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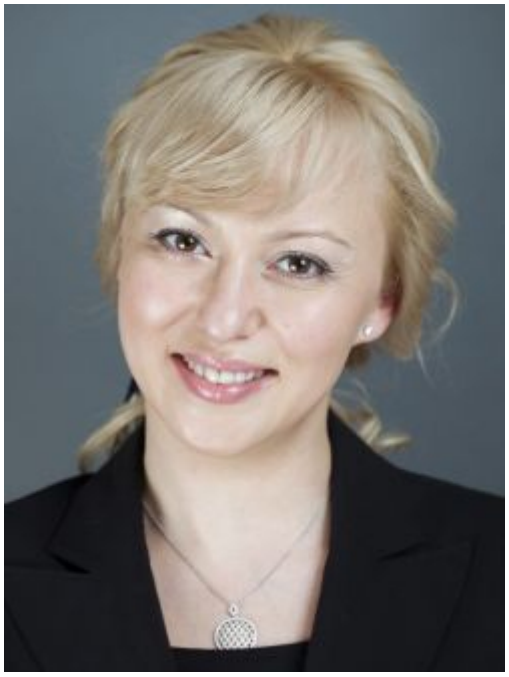
Employment: Creating Business-Driven Solutions to the Youth Employment Challenge

By Irina Kurganova

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Employers complain about the difficulty of finding recent graduates who have adequate skills for available jobs. According to our latest survey, employers worldwide report they are experiencing difficulty filling jobs due to:

• a lack of information, networks and connections among youth, especially youth from families lacking significant social capital;

• a lack of skills relevant to the workplace;

• a lack of experience and credentials that address employers' risk in making hiring commitments;

• a lack of available jobs suited to entry-level skills.

Graduates entering the workforce are unprepared as business has changed and education has failed to evolve with it.

In order to do this, employers must partner with schools to improve the quality and delivery of career services for young people at a time when they are making important decisions about their future. Below, ManpowerGroup identifies specific actions, informed by our own 65 years of experience in the World of Work, that employers can take now.

Support Information Projects to Provide Career and Labor Market Information for Young Job Seekers

Employers have an opportunity to reach beyond the job-board model while still working proactively with emerging job information services and platforms popular with youth, such as mobile phones/texting and smartphone-based applications, in order to connect with young

people more efficiently. Employers can also cooperate with special programs and initiatives that are designed to give youth a deeper understanding of overall career trends and opportunities.

By using these channels and transparently specifying the qualifications required for their positions, employers can help youth gain an understanding of the jobs available in the local economy, the avenues for pursuing those jobs, and the skills and experience necessary for obtaining them.

Partner with Demand-Driven Training-to-Employment Programs

Training-to-employment programs focus training narrowly and intensively on the requirements of specific, available jobs, and include a post-training placement component based on prior hiring commitments from employers. These programs can help employers rapidly address skills shortages and they can efficiently expand access to work opportunities for individuals who may not have been able to obtain these jobs on their own.

Create and Engage With Programs that Build Young People's Work Experience

Prior work experience is positively associated with an individual's ability to obtain permanent work at a later date. Such work is therefore a superior alternative, for young people, to accepting an extended period of unemployment while they wait for an optimal full time opportunity that may never emerge. A series of internships, project work, temporary work, etc., can be structured in low-risk, low-stakes way, giving young people easy access to these opportunities without requiring long-term commitments from employers or creating dead-end jobs.

Commit to Hiring, Training, and Mentoring Youth

Companies that are willing to invest in training and mentoring young people on the job will be able to make better use of the recruitment sources that are realistically available to them now, and will benefit from a base of loyal employees with career and promotion potential. On-the-job training and mentoring can also be one element in a more comprehensive strategy for better responding to emerging talent shortages and finding innovative ways to source, develop, and manage the talent necessary for sustaining long-term business objectives.

Companies need to "lean forward," take a calculated risk, and open their doors to inexperienced young job candidates. They need to invest time and effort to develop and train these young people, and to make the long-term commitment to develop both general workplace competencies and specific enterprise skills. They need to engage their best employees as mentors to young talent.

Invest in Entrepreneurship Education in Schools, Colleges, and Vocational Institutions

One important strategy for expanding the number of available jobs is to expand the number of job creators. Promotion of entrepreneurship is an indispensable component of regional economic development. Promotion of youth entrepreneurship in particular can directly impact potential young business-starters themselves, while spreading positive employment impacts among their peers and their communities.

Once again, I would like to reiterate that businesses can no longer simply rely on the labor market, or a bidding competition, to ensure access to required talent. Employers must come to understand that pro-active talent development tailored to their own requirements is in their own interest, and it is indispensable to sustaining their long-term growth.

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