

ISSUES FAIRFAX 2008 JUST IN TIME SKILLS NEEDS



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A Dialogue

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- To strategize about how to invest in and develop human capital in Fairfax County and Northern Virginia to ensure that workforce availability keeps pace with short-term business needs.

- Discussion Questions:
 - ⌋ What are the skills gap issues in Fairfax and Northern Virginia?
 - ⌋ How is the inability to recruit immediately qualified workers effecting your business now? How will it in the future?
 - ⌋ How could the skills of Northern Virginia's workforce be developed in the short term?

IS THERE A NORTHERN VIRGINIA SKILLS GAP?

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- The skills gap - the inability of employers to find a fully qualified workforce -- has serious consequences for employers and employees. Thousands of companies fail to achieve the levels of productivity that would make them profitable.
- Economists identify Fairfax County and Northern Virginia has a 'labor shortage' region – there are more available jobs than potential workers available.

What Businesses Say Nationally

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Skills Requirements *'what skills do you need from a ready and prepared worker now and over the next 18 to 24 months'*. These skills are not in order of priority nor do all skills apply to all businesses interviewed. They are trends across multiple businesses in various industries.

- Technical skills, including mechanical and electrical
- Work ethics
- Customer service skills
- Team skills
- Supervisory skills
- Communication skills
- Sales skills
- Numeracy skills
- Literacy skills
- Problem solving skills
- Decision making skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Creativity, innovation skills
- The ability to think in diverse ways, open to new and different ideas
- Systems thinking and analytical skills for work process integration
- Basic computer skills (including, how to turn it on, open and move between multiple screens, and how to use a computer while talking to a customer over the phone).

Two Other Key Requirements - Nationally

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- The ability to pass a drug test
- The ability to pass a criminal background check

What About This Next Generation of Workers?

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- Millennials, the newest generation to enter the workplace.
- Referred to by a variety of names: Gen Yer's, Generation Next, Sound-Byte Generation, Echo Boomers among others. Millennials were born between 1980 and 1999. They are about 74 million strong and are just starting to enter the workforce. Many in this generation don't know what it's like to live without a computer. They are by far the most technologically savvy generation.

What About This Next Generation of Workers?

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Some characteristics:

- Very demanding and realistic – about life
- May have *Helicopter* parents – people who hover and step in when the child faces difficulty (can be at school or on the job)
- Demand diversity at work and demonstrate respect for people
- Are more team-centric at work and are well educated
- Thrive in a collaborative work environment
- They talk a new language – *instant messaging* ("#s look gd... Inch @ 1/ back l8r." Translation: "The numbers look good. I'm leaving for lunch at 1 p.m., and I'll be back later.")
- Like freedom and flexible work schedules; are multi-taskers and excellent goal-setters who prefer macro-management
- Believe they should be evaluated on work product – not on how, when or where they got it done

Potential Northern Virginia Short-Term Strategies

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1. Build a sense of urgency throughout the Northern Virginia community about the misalignment between business needs and the skills and talent gap of the current Fairfax County and Northern Virginia workforce (if there is one).
2. Consider two key focus areas:
 - *Talent Recruitment*: Focus on importing new talent to Northern Virginia or encourage to return to the region.
 - *Talent Development*: Focus on K-16 to invest in and build human talent and capital in the region. Develop sustainable partnerships between workforce organizations, economic development entities, K-12, and higher education to enhance talent development in the emerging workforce.