

Business Matters

New Jobs Forecast for Oregon

Replacement and Transfer Jobs outnumber New Jobs 11 to 1

Story by Milo Banks

Salem OR - The Oregon Employment Department projects total job growth in Oregon of 10% between 2022 and 2032, which translates to about 221,600 new jobs. That's a lot of jobs added, but in terms of 10-year growth since the year 2000 it's moderate growth.

New jobs are only one element of Oregon's workforce needs. Across the board workers are lost to retirements or career changes, and those workers will need to be replaced. Replacement job openings make up 92% of all opportunities during the next decade. Replacements outnumber new openings 11/1 and total nearly 2.5 million openings statewide.

Even industries that aren't projected to grow at all will have many job opportunities available as the current workforce retires or changes careers. A wide range of industries will grow more slowly than average, from natural resources and manufacturing to retail trade and government. Although utilities and mining are small and slow growth fields, there will still be thousands of job opportunities in the next decade from replacement. Even finance and insurance, which is projected to decline in total employment, will have nearly 50,000 projected replacement openings over the next 10 years.

The workforce is aging in the U.S. and Oregon, and while workers are staying in the workforce later in life than in previous generations, older workers are still very likely to exit the workforce. Several slow-growth

industries have an older than average workforce, especially natural resources and mining, real estate, and utilities, where approximately 30% of workers are 55 and older.

Another aspect of this is "transfers", those workers who leave one field for another. Projections indicate a higher turnover and younger industries, such as retail, have many more transfer openings over the 10-year period.

An example is, Power Plant Operators, who are a high-wage occupation that is vital to the slow-growth utility industry. The median wage in Oregon is an enticing \$50 an hour, but the field is relatively small and expected to decline 7% from 2022 to 2032, meaning there will be roughly two fewer people doing this job each year across the state. Those declining number of jobs might discourage people from considering this lucrative and important career, but the industry will still need to find new workers. There are about 17 projected openings in this field annually due to replacement needs. There are dozens of examples of occupations that are slow-growing or declining that will still need trained workers to enter the field each year.

New jobs, overall, are projected to be somewhat soft over the 10 years, 2022 - 2032, but it doesn't portend decline per say. Replacement jobs in an older workforce and job "transfers" will likely translate into continued stable employment rates even in slower economic growth times.

Business Oregon Seeks Applications for Grant Program

Story by Milo Banks

Supporting Regional Innovation Hubs Business Oregon and the Oregon Innovation Council are pleased to announce the availability of approximately \$2.5 million in grant funding to support the implementation of Regional Innovation Hubs. These grant funds are expected to support collaboration and community partnerships, create and expand existing innovation-based entrepreneurial services, and assist regions across Oregon to coalesce around a larger vision for their innovation ecosystem. The Request for Grant Applications is currently open and will close on February 20, 2024.

A key recommendation in Oregon's 10-Year Innovation Plan, Regional Innovation Hubs are partnerships that deliver programs and services to support the creation and development of high-growth, scalable, innovation-

based businesses. To receive grant funding, Hubs will provide technical assistance, access to capital, networking, talent development, and mentorship to Oregon companies primarily in the technology and science sectors.

Key program outcomes will include innovation-based companies growing, attracting investment capital, and creating jobs. In addition to directly supporting entrepreneurs, the goal of the program is to fill gaps in the existing innovation and entrepreneurial resources across Oregon, encourage increased partnerships and coordination among partners, and foster regional collaboration.

Applications are due no later than 8:00 a.m. PST Tuesday, February 20, 2024.

More information about this program and the full application can be found at www.oregon.gov/biz.

Drain Chamber of Commerce

Continued from Page 8

industry museum or a pioneer plaza or history walk in town. There is of course the covered bridge and the old wagon display to incorporate into any of these projected features. Breathing new life into the towns features and appearance would go a long way to improvements.

Betterment ideas include, painting or revamping downtown buildings and put a new face on the blight and decline. Adding park and park like facilities to give more local activities a place to bring folks a comfortable recreational setting. One of the ideas is to look towards a Park overseer, a resident to help keep Ana Drain park secure and safe. Bonnie has done some inquiry on the feasibility and has information from Yoncalla city who has such an attendant

there. Still in the exploratory stage, if the details are worked out properly, it could help curb vandalism and other inappropriate problems that affect the park.

Any efforts at improvement or beautification requires citizens and residents to step up and work together. Bonnie reminds us that the city of Drain has rich history of citizen involvement in it's past and the whittling away of our lifestyle can only be reversed with volunteerism. Step up and find a voice and reach out with your activism and organize. Join the Chamber of Commerce, find a Committee, form a coalition with your neighbors and work together.

Zolezzi Insurance - Two Generations

Continued from Page 4



"A lot of things in this industry have changed and the one thing that I try to keep consistent is the level of service. If we weren't doing the service piece of it I suspect we wouldn't be nearly as successful as we are."

"The other side of that success is the people I work with. I have a wonderful staff, I always have. I've been fortunate to find such good people and there are a lot of talented people in these small rural communities, like the ones which we live, that get overlooked. We somehow find a way of sifting the sands and getting the gold nuggets on the other side of it. So, yea, we provide a good service and I have a wonderful staff, without those 2 most important things, we certainly wouldn't be successful."

I asked about managing challenges in the current market and economic landscape, Craig had this to say.

"So, yeah, covid changed the business world a ton. Folks started working remote. We still do a little bit of a hybrid with some of the employees that may work a day or two at home but the majority have now come back in the office on a full-time basis. We have a wonderful team, some great people but it is the biggest challenge, as we grow and need more talent it's ever increasingly difficult to find it. Jessilyn Whiteman is the agency manager, she deals with 99% of the HR, she is my right arm, she is wonderful. She's a good communicator, can handle many things at once and she continues to drive that side of the business which is wonderful for me because it gets me gives me the ability to get out and about and try to drum up some business. I need talented people, I'm not a big fan of let's do everything remote. Yes we do utilize technology we've done a good job with that but I don't want it to be 1-800 hit a button you get somebody in Denver Colorado that knows absolutely nothing about living in Western Oregon and they're going to be the ones that helps you, that's not a model for us so I would say recruiting talent is a massive challenge."

"Another challenge is markets. Smaller agencies like mine, I need to make sure that I can continue to build and foster good relationships with the markets so that I have good competitive price products to sell to my customers. With the inflation, everything's up. That's a challenge. In the thirty some years I have been doing this, it's the most difficult insurance marketplace I've seen. So what I mean by that is the insurance companies appetite for risk has shrunk. Things that they used to write every day, are no longer acceptable to them or if it is acceptable, then they increase the price 30%. So we're seeing significant rate increases across the board. I don't know when or if that end is in sight. It's a trend that I don't like and it is continuing. And then from just owning a business, the tax structure in which we live makes it very difficult to continue to be profitable and fiscally healthy as an organization I'm not sure that's ever going to change either."

When we talked about goals for his company he said, "So my goal is to provide the best service in the industry. I want my people to care about what they're doing to be passionate about what they're doing and to take care of the people that we do business with. That is number one. Yes we have to make a profit while we're doing that, but that isn't the main focus. That culture has been established when this business was established. My dad instilled that in me. There's a certain way, there's a right way to do things and there's a right way to treat people. I think we've done a good job of fostering that and being committed to that and developing a culture that resembles and reflects that. So that is probably what I'm most proud of, the bottom line is that I've got good staff. They come to the party each and every day, they put themselves out there and they do a wonderful job of service and to continue with that culture we have. And we did just expand into

Florence, that was a goal I had like three years ago and worked very diligently to get there. What I want to do next is to continue the culture and migrate it to the west. We've done that for the last year and we're pointed in the right direction. The talent that I acquired when I purchased the agency, they are drinking the Kool-Aid and they're providing the services this insurance agency is known for. I want to grow, I want to employ more people as the growth comes but the biggest thing is the service to customers and the well-being and the happiness and health of my staff. I want to maintain that and continue forward."

Spending the morning with Craig was a high energy tour of the Drain office and meeting his co-workers and a very concise description of his enterprise and after a few photos I thought we would



Gordon L. Zolezzi
Founder, Zolezzi Insurance Agency

wrap it up and he wanted to end with these words.

"My favorite things are the relationships that I've built with customers. Hands down the relationships that I have built with people across the state make me get up every single day, right? I'm kind of a workaholic I do this everyday. I don't complain about it because I enjoy it and the reason I enjoy it is because of all the relationships I have not only with my staff, they're awesome, but also with all of the folks in the communities in which I serve."

"The other thing about small communities is that I grew up in Drain it's fun to just kind of walk the streets and visit with people that I don't see that often anymore and that I remember as a kid. One of the things I really like to do, this is strange but in the summer when it gets light really early, I'll go to the Drain office and maybe do some work outside and then there's a bench in front of our building and I like to sit there and just kind of look around."

"I remember when Bob Whipple had his accounting shop next door and Bill Lockyear had the pharmacy and the bank was right here and the postmaster George Eglington was down there and it was a real downtown community. I'm not saying it isn't now but you know I have all of those memories and those are created because we live in such a small area that everybody becomes friends oftentimes I'll sit on that bench and I will see someone walking by, and I'll be like, 'Hey Rusty how you doing. Good to see you', 'Hey remember when we were kids and we went and did this or that?' That's what's fun about being in a small town. I played Little League baseball here and really, that is the most fun about growing up in a rural community and working the business that you have established and, you know, you have some pride. I have a lot of pride. I tell people where I'm from and they laugh at me, right? And they kind of they kind of snicker and I tell them, I have no problem. I'm proud I came from there, that's a hard working town, there's a lot of good folks there and that's where I cut my teeth, so I own that."