

A Welfare to Work Program that Transforms Lives

By JACK BRATTON
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

As a slow moving economy puts a new focus on employment policy, a pilot project at Portland Community College (PCC) is helping companies and their employees reduce turnover and increase productivity, and helping employees build good careers.

The program, the Career Transcript System (CTS), is based on the idea that positive communication between supervisors and employees improves the workplace. CTS gives supervisors a structured way to coach and develop their employees, and it helps employees build up solid workplace skills and boost their self-esteem.

For Terri Greenfield, Dean of

the Business and Government Department at PCC, the availability of the workplace liaison – or “coach” – is the most important aspect of the program because “they act as a sounding board and offer advice and support to program participants.” According to Greenfield, the CTS program “is what human resource departments should be doing.”

CTS advances the development of core workplace skills that are crucial for success in any job. CTS uses objective and work-based evaluations to assess on a regular basis a person's proficiency with core skills. The results are then recorded on a person's “Career Transcript,” which is similar to a resume. The Career Transcript is a

constantly changing document that reflects an applicant's most up-to-date education and work experience. In addition to highlighting an employee's strengths, it can be utilized as a professional development tool by identifying skills that need to be improved. This allows employers to provide the necessary training to help the employee reach his or her full potential.

The Portland CTS program is based at the Department of Social Services one-stop center in partnership with Portland Community College. The program was first implemented in Portland in May 2000 and there are currently 94 active participants in the program. A majority of participants are single mothers. In CTS sites around the

country, job retention is increasing, wages are increasing, and skills are improving.

A variety of businesses – 22 in all – take part in the program by hiring CTS participants and providing the necessary support these employees need to help ensure their success on the job. Participating businesses in the area include hospitals, rehabilitation centers, assisted living centers, grocery stores and retail stores.

One of the main goals of the program is to increase employees' skills in order to achieve the type of upward mobility in the workplace that will ensure that participants get off – and stay off – welfare.

For more information, contact Melissa Siberts at 410/516-5190 or Liz Goodman at 202/667-0901.



PHOTO BY M. WASHINGTON

Pat Sheehan is a letter carrier for the United States Postal Service. To qualify, an applicant must pass the official Postal Carrier exam with a 70% or higher. A letter carrier can start off as part-time flexible for 2-3 years, earning \$14.65 per hour with opportunity to do overtime. After serving 10 – 15 years, the salary increases to over \$20 per hour. Excellent benefits are included.

“One Stop Shopping” for Job Seekers

By LOUIS ZERBE
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I always enjoy the “One Stop Shopping” concept when I go to a Fred Meyer's. You can get almost anything at those stores. But what about for other areas in your life – like getting a job? Wouldn't it be great if you could go into one place, do the whole thing and come out happily employed with a great job? Well, now you can! Picture this: You make one stop and have resources available, from A-Z to become employed. Portland Community College has a group of Work Force Training Centers that are truly “one-stop-pers.”

The Work Force Training Centers will help you with your resumé, offer job postings and whatever else it takes. There are computers and faxes along with a whole host of other services at your disposal. They even bring the employers to you. Each week, employers visit the Career Center and talk about their company's job opportunities. You can inquire about them while they are interviewing you. If it is a match, they can recruit you right there.

As part of the program, job seekers will undergo a series of tests to assess skills and talents. Training and career upgrading is given over a 6 – 12 month period.

The centers use a “needs based” training approach that's tailored for the job seeker. This means you don't have to become whatever kind of employee they have training for at the time, such as when dislocated log truck drivers were all trained to be computer operators. PCC's main goal is to give you the kind of skills that will get you back to work, not at just any job, but the right one for you. If all this is not enough, maybe the cost will convince you: it's free. If you are out there and stuck in your job search, use the resources through the Work Force Training Centers through Portland Community College. Call 503/244-6111

for more information.

*Portland Metropolitan
Workforce Training Center
5600 N.E. 42nd
Portland, OR. 97218
503/943-2000
503/943-2221

*Central Portland
Workforce Training Center
1626 S.E. Water Ave.
Portland, OR.
503/731-6600

*Washington County
Workforce Training Center
18624 N.W. Walker Rd.
Beaverton, OR. 97005
503/533-2700

Getting the Perfect Job: A How-to Formula

By RON WEBER FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Statistically, between seventy-five to ninety percent of the workforce are dissatisfied with their jobs. More than fifty percent are downright disappointed with their profession, and about twenty-five percent of our working population uses the word “hate” when asked how they like their job. Do they really hate their jobs, or is it just working that they don't like.

Here is a simple four-point formula that will aide in pursuing the perfect job match every time. As a suggestion, try asking yourself these questions when applying for work:

1. Do I like the job? Don't be concerned with the people, bosses, etc. Just ask yourself if you like the work.
2. Is it a job I can do (physically, mentally and emotionally)?
3. Have I been trained or schooled to do this kind of work?
4. Do I have experience in this job? Have I done it in the past?

Obviously, if you are young or new to the working world, you won't be able to answer yes to all four questions, but these basic questions can help you aim for your “dream job.”

If you can answer yes to all four categories, then you are probably right where you should be. Like it or not, this is as good as it gets. If it is your boss, co-workers, or on-the-job politics that is spoiling it for you, you're not alone. Many American workers today tell you that they don't like their bosses and the way the company runs itself politically. For one moment, imagine yourself on a remote island with no boss or co-workers. Pretend all the working conditions are just the way you want them. Then ask yourself if you really enjoy this kind of work. If you don't, then find something you do like. Look for that “perfect job.” Then work on getting it. Sometimes it takes time. Once you get as close as you can to what is best for you, then it's a matter of working on the conditions, some of which you just have to accept and get on with it.

Here are some hints and suggestions:

1. Stay out of work related politics as much as possible. This may mean just “doing what you are told” at times. Most bosses do not want a lot of arguing back at them about their decisions. Many bosses have their hands tied from up above. Disagreeing with them will not do any good anyway.
2. Stay off the “gossip train.”
3. Just be the best worker-among-workers you can be. Leave the decision making to the people who are paid to do it. If you try running the company from a lower or mid-level, you will only put yourself at odds with the real decision makers.
4. Put your energies towards doing the best you can and then shoot for more. Ask the company to cross-train you at other jobs. Sign up for classes and show a willingness to learn. This makes you more versatile and tells your superiors you are teachable.
5. While on the job, show respect for the management chain of your company. Whether you like it or not, they do run the business.
6. Show yourself as a team player. Selfishly isolating yourself as a loner is a quick way to end up spending years without advancement.
7. Ask questions. Let your bosses know you are interested in how the company runs. Let them know you want to help create the best working environment possible.
8. If you are not where you want to be, tell them. Show them this four-step process and let them help you get there. Obviously they have experienced advancement and should know how to help you do the same.
9. Smile and show a good attitude. Both co-workers and superiors really enjoy working with a person who is positive. No one wants to listen to a whiner or habitual complainer. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Complain and you will be eating lunch alone.
10. Why hasn't money been mentioned? Because, it is a lousy motivator. If you really don't like your job, all the money in the world won't help. If you do like your job, you will excel at it, and the money will come naturally. Someone who is a team player, has a good attitude, gets along with their bosses and performs on the job well can't help but do well. Find what it is you are supposed to be doing. Do it well. Cooperate with those around you. Be patient and the rewards will come. You can “bank” on it.

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