alleviate the problems. For example, if they are late because the bus is late, can they start later? If their cars are unreliable, can you start an emergency loan fund? Can you help arrange a car pool? Could you develop a “talent pool” of coworkers who can do inexpensive car repair, share child care or give advice on balancing work and personal life? If people are absent because of sick children, could they work at home, bring the child to the worksite, or switch schedules with a coworker? Could you reward perfect attendance with an occasional afternoon off?

Personal phone calls are cause for disciplinary action.

Personal phone calls affect productivity, but employees may have difficulty focusing on the job if they are concerned about what's happening—or not happening—at home.

Allow quick calls to check on children or elderly parents.

Employees must wear a uniform.

Uniforms create a professional-looking workplace and allow customers to identify employees, but lower-income individuals often can't afford them.

Pay for at least one uniform, arrange for discounts where uniforms are sold or keep a supply of clean spare/loaner uniforms. Recycle the uniforms of those who are promoted or leave.

Being sick is the only excuse for missing work.

A sick-only policy may discourage some unscheduled absences, but it fails to acknowledge reality—and forces people to lie. Lower-income workers often don't have the resources and personal support to deal with a sick child, school meetings or legal matters that must be dealt with during work hours.

Encourage people to be honest about why they need time off so you can assess real needs. If you give sick days, allow them to be used for doctor's appointments and to care for sick family members. Give a couple of paid personal leave days to take care of other business. If you don't want to make this formal policy, let people know that you will work with them when they need time off if they give you advance notice—then be consistent.

Work schedules can change.

Altering schedules can maximize resources and respond to customer demand, but low-income workers, especially parents, may have difficulty adjusting to frequent changes.

Give enough notice to make adjustments with personal situations. If they are unable to adjust, allow them to transfer to another job with a more stable schedule, if possible. Make it clear up front that schedules change and that transfers are not always possible. If you have no alternatives, use your network to help them find other employment.

Overtime is expected.

Although overtime is based on economic decisions and results from an uneven, seasonal or cyclical work flow, employers, and many employees, consider it a perk; however, some workers are pressed to put in the extra hours when child care providers close at a certain time or a spouse works another shift and needs the car.

If the schedule for overtime is flexible (i.e., an individual could come in early or on a Saturday instead of staying late), you should extend this flexibility to workers. Have a pool of part-time people to call on. Or allow work to be taken home, if possible.

BE FLEXIBLE

THE BENEFITS: Of course, flexibility is not possible for all jobs, especially at small businesses. But even in companies with many workers doing the same job, the option of arriving a little late and making up the time is a privilege more often extended to people with professional or administrative jobs; hourly-wage employees are expected to work strictly scheduled hours or face disciplinary action. Fairness aside, offering a bit of wiggle room for those who may need it most can help you create job satisfaction and retain your workers.

Flexibility: The Key

“Our own research consistently reveals that flexibility is linked to engagement, retention, job satisfaction, and employee well being.”

When Work Works. Families and Work Institute, 2002.

Ways to Make “Inflexible” Hours More Flexible and Benefit the Business

Offer a weekly schedule of four 10-hour days or three 13-hour days.

Why? Allows your business to extend its hours.

Cross-train employees to do jobs that require strict hours—such as opening, closing or covering the phones—and allow them to trade off days when they come in early or stay later.

Why? Builds employee skills and provides more flexibility for managers to assign tasks and arrange schedules.

Allow two employees to share a full-time job, working a few overlapping hours to communicate and coordinate their duties.

Why? Provides a wider range of skills and experience for a position – and better continuity when one job-sharing partner is ill or on vacation.

Accommodating the Need for Flexibility

First Horizon offers formal and informal flexibility options and does not discourage its employees from using these. For example, by hiring part-time relief staff to back up full-time workers, the company can better accommodate employees who encounter occasional scheduling problems. This flexible scheduling is especially helpful for working parents as it allows them to take care of their work and personal responsibilities. To assist employees who need more flexibility than their current jobs allow, human resources staff will help identify and move them into more flexible positions when possible. More than half of the employees at First Horizon take advantage of flexibility options.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Use the questions to consider the benefits and logistics of offering flexible work arrangements to your hourly-wage workers. Then decide whether you can implement more flexible policies and practices likely to increase job satisfaction and reduced turnover.

COST

\$\$\$\$ depending on which practices you adopt. There may be expense in scheduling and tracking work hours and aligning these with labor regulations so that you don't incur unintentional overtime costs.

FLEXIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

- Have you sought input from your employees** about what could be most helpful in allowing them to get to work on time every day?

If you assume lesser-skilled, hourly-wage earners will ask only for a substantial raise, you might be surprised. In a report by the Families and Work Institute, the issue of pay did not come up in focus groups of low-wage workers. Instead, workers seemed to be realistic about the wages they could command. And although employees interviewed vastly preferred not to lose pay when they missed work, many would use unpaid time if they could take it without jeopardizing their jobs.

- Do you have formal policies** that allow your hourly-wage employees paid time off to be sick, handle personal business and rejuvenate?

Acknowledging that the workload for its hourly-wage workers is demanding, My Grandma's Coffee Cakes in Boston, MA, offers benefits often found only for upper level or exempt employees. Production and office workers get six sick days a year that may be carried over to the next year, three personal days that can be used for any or no reason and five paid vacation days for the first two years, with up to 15 vacation days in the fifth year of employment.

- Do you have either formal or informal practices** that allow your hourly-wage employees to deal with occasional emergencies, such as breakdowns in child care or transportation arrangements or the need to stay home with sick children?

Although equal treatment for employees must be considered, some companies leave it up to the manager's discretion to make decisions about allowing unscheduled, unanticipated time off.

- Do you have policies/practices for higher-wage employees** that could be extended to your hourly-wage workers?

Companies often allow their professional or managerial employees more control over their work schedules than their hourly-wage workers are allowed; for example, to start the workday earlier and quit earlier to manage child care responsibilities with a spouse or other family member. Although flex-time may not be possible in some jobs, including retail sales positions and companies with few employees, in other cases convention may be the sole reason these privileges are extended to some and not to others.

- Do you encourage the use of the adaptable work arrangements** that you do offer?

Employees can be reluctant to use the flexibility available to them because they feel it might jeopardize their jobs. Although professionals often feel they must be on the job and visible in order to advance, a Work and Families Institute report indicates that low-income workers were even more likely than higher-wage workers to believe that if they use flexible scheduling, they are less likely to advance.

MAKE THE JOB SATISFYING

THE BENEFITS: People may endure jobs that afford little personal satisfaction, but only for a time. Although what provides satisfaction is different for different individuals, feeling that what they do is important, feeling appreciated, having the chance to learn, mastering a skill and being paid to do it—all go a long way toward keeping an employee on the job.

Three Reasons to Make Work Satisfying and Enjoyable

1. Satisfied employees are contented employees, and contented employees treat customers and coworkers well.
2. Feeling appreciated and pleased about one's performance makes coming to even the most routine job satisfying, if not enjoyable.
3. Most people enjoy doing their jobs well and getting paid for their labor and expertise.

Try ►►►

THIS TOOL

USE

To help increase job satisfaction, consider the bulleted suggestions in the right-hand column and identify those you are not routinely doing. Implement the promising practices by prioritizing those that are easiest and less expensive and that you feel will be most effective in your workplace. Aim for responses from your hourly-wage employees similar to the ones in the left-hand column.

COST

0-\$\$\$ depending on which practices you adopt. Many suggestions require only a moment to praise or show appreciation. Paying or allowing time off for certification training or buying pizza for the team incurs costs.

JOB SATISFACTION TO DO LIST

▼ To create this type of job satisfaction

"It's not like I need to be thanked just for doing what I'm supposed to, but it feels good when it happens."

"I didn't think I could ever learn to use the computer, but here I am on it every day."

"My kids are proud of me for working."

"Having this job saved me. When Dave was so sick, I'd come to work in tears some days. My coworkers and supervisor knew what was going on and would listen when I needed to talk."

"Last place I worked, I made a mistake and they gave me my last paycheck at the end of the day. Here if you make a mistake, they don't hold it against you. They just help you figure out what went wrong."

"I want to come to work because there's always something crazy-funny happening."

"It's not the job I want to be doing the rest of my life, but for right now it works out just fine for me."

"I didn't get paid for all the time I had to take off, but they let me come back the day I was ready and I got the same raise as everyone who started when I did."

▼ Do things like this

Make people feel appreciated

- Learn people's names and pronounce them correctly.
- Say thank you and mean it.
- Reward special efforts of individuals/teams with items that are meaningful to people with fewer resources: gift certificates, bus tickets, a special lunch, time off.

Offer opportunities to learn

- Ask people what they want to learn.
- Cross-train, but don't stop there. Help your employees identify the skills they are learning and understand how to apply their knowledge to other tasks.
- Help employees receive certification for the skills they learn, such as customer service; using specific software, materials or equipment; or healthcare procedures, so they have something recognizable/tangible for their efforts.

Build confidence

- Mail to their homes thank-you notes, certificates, notice of raises or promotion so they can be shared with family/friends.
- Ask for employee input on how to best do the work.
- Increase responsibilities as soon as people are ready to take them on.
- Give a small bonus for jobs well done.
- Give a raise within the first six months, even if it is a small one.

Learn what's happening in your employees' lives

- Share personal aspects of your own life, including occasional challenges.
- Follow up when employees mention their families, special events or difficulties.

Promote supportive relationships

- Provide a sponsor for newcomers (see pages 32 and 33).
- Arrange events so people can get to know one another outside of work. For example, tickets to a sporting event where everyone sits in the same section, or volunteering together for a community event.
- Personally acknowledge those who help create a caring environment on the job.

Allow mistakes

- Treat mistakes as learning opportunities, not catastrophes.
- Acknowledge when people do difficult tasks correctly.

Create a pleasant work atmosphere

- Hire people with a sense of humor, gentle teasers, those who like to laugh.
- Lighten up a stressful day with some absurdity that helps put it in perspective.

Make the job work for individuals

- Find out why people want to work at your business specifically, and continue doing what people appreciate—for example, scheduling around their outside obligations or allowing children to come to work occasionally when child care arrangements crumble.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

After a month or so on the job, distribute a similar assessment and have new employees respond to three crucial components of job satisfaction. Discuss their responses and consider what can be done to increase satisfaction likely to affect individuals' productivity and loyalty. Don't make promises that can't be kept, but acknowledge dissatisfaction and explain why some changes can't be made. Discussing the job offers an opportunity for relationship building and for identifying both satisfying and frustrating aspects of hourly-wage positions.

COST

\$\$\$\$ depending on the type of actions taken.

SATISFACTION ASSESSMENT FORM

1. Balancing Work and Family/Personal Responsibility

Actions to Improve Job Satisfaction

- It's a tremendous struggle
- It's challenging
- It works okay most of the time
- It's working out fine

Would be lots better if I didn't have to work every weekend

Okay, maybe I could rotate the schedule so everyone gets a weekend off every six weeks or so. I'll do some research.

2. Job Duties

- I'm dissatisfied
- I'm mildly satisfied
- I'm really satisfied
- I love the job

I'd like to do some outside deliveries

Help her get her professional driver's license?

3. Feeling Appreciated

- I feel unappreciated
- I'm barely appreciated
- I feel generally appreciated
- I'm definitely appreciated and people show it

I wish somebody besides Greg would say I'm doing OK

Her two-month anniversary's coming up. We'll do a party. Also I'll remember to pass on compliments from Arnie in accounting.

Other factors that could make the job work better for me:

AVOID PITFALLS TO MAKING STAYING EASIER



Not Selecting, Training and Supporting Supervisors Adept at Managing Hourly-Wage Employees

Think carefully about whom you put in charge of your hourly-wage employees. People are more productive when they are respected and valued and know it. Hire supervisors who are empathetic, straight-shooting problem solvers.



Not Changing Policies or Practices that Cause Good Workers to Quit or Be Fired

Take time to pinpoint why employees you want to keep leave your business. Sometimes policies/practices (such as “three strikes, you’re out” or allowing time off only for illness but not, for example, parent-teacher conferences or legal appointments) are based on custom or convention with little regard to the realities of holding down a job and managing responsibilities outside the workplace.



Failing to Treat People Equitably

In retaining workers it is most important to treat people impartially and fairly — not necessarily in the same way. For example, employees without children will most likely not resent your allowing parents time off for a child’s sporting event if you allow them occasional time off for an occasion important to them.



Asking for Feedback, but Failing to Acknowledge Problems or Take Action

Job satisfaction is directly related to employee loyalty, but what constitutes a satisfying job is different for different people. Determining what could make a job satisfying for good workers requires both observation and inquiry. However, you may lose trust and credibility by asking individuals what could make their job better if you are unwilling to take action. If a change is impossible to accommodate, admit it, and offer more information, a plan or an alternative.





HERE TO STAY

Section 4
**They Learn,
You Benefit**



ATTITUDE, REALITY
CHECK AND WHAT
YOU CAN DO TO
HELP PEOPLE LEARN

►

Common Attitude

Hourly-wage workers don't stay on a job long, so it makes little sense to invest in more than minimal training.

What Needs to Change?

“Workers with the highest wages and most formal education receive the most workplace education, whereas lower-wage workers and those with the lowest level of education receive the least.”

Monthly Labor Review 1998, 121(6).



Think About This

You are probably not doing business the same way you did last year. Your employees may be producing or selling new products, offering new services, dealing with different customers, interacting with new or fewer coworkers or complying with updated policies and regulations. Even if you have not made significant changes, you are undoubtedly seeking ways to increase the speed, quality or quantity of what you produce. All this requires employees, including your hourly-wage workers, to acquire new skills to keep your business competitive. There are many reasons to train your hourly-wage workers that can outweigh time and expense. Well-trained employees are confident and capable of assuming control over their jobs, which frees management for other tasks.

Trained employees can answer customers' questions, which builds customer loyalty. And employees who understand the business are less frustrated, more satisfied and less likely to complain. In fact, there is likely to be much more leverage in training your unskilled workers if you invest in training that 1) increases productivity and/or fixes mistakes, and/or 2) builds a labor pool for higher-level, less easily filled positions.

What You Can Do

Mentor Openly,
Covertly and
Continuously ▶

Mine for Talent ▶

Increase
Expectations and
Expertise ▶

Make Skill
Building
Intentional and
Accessible ▶

MENTOR OPENLY, COVERTLY AND CONTINUOUSLY

THE BENEFITS: When your new hourly-wage workers increase their knowledge and skills, they can deliver better products and services more consistently and more quickly. Their increased productivity increases your business' profitability.

Tips for Making Mentoring a Common Occurrence

Here are three ideas you can implement with or without a training department:

1. Create an environment that encourages those who help and teach others.

Tell newcomers that their coworkers will help them learn the ropes and that when they are veterans they'll be expected to do the same.

Reward employees when you see them teaching others. It need not be a monetary reward. Give the "teacher" an apple pie to share—or two free tickets to the movies or a pack of bus tokens.

Model informal ways to build skills:

- Behind the counter — *"Have you tackled the phone system yet? The directions didn't help me at all so I made up my own. I'll be happy to give you a copy and show you some basics."*
- In the lunchroom — *"You did a great job dealing with Mr. Smith this morning. The first time he yelled at me, I lost it. I found the best way to avoid annoying Smith is to double-check his order, call Joe or Nito to take his packages to the car and ask him if he has a new joke—he loves to tell his jokes."*
- At the computer — *"Let me show you a trick someone taught me. If you want to copy a slide from another file, all you have to do is... ."*

2. Have a Routine Time for Group Learning.

Once a week, once a month or four times a year, schedule a learning session. Don't make it mandatory, but make it worthwhile. Keep it short and bring food. Vary the topics, speakers and venues. Have workers who have developed a special technique or process share their idea. Invite a friend or former teacher to offer useful information. Schedule an exchange visit with a vendor.

3. Send a Message.

Once a week or so find a quote, a statistic, a marketing idea, a sales approach, a customer service technique or a fact that can be applied to your business. Encourage employees to make suggestions. Send the message through email. Or post it in the restroom, lunchroom, break room or behind the counter.

Questions Are Encouraged, So Are New Employees

After an initial five-day training, newly certified customer support representatives at **Ryla** get on the phones. Team leaders and experienced associates—anyone whom the newcomers want to approach—act as coaches. Reps are monitored randomly by a Quality Assurance team that provides feedback in positive terms and is thought of as "genuinely interested in helping."

"They train you until you say you don't need more. But you can always ask questions, and we do."
Associate, Ryla Teleservices

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Set the example calendar next to yours and identify times when similar learning activities could take place at your worksite. Try to encourage informal learning between veteran workers and new hires. Provide experiences that are likely to build confidence and have a positive effect on the performance of hourly-wage workers. Scheduled activities, such as lunch groups and cross-training, reinforce your expectation of continuous learning and improved performance. Also, when coworkers help train newcomers, they develop communication and leadership skills. Take participation into account during performance reviews of sponsors and coworkers who help train and support others.

COST

\$\$ for time it takes to organize events and employees' time away from job duties. Presentations by outside lunch group speakers or your partner organization (see Section 5) could cost little or be free.

LEARNING CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26 <i>Partner Organization calls new employee at home to make sure she's ready for her first day at work</i>	27 <i>Sponsor introduces new employee to others and takes her to lunch to discuss work culture</i>	28 <i>Coworker explains monthly inventory and demonstrates counting machine</i>	29 <i>Coworker gives pointers on spotting duplicate entries on inventory</i>	30 <i>Manager informally checks in, encourages and answers newcomer's questions</i>	1 <i>Partner Organization checks in with both employee and manager and discusses first week on the job</i>	2
3	4	5 <i>Sponsor invites employee for coffee and asks how her family is adapting to mom's new work schedule</i>	6 <i>Lunch Learning Group: Coworkers demonstrate their favorite products; newcomer to demonstrate next month</i>	7	8	9
10	11 <i>Training Opportunity: New employee sits in on suppliers presentation about window sealant</i>	12 <i>Coworker answers questions about issuing rain checks</i>	13 <i>Manager stops by to congratulate employee on handling customer with mystery credit card</i>	14	15 <i>Sponsor takes new employee to book-keeping to answer questions about withholding on paycheck</i>	16
17	18 <i>Coworker observes employee standing about and suggests she straighten up check-out counter</i>	19	20	21 <i>Sponsor advises new employee not to discuss drugs with coworkers, even jokingly</i>	22 <i>Cross-Train: New employee spends several hours in shipping and receiving and tries hand at cardboard compacter</i>	23
24	25	26 <i>Partner Organization advises employee to request only half a day off for her sister's wedding</i>	27 <i>Manager acknowledges employee's first month anniversary and thanks her for her work</i>	28 <i>Sponsor suggests employee develop a specialty; employee starts studying catalogs on ceiling fans</i>	29 <i>Partner Organization visits and inquires about employee's training needs</i>	30

MINE FOR TALENT

THE BENEFITS: Do you have more difficulty filling jobs a step or two above your most entry-level positions? You may be able to fill those positions, increase productivity, produce better products or add profitable services if you could harness the interests or innate talents of your hourly-wage workers. Identifying and allowing workers to use their talents requires little investment and could yield large dividends.

Talent: A Pharmacy Tech Lurking in Security

For **Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions**, located in a low-income area of Baltimore, MD, it's easier to find security guards and housekeepers than to hire qualified medical staff, including nurses' assistants and radiology and pharmacy technicians. With this in mind, the Institutions' Skills Enhancement Program offers a broad range of courses from GED, ESL and college preparation to medical terminology and computer basics. One employee, a security guard with a high school diploma, brushed up on his language and math skills by taking free on-site tutorial classes. Once he was "confident that he could go back to school," he enrolled in a medical terminology and computer class at the Skills Enhancement Center before being accepted into a pharmacy technician program at a local community college. Receiving full-time pay while working part time, the man became a certified technician and was hired in the hospital pharmacy. In exchange for the training, which resulted in a substantial increase in wages and job satisfaction, the new technician agreed to work for Johns Hopkins for a year. (Many job-specific programs at Johns Hopkins are supported through partnerships with local government, community-based organizations and community colleges. See Section 5 for partnership ideas.)

Tips for Mining Talent

1. Show an interest in what your hourly-wage workers can do, aside from the job for which you hired them.
2. Have workers identify their aptitudes, interests and skills — and those of their coworkers — and learn how these could be used on their own jobs and for higher-paying positions.
3. During performance reviews — or even casual conversations — discuss with employees their talents, instead of spotlighting flaws.
4. Develop an action-oriented plan so employees can set goals, document achievements and increase skills that benefit your business. Connect the plan with performance reviews, raises and promotions.
5. Cross-train workers to expand the number of tasks they can do — providing variation of their routine and increasing job satisfaction.
6. Encourage managers to identify talented workers, develop their abilities and move them to more skilled and responsible positions — instead of hanging on to them.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

To help identify talents, distribute a similar inventory to an employee and his/her coworkers. Then discuss these talents as skills transferable to the workplace. If appropriate, take actions that can better use the talents to benefit both the business and the employee. Acknowledging talent increases loyalty because your employees know you are interested in them. It can also raise the confidence needed for employees to take on additional responsibility and to advance to more difficult-to-fill positions.

COST

\$\$-\$\$\$ for time it takes to complete and discuss responses. Offering additional guidance or training may incur additional expense.

TALENT INVENTORY

Talents	I have a talent for and enjoy:	I noticed my coworker has a particular talent for:	As a manager, I noticed our employee has a talent for:
<p>Working with people, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking time to understand what others are saying • Helping customers • Helping coworkers • Making others feel comfortable • Explaining products or services • Handling complaints effectively 	<p><i>I always read labels. I figure others won't spend the time, so I share what I find out. I'm careful though—most people don't want to hear too much.</i></p>		<p><i>I watched Maria help a customer pick out colors. She has very good taste.</i></p>
<p>Working with information, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing products/services • Remembering information/details • Keeping electronic/written information well organized (orders/receipts/invoices, etc.) • Being good at numbers • Finding solutions to problems and making systems work smoothly • Other skills specific to our business 		<p><i>You can tell after Maria has used a register. Everything is organized, and there are notes written about the sales and promotions. The tape/toner is never low.</i></p>	
<p>Working with equipment/space, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging equipment/products/displays so space functions well/looks appealing • Using tools/equipment • Fixing equipment • Keeping products/stock organized • Filling orders quickly and accurately • Other skills specific to our business 			<p><i>Maria's register always has more volume, more sales. She is just faster than else—more people go through the line.</i></p>
<p>Actions</p>	<p><i>Talked w/Maria about the possibility of using her talent for sharing information and helping customers make decisions. Discussed a transfer to appliance or furniture, where positions are harder to fill—and where she could earn a commission and make more money. She's interested and will job shadow in each department.</i></p>		

INCREASE EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERTISE

THE BENEFITS: Increasing your expectations of employees who may be struggling because of lack of personal resources may seem counterintuitive; however if increased expectations lead to more job satisfaction and the opportunity to advance, it can pay off in motivated, better-skilled workers who will stay longer and become real assets to your business.

Developing Assets

At **Marriott International**, the Career Advancement Training (CAT) is an 11-week, 36-hour training program designed for entry-level employees. Developed and supported by the corporate office and available for any Marriott employee, CAT is viewed as a way to increase people's productivity in their current jobs, help them develop the skills to move into other positions and stabilize the turnover that is endemic to the hospitality industry. The program, a combination of classroom and on-the-job cross-training, addresses customer service, Marriott culture, goal setting, teamwork, time management and professional image and behavior. Cross-training exposes employees to occupations outside their regular job and department. For example, housekeepers can cross-train in positions in food and beverage, kitchen, front office, building maintenance or security. Employees also develop a resume that outlines their new skills and learn more about the employee-assistance benefit that offers free, confidential assistance on issues of daily living. CAT training at some hotels has been supported by local government funding earmarked for incumbent workers.

"The chance to learn a new position gives me a better understanding of the hotel business and helps me see new opportunities for work. It also makes me feel like part of a team and realize that if I work hard the company cares about my future." Cook's helper, Marriott

High Expectation

First Horizon begins training its entry-level employees during a two-and-a-half-week, classroom and on-the-job orientation. For example, tellers, who start at \$9.00 per hour, learn basic system and transaction procedures and customer service skills. But they are trained also in proactive decision-making and taking charge on the job. After the initial orientation, managers and supervisors coach the new tellers with the goal of moving them to higher-level positions as soon as they feel comfortable. Steps for advancing are well defined. Those who perform well at all three teller levels and complete a certification program can move into leadership positions. In fact, they are expected to progress through the levels whether or not they want to become leaders. Pay increases at each level. The company offers tuition-reimbursement to employees, including data entry clerks and statement processors, seeking to continue their education. During the yearly performance review, managers ask questions and help identify and solve problems that hold individuals back. In addition, the company tries to place employees where they can be most creative. Because the company offers a wide range of services, employees—even hourly-wage employees—can be moved as their talents become apparent.

"They want us to think outside the box, be self-reliant, know how to take initiative, and get the job done." Employee, First Horizon

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

With a struggling employee in mind, consider whether improving the skills listed on the left could result in retention or increased productivity indicated in the middle columns. Think about ways for the employee to gain the relevant skills. Attention to basic and life skills can allow you to identify skills necessary for particular jobs.

COST

\$\$ for supervisor time to connect performance to basic skills and to discuss options for skill improvement with employee. Costs are incurred if the company pays for training; however, basic skills training may be available free or purchased at a nominal price. Check with your local One-Stops and your employment and training partners.

SKILL IMPROVEMENT CHECK-OFF

Basic/Job/ Life Skills	Reduce Turnover		Increased Productivity/ Asset Building			Actions for Improving Skills
	Reduce mistakes	Minimize work/life conflict	Increase job satisfaction	Improve productivity in current job	Advance to a more skilled position	
Improved Their Basic Skills						
Spoke English better						
Could read better						
Could write better						
Had better math skills	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Improved/Expanded Job Skills						
Offered better customer service						
Had better computer skills						
Improved/learned _____ (job skill)						
Could function better on a team						
Could better identify/solve problems	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Improved Life Skills						
Could better balance work and life	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Could better handle personal finances						
Could better handle legal issues						
Could better handle stress						
Other:						

Discuss with Chris that what keeps him from being more productive are his math skills and self-confidence. He wasted \$300 of materials when he mismeasured, and he doesn't contribute when it comes time to lay out the structure and figure the rail spacing. We could have him work on Tim's crew to get better instructions and more experience. Also we'll lend him a workbook and buy him a good tape.

Works a second job in security a couple nights a week and comes in dragging. Will discuss how getting a handle on the math/layouts will lead to a raise and see if he could cut back on night work.

MAKE SKILL BUILDING INTENTIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE

THE BENEFITS: Although business is about business, not about training, most jobs provide opportunities to learn, become more productive and build skills that can be applied to other tasks. Instead of allowing learning to take place in a haphazard, hurry up, as-needed, crisis basis, help your hourly-wage employees identify valuable skills and develop a plan to gain and use them to increase productivity and their value to the business.

How Your Employees Learn Best: It's Not in the Typical Classroom

Adults, especially those with many responsibilities and few resources, don't have time/patience for abstractions. What's learned should be concrete, useful and used immediately.

*~~"one theory of germs is..."~~
~~"here's how to sterilize a catheter"~~*

Adults who have had poor academic experiences can be anxious or ambivalent about learning. They learn better in an environment that doesn't remind them of a classroom.

*~~rows of desks/teacher up front~~
~~in the lunchroom~~*

Adults often have a sense about what they need to know. They can assess their own skills or identify their own gaps and limitations.

*~~standardized test, only~~
~~self-assessment/discussion with mentor~~*

Adult learners are not clean slates. They learn best when new knowledge is connected with what they already know.

*~~"Tighten it half a turn..."~~
~~"Remember how we tightened..."~~*

Nor are they necessarily empty pitchers waiting to be filled. Collaborating with coworkers, managers and trainers is more effective than sitting and listening to an authority.

*~~"Listen up, I going to tell you..."~~
~~"Okay, let's figure out why..."~~*

Adults learn when there is a good reason to learn: to achieve a gain or protect themselves from loss.

"You need to get certified to keep your job, but you'll also advance a level and make \$1.05 more an hour."

Low-Cost Ways to Build Skills

Coaching

Someone who knows how to do something teaches someone who does not. *"Luis can get 10 cars in the same space the rest of us can get in 8. He's going to teach you how to do it too."*

Cross-Training

Have employees learn jobs related in some way to their own. *"Spend a couple of hours with Sherri to learn how she keys in the new inventory; that way when you ring up an item and discover a pricing error, you'll have a good idea of what it takes to fix it."*

Hands-On Learning

Many people in entry-level jobs learn by doing. *"The fire department is coming to check our extinguishers and show us how to put out small grease fires. You'll get a chance to give it a try."*

Assignments

Give an individual or group the task of solving a problem. *"I figure we can save \$1,600 a year if we cut back to one dumpster. As a team, first check my reasoning and see if I've got it right. Next figure how we could reduce the amount of trash we generate and then report back on whether it would be worth the effort."*

Self-Directed Learning

Provide resources to motivated individuals who have identified skills they want to obtain. *"The software and manual are on the Intranet. Here's the password."*

Partner with Employment and Training Organizations

See Section 5 in this guide.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Follow a five-step plan to encourage hourly-wage employees to identify opportunities, develop plans and gain skills that benefit both them and your business. Your employees can take responsibility for actions that increase your profitability.

COST

\$ for supervisor and employee time to identify opportunities. \$-\$\$ depending on whether training takes place during work time and whether/how much the business pays for fees, tuition, licensing, certification and other training-related expenses.

LEARNING ACTION PLAN

- 1 . First give employees information about business needs/strategies/plans and then help them identify opportunities that align with these.**

"We have enough business to expand our full-time crew. We'll need more people who can lay turf and apply pesticides."

- 2 . Have employees put plans in writing and update these periodically.**

Goal: <i>Get hired full time on the new crew.</i>				
What I need to do/learn	Actions I need to take	Timeline	Problems/obstacles	Solutions
<i>Learn how to install turf.</i>	<i>Go out with Randy/Jorge on some turf jobs.</i>		<i>My part-time maintenance crew doesn't do turf.</i>	<i>Check with foreman; ask about working on the new housing development job.</i>
<i>Get certified in Pesticide Application.</i>	<i>Sign up/take one-day class at Community College.</i>	<i>Sign up by 12/5. Take class on Sat, 1/23.</i>	<i>Getting Saturday off from my other job. \$40 tuition/fee.</i>	<i>Get Lupe to work for me that Saturday. Ask about getting a check for the fee up front.</i>

- 3 . Follow up with employees on their plans.**

"All set for the pesticide class?" "How'd the class go?" "Did your certification come in the mail yet?"

- 4 . Provide opportunities to practice new skills.**

"Now that you have a taste of turfing, we could use help rehabbing a golf course on Monday."

- 5 . Acknowledge/reward those who gain skills useful to your business.**

"Okay, everybody listen up. The doughnuts are to celebrate Hugo and Juan Carlos getting their pesticide certification last weekend. They'll be part of the new full-time crew we're putting on in late February."

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Identify skills in the left-hand column that could improve employee productivity and allow you to advance your lower-paid workers to harder-to-fill positions. Then consider the information in the other columns that can help increase desirable skills.

COST

\$\$\$\$ depending on when and how skills training is delivered.

SKILL TRAINING OPTIONS

Skills needed to become assets and advance	Options to teach skills	Ways to make acquiring skills accessible to hourly-wage worker	Resources/ possible funding
Basic literacy/ English language skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invite community college or employment and training organizations to provide language classes for your business or for a group of similar businesses, perhaps through a business association. ▶ Develop and offer your own business-specific training, perhaps with the help of a consultant who can do needs and skills analysis. ▶ Hold brown-bag lunches where employees informally practice English, improve pronunciation or learn/review grammar and word usage that could improve communication with customers. ▶ Purchase language videos, cassettes or computer courses employees can check out and take home—or use on company equipment during breaks or lunchtime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Schedule classes on site or nearby during lunch time, between shifts or directly after work to help minimize child care/transportation problems. ▶ Pay or offer raises to employees who attend class and meet learning goals, such as improving scores on standardized language tests; obtaining a certificate, a GED or a high school diploma; or showing progress in communicating on the job, as determined by their supervisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Business/organization partnerships may be eligible for grants through federal/state or local workforce development agencies—if the training meets certain criteria. Check with your state or local Workforce Investment Act agency or WIB. ▶ Community colleges or adult education programs often provide a needs/skills analysis and customized training. Employers usually pay for the services/ training, but some public funding may be available for special populations, such as welfare recipients, refugees, those needing English-as-a-non-native-language training, ex-prisoners or displaced workers. Unions also offer skills training. ▶ Check with local volunteer agencies and state resettlement offices who may receive funding from the Refugee Resettlement Program at the US Department of Health and Human Services to provide ESL and job readiness services to newly arrived refugees.

SKILL TRAINING OPTIONS

Skills needed to become assets and advance

Options to teach skills

Ways to make acquiring skills accessible to hourly-wage worker

Resources/possible funding

Computer literacy

- ▶ Have employees with no or minimal skills partner with experienced, patient, computer-savvy coworkers who can teach basic functions and the software applications. Point out to teachers that their coaching will make them more eligible for supervisory positions.
- ▶ Hold a workshop/workshops on basic computer skills, enabling employees to produce something needed for their job, such as a spreadsheet, notice or poster.
- ▶ Pay or reimburse all or part of the tuition for pre-approved and completed computer classes.

- ▶ Allow employees to access self-paced lessons or online classes during predetermined working hours.
- ▶ Provide several computers, place them in a central location, have sign-up/time-limit procedures and allow them to be used by employees during breaks, lunchtime, before or after work.
- ▶ Provide laptops that can be checked out overnight, with limits on borrowing time.
- ▶ Give employees outdated but functioning computers no longer needed by your business or new computers as a bonus or incentive.
- ▶ Have a computer-acquisitions plan that allows employees to buy computers at a discount and then provides a specific amount of time for computer maintenance and support.

- ▶ Publicly funded One-Stop employment centers often offer basic computer training and related online classes.

Supervisor/management skills

- ▶ Offer a personal development series of workshops on topics such as pursuing your dreams, achieving goals, financial management, and time management — topics that will help the workers grow individually and learn management skills. At the end of each session or as the last session, have managers connect the topics with skills necessary for assuming supervisory responsibilities.
- ▶ Cross-train employees on management tasks/duties, such as planning sales promotions, controlling inventory, drafting budgets, interacting with suppliers, resolving conflicts and/or implementing procedures and policies.
- ▶ Provide a workshop for supervisors/managers to identify, coach and encourage workers who demonstrate people skills and an aptitude for organization to work toward management positions.
- ▶ Ask your partnering staffing company or employment and training organization to include some management skills in their training for job seekers.

- ▶ Offer workshops during working hours or at lunchtime.
- ▶ Have mentors/managers help interested employees develop a step-by-step plan for moving into supervisory/management positions. (See Make Skill Building Intentional and Accessible on page 64.)
- ▶ Provide tuition reimbursement for classes that develop supervisory skills.

- ▶ Look for community college outreach programs seeking to recruit part-time students in short-term programs. Some might offer scholarships for low-income individuals, or consider tuition reimbursement for employees who successfully complete programs and accept supervisory duties.
- ▶ Consider banding together with other members of industry or trade associations to share the cost of training frontline supervisors.
- ▶ Public funds may be available to train incumbent workers who can help your business succeed. Check with your local Workforce Investment Board.
- ▶ Approach your partner employment and training organization to explore whether it can develop and offer supervisor training that leads to promotions for entry-level workers.

AVOID PITFALLS TO TRAINING HOURLY-WAGE WORKERS



Overlooking Basic Skills Training

The cost of not training workers in basic workplace skills may well exceed the cost of training. Poor communication skills, for example, can cause not only expensive errors and lost production, but workplace injuries and deaths. Weak basic skills also impair productivity and limit improvements, such as introducing new technology and equipment that require reading complex instructions or understanding mathematical equations. Although the general public expects its schools to equip graduates with skills beyond the basics, US employers know that not all job seekers are graduates and those who graduate may still lack skills and the ability to transfer what they learned in the classroom to the workplace. In addition, large numbers of those working in hourly-wage jobs are non-English-speaking immigrants. Helping workers gain basic skills to both do the job correctly and be productive may be, in fact, a necessary expense – as well as a good investment.



Failing to Encourage Hourly-Wage Employees to Set Goals

Performance reviews and goal setting are time-consuming activities for both managers and employees, but businesses risk wasting valuable resources—for which they are already paying—when they fail to develop the potential all workers bring to the workplace.







HERE
TO
STAY

Section 5

Partner

For Retention



ATTITUDE, REALITY
CHECK AND WHAT
YOU CAN DO TO
**PARTNER
FOR RETENTION**



Common Attitude

Becoming involved with outside organizations or agencies, especially those connected to the government, is more hassle than it's worth. Most are interested only in getting people hired – usually people with shady backgrounds or those unable to get a job otherwise.

What Needs to Change?

Researchers interviewing business organizations representing 78,000 employers found that many were unaware of services available to them from the publicly financed workforce development system.

Reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act: What Employers Say about Workforce Development. Workforce Innovation Networks, WINs, 2003.



Think About This

Currently, employment and training organizations that receive federal funding get dollars based on how successfully their referrals keep their jobs. Although some organizations are more effective than others at helping businesses retain workers, many are trying to make certain that individuals are ready for work, carefully matched to jobs and have access to assistance with child care, transportation and other services that allow them to keep working. In addition, effective employment and training organizations have recognized that local businesses – not just job seekers – are their customers.

By forming a partnership with high-performing organizations, you can get help hiring the right people, help keeping them on the job and help training them so they become assets to your business.

What You Can Do

Find the Right Partner ▶

Partner to Keep People On ▶

Partner to Improve Skills ▶

FIND THE RIGHT PARTNER

THE BENEFITS: By using an employment and training organization whose staff is knowledgeable, professional and attuned to your needs, you could develop reliable resources for your hourly-wage workers at no – or little – cost.

Help for Your Employees Means Help for You

A partnership with an employment and training organization can provide benefits similar to an employee assistance program (EAP). These organizations often receive public funding and can provide free services. The low-income individuals you hire might be eligible for support that can keep them on the job, such as:

- ▶ Assistance finding and/or paying for child care.
- ▶ Help with transportation costs.
- ▶ Housing assistance and emergency heating fuel assistance.
- ▶ For new hires, assistance purchasing uniforms or other clothing for work or tools.
- ▶ Financial planning and help accessing income benefits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. In a few locations, matched savings plans to build assets.
- ▶ Access to work-related health care services; for example, financial assistance to replace missing teeth or for eye examinations and glasses. Access to State Children’s Health Insurance Programs and Medicaid for family members.
- ▶ Access to counseling services.
- ▶ Support groups to help balance work and family.
- ▶ Financial assistance to upgrade skills (sometimes with child care included).
- ▶ Help learning English, building basic skills or obtaining a GED.

The Right Partner Sends the Right Workers

Triad Speakers, Inc., employees 45 process operators, all of whom are expected to work in teams and cross-train for all the processes that produce the company's factory-customized high-end speakers.

Mt. Hood Community College Workforce Connections, a local employment and training organization and One-Stop Center, has helped Triad find people with the right mind-set, those who like working with others and who are open to learning new skills. Although not all employees are hired through Connections, Triad's director of manufacturing feels confident that those prescreened by the organization's business services specialists are people he will want to take a close look at. The specialists have spent time at the plant and know what it takes for its operators to succeed.

More than a Pep Talk and the Occasional Bus Ticket

Located in Chicago, the **Cara** program assists employers in finding quality, motivated candidates to fill entry-level positions in hospitality, manufacturing, office services, health care and financial services industries. The program provides customized skills training, job preparation, job placement and intensive retention services. For its job seekers and new workers, a large part of the program involves goal setting, financial planning, credit and debt management and a matched savings plan. Cara also provides extensive supportive services to employed individuals that include rental assistance, dental care, transportation assistance and on-the-job mentoring. All services are aimed at helping low-income workers stay on the job and advance.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

Read the FAQs to learn about the benefits of partnering with employment and training and other organizations/agencies assisting entry-level job applicants. Contact your local Workforce Investment Board to learn about specific resources in your community. You might also discuss these questions with businesses similar to yours that use the services of effective organizations.

COST

0 to learn about the organizations and their services to businesses.

FAQs ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS

▶ What's an employment and training or workforce development organization?

These organizations provide employment-related services to individuals and workforce-related services to business. They include large One-Stop Career Centers; small, medium or large nonprofit community-based organizations; and programs operating through community colleges. Increasingly, these organizations focus on assisting employers as well as job seekers. While their capacity, services and quality of service differ, most can help supply job applicants to employers. Many provide prescreening and prepare applicants for specific jobs.

▶ Don't these organizations deal with welfare moms, drug addicts or people with criminal backgrounds?

Many do. However, they often have special expertise to help individuals prepare for work and retain their jobs. The best organizations work closely with business owners, human resource staff and managers to understand what skills and attitudes are required. In addition, these organizations may be able to help businesses access an untapped source of workers willing to take hourly-wage jobs, gain skills and become assets to their employers.

▶ What services could an organization offer my business?

Services commonly offered to employers include: screening job applicants, help with job matching, soft skills training, preparing job seekers for specific jobs, support services to help individuals remain employed or quit responsibly, supervisor training and customized job training, including training incumbent workers.

▶ What do I have to do to get services? Isn't there a lot of paperwork?

Most organizations try mightily to meet employers' needs, provide services that are beneficial and eliminate any paperwork. Employers who share information and invest time in creating a partnership are most likely to receive valuable help in finding the right people for their entry-level jobs, retaining them and upgrading their skills.

▶ Do I have to pay?

Typically, a wide variety of core services to business are available at no charge to the business, job seeker or worker. In some cases, businesses have invested in or paid a fee to participate in local initiatives providing, for example, very specialized or intensive training or development projects.

▶ How do I find organizations in my community?

Contact your local Workforce Investment Board. (WIBs can be located by using the directory of the National Association of Workforce Investment Boards, www.nawb.org/asp/wibdir.asp.) Also check with the Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, Goodwill Industries, the Urban League or your local Mayor's Office for organizations that provide assistance to both employers and job seekers. Trade associations, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, also have information and resources for employers of hourly-wage workers. The US Department of Labor Business Solutions team assists large multistate employers in connecting with the publicly funded workforce system. See www.doleta.gov/BRG/Business_Solutions/

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

To decide whether you want to partner with a particular employment and training organization, first identify local organizations that refer hourly-wage workers to local businesses and then assess their services. Not all effective organizations provide everything listed; however, they often collaborate with other organizations to offer a fuller array of services to businesses. You might want to share this assessment with potential partners as a starting point to discuss your needs.

COST

\$ for the time needed to identify and assess potential partner organizations.

PARTNER ASSESSMENT

- The organization is knowledgeable about my industry.
- The organization's staff members are eager to learn about my company by visiting and listening to my expectations and concerns and by observing what my employees do. They are interested in:
 - How my products are produced and how my services are delivered.
 - Who my customers, vendors and competitors are.
 - What it takes for my company to be competitive.
 - The skills needed by my hourly-wage workers.
 - My expectations regarding employee productivity and behavior on the job.
 - The type of person who would fit in and be successful at my company.
 - My hiring process and requirements.
- The organization's staff members are professional and conduct business with my company's best interest in mind. They:
 - Communicate in language I can understand.
 - Offer a single contact at their organization.
 - Are realistic and honest about the individuals referred for employment.
 - Return calls and keep appointments.
 - Keep information confidential.
 - Stay in touch.
- The organization offers services that could reduce turnover and increase productivity, such as:
 - Referring good employees who might otherwise be difficult to find.
 - Prescreening job applicants to ensure a good match.
 - Helping with interview scheduling.
 - Offering new employees assistance that gets them off to a good start (this might include help with child care arrangements and transportation).
 - Training applicants and new employees in skills specific to the job.
 - Continuing contact with new hires until they are settled into the job and doing well.
 - Reinforcing job performance expectations and offering realistic solutions to problems that can interfere with performance and retention.
 - Helping manage turnover by encouraging employees planning to quit to give ample notice and by quickly replacing those who quit or are fired.
 - Responding quickly when employees behave/perform in ways that could lead to being fired.
 - Offering additional, informed suggestions about how you can minimize turnover and increase your hourly-wage workers' productivity.
 - Letting me know what's expected of my business and me.
- The organization provides information and data about their services and results. It:
 - Has readable marketing materials that tell exactly what services they provide, who to contact and how to contact them.
 - Describes accurately the skills that individuals will have after participating in their program.
 - Can provide reports on the results of their services, including how long individuals stay in jobs in which they are placed.
 - Welcomes the business customer on tours/visits to the program site.

PARTNER TO KEEP PEOPLE ON

THE BENEFITS: It's not difficult to find private agencies and nonprofit organizations that want to supply workers for your lower-wage positions. Partnering with those who are truly interested in helping you retain employees could mean less turnover for your company.

Partner Support and a Training Opportunity

In Cleveland, Ohio, local employers can partner with **Towards Employment**, a not-for-profit employment and training organization offering employment services through its worksite-based initiative, **ACHIEVE**. Employers select from a menu of services to create a customized program that fits their needs and includes activities targeting both managers and frontline employees. **ACHIEVE** offers training for supervisors on diversity and the issues faced by low-income workers, 24/7 access to **ACHIEVE** staff who can assist employees during personal crises, a review of the company's human resources practices and support in the implementation of career ladders. Working with low-wage employees, **ACHIEVE** offers confidential counseling; support, such as uniforms, child care and bus tickets; and Lunch & Learn workshops at the job site in which employees can increase soft skills and receive information, for example, on the Earned Income Tax Credit. Employers receive quarterly reports detailing services and progress made toward meeting predetermined benchmarks, such as the percentage of low-wage employees earning a perfect attendance award, or a decrease in involuntary terminations among target employees. During a three-year demonstration phase, **Towards Employment** reports that, for three quarters of the 22 employer partners, **ACHIEVE** participants experienced lower turnover than the employer baseline with a 34 percent reduction in turnover on average.

Tips for Finding Resources to Train Your Workers

- 1.** Contact your local Workforce Investment Board to learn about programs and services in your area. Find yours at www.nawb.org/asp/wibdir.asp
- 2.** The Department of Labor provides much of the public funding for training the US workforce. Usually individuals must qualify and apply for training vouchers, but sometimes contracts for on-the-job or customized training are available to employers or employer associations. Being in touch with your state or local WIB will keep you informed of opportunities to increase the skills of your workers.
- 3.** If you hire people receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits, they may be eligible for job placement services and/or skills training. Staff members of agencies/ organizations placing welfare recipients will have information.

4. Much of public funding is earmarked to train workers in areas where there are many openings and a continual shortage of skilled labor.
5. Most states and some local areas set aside funding for economic development. For example, if a business can bring jobs to a community, the employer may be able to receive funding to train individuals for those jobs.
6. Different funding allocations have different requirements and expectations. Working with a community or public partner is frequently a requirement.
7. In addition, the US Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Center for Workforce Preparation, which develops workforce strategies for chambers, businesses and communities to hire, train and advance skilled workers. See www.uschamber.com/cwp/

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

To identify what you can do to get the most out of a partnership with an employment and training organization, put into action the suggestions on the right. They can help your partner help you find the right people, retain and advance them.

COST

\$\$ depending upon the amount of time you interact with your partner organization.

PARTNERING TIPS

- ▶ Let your partner organization know the length of time you expect a new employee to stay.
- ▶ Invite your partner and potential job candidates to visit so they can meet supervisors and coworkers and get a feel for the environment and work culture.
- ▶ Discuss your application and interviewing process and the skills and expectations for specific jobs. Provide your employee manual, performance review forms and other materials that would help your partner understand your expectations.
- ▶ Have your partner attend new employee orientation.
- ▶ Agree to contact your partner if issues arise with employees referred to you. Allow him or her to contact you to check on employees' progress.
- ▶ Consider your partner a resource on retention issues—for example, for insight on creating a supportive workplace, mediation with employees when things go wrong, and ways to provide flexibility, training or incentives that keep people working.
- ▶ Get your partner's help with accessing training for your employees. This might include supervisor training, basic skills upgrades, English-as-a-non-native-language training and customized training for specific job skills.

PARTNER TO IMPROVE SKILLS

THE BENEFITS: Publicly funded local employment and training organizations – or those funded by private donations and/or foundations – can often offer expert advice and skills training for your hourly-wage workers. Some services may be free to employers of eligible workers. Employers or the trade/business associations to which they belong often purchase customized training and ongoing retention services.

Getting the Skilled Workers You Need

In many places, employers in specific industries have built active partnerships with organizations that receive funding for employment and training. Here's what six effective partnerships do and how they are funded:

Charlotte's Career Pathways Partnership helps employers diversify their workforce by screening applicants, primarily Latinos, to meet employer standards. It also provides customized skills and language training for specific professions. Companies can receive up to \$4,000 per trainee to assist in job and language training costs.

Funding sources include: State of North Carolina for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Adult Basic Literacy, United Way, Duke Power, Latino Pathways, local businesses, churches, charitable foundations and individuals.

The Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute conducts skills training, education and career support programs for frontline employees and neighborhood residents in the local health care and research industries.

Funding sources include: participating employers, SkillWorks, the Miller Foundation and state and city contracts.

The Westside Industrial Retention and Expansion Network, WIRE-Net, in Cleveland, partners with technical schools and community colleges to help employers fill job openings with trained workers. The organization offers retention support and additional skill building to graduates hired by WIRE-Net employers. WIRE-Net also provides economic development services, including physical expansion, financing and trade seminars.

Funding sources include: the City of Cleveland through the Workforce Investment Act, US Department of Labor and private foundations.

The Lancaster Workforce Investment Board in Pennsylvania supports an initiative that maintains a pipeline of skilled workers for the food processing industries. More than 50 classes are offered over a three-year time period, with 20 employers sending workers to gain skills.

Funding sources: a consortium of schools, public agencies, employers and employer associations that combine their resources.

Jewish Vocational Services of San Francisco prepares individuals for work in the retail, hospitality, health care, non-profit and business service sectors through customized training, English language training, job placement support and partnerships with schools, community colleges and local employers.

Funding sources include: California Employment Development Department, Private Industry Council of San Francisco, the Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative, the Mayor's Office of Community Development and the Jewish Community Federation.

The District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund in Philadelphia, PA, was established through employer contributions to the National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees (AFSCME). It supports a learning center where employees can access free classes seven days a week during daytime and evening hours to build skills in reading, math and writing, English as a Second Language and basic computer competency. Workers can also prepare for the GED and take courses related to being a nurse's aide/home health aide, practical nursing and behavioral health.

Funding sources include: public resources from the federal and state education, welfare and labor departments to expand services to the larger community.

Try ▶▶▶

THIS TOOL

USE

To assess whether your business might qualify for training for your employees, put a check in the boxes next to the questions for which you can answer yes. Use the criteria suggested here to seek more information from your local Workforce Investment Board or other organizations/agencies working with entry-level job applicants. Keep in mind that processes and criteria for funding training for industrial sectors and individual businesses differ significantly.

COST

\$ for the time needed to seek information based on this preliminary assessment.

TRAINING FUNDING INVENTORY

Are You Qualified?

- Is your business part of a high-growth, high-demand business or industry sector in your region?*
- Could your business be more profitable if your low-wage employees had better or different skills?*
- Could you retain workers, raise wages or advance your low-wage employees to better-paying positions if they received skills training?*
- Could you increase your workforce if job applicants had better or different skills?*

Are You Connected?

- Do you know what agency/organization in your community allocates public funding for workforce development? (It would include a Workforce Investment Board.)*
- Are you a member of a business/industry alliance that advocates for skills training for its associates?*
- Are you partnered with an employment and training organization that provides trained applicants for your entry-level jobs?*

Are You Knowledgeable?

- Are you aware of the local priorities for funding training of low-income job seekers or incumbent workers?*
- Do you know what would be required of you if your employees received training through public funding?*
- Do you know the process for obtaining or participating in training supported by public funds?*

AVOID PITFALLS TO PARTNERING FOR RETENTION



Failing to Take Advantage of Free or Affordable Opportunities to Help Hire, Retain and Train Hourly-Wage Employees

Public, community and private employment organizations are eager to work with businesses seeking to hire and retain lesser-skilled, low-income workers. Many have staff who are experienced in training and supporting people likely to be hired in your hourly-wage jobs. Smaller businesses may be overlooking a valuable source of expertise, especially if they have limited human resources capacity.

Partnering with an Ineffective Organization

Don't spend time trying to work with employment and training organizations whose staff does not take the time to understand your business and labor needs. Don't try to partner with those who are eager for you to hire their job applicants, but don't carry through on promises or disappear when problems arise. Organizations that are more interested in placing their job seekers than they are in your needs do not make good partners. Look elsewhere.

Not Holding Up Your End of the Partnership

Partnerships involve two or more parties with mutual interests and responsibilities working in concert. You will gain more from partnering with an employment and training organization when you are willing to participate beyond the hiring process. For example, taking the time to educate your partner about your industry, business and the skills required of workers; providing internships; or serving on an advisory board can help the organization better prepare job seekers to work for you.



HERE TO STAY

Plan For Retention

Use the following Action Plan as a guide to assess what your business is doing to retain its hourly-wage employees, to plan improvements or take action and then to evaluate the results.



ACTION PLAN FOR RETENTION	Do This Now	Could Improve	Should Do This	Related Tools & Action	By Whom	Who	Results
QUALITY MATCHES							
Have Coworkers Help Select New Hires							
Give All Qualified Applications Consideration Without Preconceptions About Race, Ethnicity, Background							
Facilitate Dual Decision Interviews							
Give Candidate Time to Job Shadow Before Making a Decision to Work for You							
PROVIDE A WARM WELCOME							
Have Specific Activities to Welcome New Hires and Help Them Feel Comfortable							
Provide Orientation to Workplace Culture as Well as to Job Duties							
Provide a Sponsor							
Have Frequent Check-Ins to Head Off Problems							
STAYING POWER							
Have Supervisors Knowledgeable About the Challenges Facing Hourly-Wage Workers							
Have Policies and Procedures that Encourage Retention							
Use Supportive Instead of Punitive Policies for Absenteeism							
Have Flexible Scheduling							
Help Workers Solve Problems that Cause Turnover							
Create a Pleasant and Supportive Group Atmosphere							
Make the Job Satisfying to Individuals							

ACTION PLAN FOR RETENTION	Do This Now	Could Improve	Should Do This	Related Tools & Action	By Whom	Who	Results
ADVANCING TALENT							
Create a Supportive Learning Environment							
Encourage Supervisors to Discover and Develop Talent							
Help Workers Improve Basic Skills that Affect Their Performance							
Provide Cross-Training							
Offer Advancement Opportunities, When Possible							
Help Workers Set Personal Goals that Can Benefit the Business							
PARTNERING							
Partner with Effective Employment and Training Organizations							
Work with Employment and Training Organizations to Identify Job Applicants Who are Good Matches							
Work with Employment and Training Organizations to Support New Hires							
Work with Employment and Training Organizations to Build Basic, Life and English as a Second Language Skills							
Work with Employment and Training Organizations to Provide Job Skills Training							

Publications That Look at the Challenges Faced by Low-Income Workers:

The Betrayal of Work: How Low-Wage Jobs Fail 30 Million Americans
by Beth Shulman, The New Press, 2003.

Keeping Jobs and Raising Families in Low-Income America: It Just Doesn't Work, A Report of the Across the Boundaries Project, The Radcliffe Public Policy Center, (Harvard University), www.radcliffe.edu/pubpol, 2002.

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America
by Barbara Ehrenreich, Henry Holt and Co., 2001.

Working Hard, Falling Short: America's Working Families and the Pursuit of Economic Security, A Report of the Working Poor Families Project, www.aecf.org/initiatives/josinitiative_workingpoor.htm, 2004.

The Working Poor: Invisible in America
by David K. Shipler, Knopf, 2004.

Resources and Tools for Employers of Low-Wage Workers:

Developing the New Employee: A Trainer's Guide for Retaining and Enhancing a Diverse Workforce
by Denise Bissonnette and Richard Pimentel,
www.miltwright.com/

Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay
by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2002.

Making Work Work: Tools for Turnover Reduction (including CD), developed by Goodwill Industries International, Inc., and Key Links.
www1.goodwill.org/, 2004.

Workforce Management, a monthly magazine published by Crain Communications, provides tools to help solve human resources issues, often including those involving frontline workers. Readers can subscribe to its online listserv and receive frequent information updates.
www.workforceonline.com

The Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Extension, offers an online worksheet to help calculate the cost of employee turnover.
www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/publicat/turn.html#calc

Organizations That Offer Information on Hiring, Retaining, Training and Advancing Low-Income Workers:

Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategies Initiative (WSI) identifies and advances strategies that help low-income Americans gain ground in the labor market. www.aspeninstitute.org

Business for Social Responsibility

BSR offers a large number of online tools and guidelines on responsible business practices, including a free report, developed in cooperation with the National Retail Federation Foundation (NRF) and Jobs for the Future (JFF), to help retailers improve retention and develop advancement strategies for their employees. www.bsr.org

Center for Workforce Success

The training and education affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers' Manufacturing Institute, the Center for Workforce Success finds and promotes workforce solutions for manufacturers. Among other initiatives, it offers research and "how-to" information on building workforce skills, much of it relevant to other industries and individual businesses. www.nam.org/workforce

Corporate Voices for Working Families

With its 50 corporate partners, Corporate Voices for Working Families offers a private sector voice to the public dialogue on issues affecting working families. In particular, the organization assesses the impact of workplace flexibility as a management tool that can lessen stress and promote the well-being of workers and their families. www.cvworkingfamilies.org

Families and Work Institute

Families and Work Institute is a nonprofit center for research that provides data on the changing workforce, family and community. Its initiative When Work Works highlights the importance of workforce effectiveness and workplace flexibility as strategies to enhance businesses' competitive advantage in the global economy and yield positive business results. www.familiesandwork.org

Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future provides models and strategies for businesses to build a skilled workforce. It links employers to local educational institutions and organizations that provide skill development tailored to the companies' needs. www.jff.org

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

This federally funded research and development center is dedicated to improving practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma. Its website contains information on workplace education of interest to employers. www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=631

Public/Private Ventures

P/PV conducts research, provides training and publishes materials to help improve the performance of employment and training and other organizations that assist low-income job seekers and provide services to their employers. www.ppv.org, click on Labor Market

US Chamber of Commerce, Center for Workforce Preparation

The Chamber provides educational information and local community-based resources to industries and to businesses of all sizes seeking solutions to worker shortages and training challenges. www.uschamber.com/cwp/

ABOUT US



P/PV

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

Working Ventures

Working Ventures is a P/PV initiative that seeks to improve the performance of the workforce development field by providing practitioners and policymakers with the knowledge and tools needed to operate effective employment programs. We support the field by documenting effective employment strategies and practices, convening practitioner workshops and providing resources to encourage program innovation.

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