

Business should carry more burden of training tomorrow's workers

by Michael Kinsman

Several months ago, I reviewed the job posting for an entry-level position at the newspaper where I work.

The job was for a newsroom support person, who would assist editors and reporters and sometimes do minor writing jobs. There is no heavy lifting in this job.

But upon reviewing the job requirements, I am embarrassed to say I wouldn't be considered a viable candidate today for that job.

Still, I certainly could do the job, and did when I first started in the newspaper business. And, I certainly am capable of handling a job more demanding than that position right now.

But I wouldn't be hired today.

That thought lingers with me, and I must admit bothers me to a degree.

I've come to realize that sometimes employers sabotage their hiring flexibility by becoming too rigid in the list of requirements they demand of job candidates.

If you stand in the middle of the street today, you can hear employers on one side who claim they can't find qualified workers.

On the other side of the street, you can hear job seekers complaining that they can't find work even though they have been diligently looking for months.

What that tells me that company recruiters - in their rush to dutifully hire the best and the brightest - might actually be doing their employers a disservice by failing to acknowledge changing market conditions.

Those changing market conditions appear to be a shrinking labor pool of qualified workers and a growing labor pool of individuals who may not be a perfect fit yet probably would be suitable employees if someone

would make the effort to train them.

One reason this phenomenon exists is simply because our society has spoiled us.

Although it's certainly not the only goal of our educational institutions, helping prepare young people for the work is an important role for schools and universities.

And, the basic education they provided was fine for people through the 1960s. Then, an individual could graduate from high school and go out and land at least a middle-class job. And, to fill jobs that required advanced training or special expertise, companies often helped individuals gain that training.

Try to find a middle-class job today with just a high school degree. It may not be impossible, but it certainly is difficult.

Employers demand more of their new-hires than ever before. They expect job candidates to obtain specific skills and training on their own before they go to work.

When employers can't find those individuals, they complain about a shortage of skilled workers.

A simple solution is for employers to lower their hiring standards and step up to the plate to provide more training for the individuals they need to fill highly specific skilled jobs.

Many employers don't like this. Without a doubt, it adds costs they would rather not have. But is it fair to expect society to provide business with turnkey employees to meet the needs of a particular company?

Doesn't it make more sense to expect business to step up and shoulder more of the responsibility for training people in the specialties it needs to bring its product to market?

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