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INSIDER

– a publication from the



marlboro county
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Skills for Growth – Beyond the Low-Hanging Fruit

By Ron King



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A new skill development system is beginning to take shape in Marlboro County and other regions of the state and across the US. It's defining feature is that it's demand-driven – that is, it focuses on getting the right workers with the right skills to the right place at the right time. Our new system has enormous potential to support local job growth and to expand opportunity for a broad part of the workforce. However, our new system is mainly focused on filling existing jobs, rather than supporting the growth of new jobs. Why is that?

One reason is because existing jobs are much easier to find and fill. To begin with, there are more of them. Currently, two out of three job openings are for existing jobs, primarily due to the retirement of baby boomers. Also, it's a lot easier for us to forecast openings for existing jobs, since retirements are easier to predict than breakthroughs in new products, or processes, or markets that are responsible for most new jobs.

Lastly, openings for existing jobs tend to be concentrated in our large companies, which are much easier and more economical to work with. Large companies often have staff (HR) available to gather information, help design training programs, and serve on our boards and advisory committees. And they are more likely to have enough openings at one time to make training programs cost effective.

Smaller businesses, on the other hand, tend to have less time or staff to spare. They are more widely dispersed. Their skill demands are more sporadic and varied. And jobs have less social status, which makes these jobs appear to have less value to train-

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ing providers in search of powerful allies to advocate for continued program funding and support.

As a result, our emerging skill development system could have ended up mainly focusing on replacing workers leaving existing jobs. Or to put it another way, it could have gone after the low-hanging fruit.

The partnership is building critical capacity to gather and analyze labor market infor-

mation, and to respond flexibly to the changing needs of the labor market. We are engaging employers in new ways and trying to build industry partnerships.

"We are engaging employers in new ways and trying to build industry partnerships."



With this effort, we plan to support the growth of new jobs, which will require building additional capacity at the local level to meet the needs of growing businesses. Based on our work so far, there are **three big challenges** that skills

training leaders face.

The first big challenge is getting actionable information about the skill needs of growing businesses.

Currently, most new job growth is taking place in relatively small businesses spread across a wide range of industries and businesses, making growing businesses difficult to find. Small businesses in particular are unlikely to seek assistance or

belong to established business groups. In our case, the fact

that most managers live outside Marlboro County makes the disconnect greater. Analyzing large data sets can provide important clues about where to start looking, but the only way for us to find out which businesses are actually growing and what their particular skills needs are is to go door to door. So, Brandi and I are out there collecting data 'door to door'.

That kind of ground game is not done by many economic development organizations that have been so preoccupied with their business recruitment and start-up activities that they've neglected their outreach to existing businesses. As a result, getting good, actionable information about the skill needs of growing businesses requires changes in the way we currently function.

The second big challenge is to respond nimbly to the skill needs of growing businesses, once those needs have been identified. Typically, the demand for new skills in growing businesses is unpredictable and urgent, requiring immediate attention before a window of opportunity closes. In addition, the



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demand for new skills is widely dispersed across many businesses, affects only a few employees at a time in any particular business, and requires training that is often company specific. Very few counties currently have the capacity to respond to that kind of dispersed demand. We have gotten pretty good at providing customized training to new businesses moving into the area. Most recently, we been working on aggregating demand across a number of businesses in a particular industry through industry and college partnerships. Now we need to figure out how to deliver customized training to widely dispersed pockets of workers that are difficult to forecast. That is going to require radical new approaches to the delivery of education and training services.

The third big challenge is to find funding to retrain existing workers.

Growing businesses are heavily dependent on their existing workforce to develop and master new processes, technologies, and products. Studies show that most innovation comes from incremental improvements in existing processes and products, mainly by existing workers. Making and sustaining those improvements requires that workers learn new skills. Therefore, it's vital that growing businesses retrain their existing workers.

Currently, most small businesses have very few resources available to train, let alone retrain their existing workers.

Most taxpayer and foundation funded skill development programs focus primarily on preparing people, who are out of work, for entry-level jobs. And the incumbent worker training programs that do exist are woefully underfunded, which is ironic, since they hold the key to unlocking the job growth that is vital to expanding opportunity. Although it seems counterintuitive, it is the investments in retraining existing workers that makes it possible to maximize training these individuals out of work, since the result is more job opportunities, not just the redistribution of existing jobs.

These are three daunting challenges, and meeting them will require a lot of hard work. But it's well worth the effort. If these challenges are not met, we could end up with a skill development system that does very little to support job growth, or ultimately to expand opportunity once the baby boomers retire.



ECAM Event

We are pleased to announce an Eastside Center for Advanced Manufacturing (ECAM) informational gathering to be held Tuesday, May 17th 4:00pm-7:00pm. This event will be held at the ECAM location on Lake Paul Wallace at 801 Country Club Drive, Bennettsville, SC 29512. Food will be provided and this event is open to the public.



Northeastern Technical College, Marlboro County School District, Marlboro County Economic Development Partnership, North Eastern Strategic Alliance (NESA) and local industries continue to make progress as they work together to bring Advanced Manufacturing training to Marlboro County. Dr. Ron Bartley, President of Northeastern Technical College (NETC) will provide an update on planning, funding and the schedule.

We are grateful to all of our sponsors, industries, the Marlboro County School District, NESA and NETC for continued support in this important endeavor for our community.

Pregnancy Health Fair

For Expecting Parents and Those Who Plan to Be Expecting Soon



THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2016 – 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

WR Dulin Conference Center, 500 Lauchwood Dr., Laurinburg

COME LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- Prenatal Care • Labor Options • Birth Plans
- Caring for Your Baby • WIC • And much more

5:30-6:00 pm – LIGHT REFRESHMENTS AND EXHIBITORS

6:00-6:45 pm – WELCOME REMARKS AND GUEST SPEAKERS

6:45-7:00 pm – GIVEAWAYS AND DOOR PRIZES

GUEST SPEAKER

LaTonya Armstrong, Certified Nurse Midwife
Women's Health Center of the Carolinas

Please join us for this **FREE** event!

Registration Required
910-291-6806



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CONTACT US

We would love to hear from you!

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Did you know that....

..... The Marian Wright Edelman Friends of the Library is accepting \$1 donations for a Mother's Day Gift basket? The raffle drawing will held on Friday, May 6th.

..... Scotland Health Care System is now bringing early breast cancer detection to you via a mobile unit staffed by certified mammography technologists. The goal is to provide women with a more convenient option for breast cancer screening. To schedule an appointment please call (910) 291-7244.



..... Industrial Performance Partners of SC is currently hiring welders? Contact Heather Sowell with Mega Force Staffing for further information: (910) 277-0140 - hsowell@megaforce.com - 815 South Main Street, Laurinburg, NC 29352

..... Mohawk Industries is actively seeking job applicants? Find out more information on current career opportunities and apply online at www.mohawkcareers.com.

..... Domtar is actively seeking job applicants? Find out more information on current career opportunities and apply online at www.domtar.com/en/careers/jobs.asp.

Baldor ABB Plant Closing

Baldor-ABB announced that it is ending its Clio, SC manufacturing presence, in response to domestic and global mining industries challenges. The heavy open pit mining equipment maker reacts to slowing demand for construction and mining equipment worldwide by cutting capacity and consolidating plants. The closing in Clio, SC, announced to employees on April 26th, will leave 62 employees out of work at the end of 2016. The plant will close in stages over the next 8 months.

The Ft. Smith, AR -based Baldor-ABB plans to move production to a plant in Shelby, SC. The closing process will begin in August with all of the hourly associates and many of the salaried associates being offered transfers. It is not known how many may take advantage of the transfer opportunities. The local workforce is down from 125 as recently as last year.



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A special *Thank You* to our 2016 MCEDP Contributors

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Marlboro County Calendar of Events

May 2016 Events

Date	Time	Event	Location	Cost
3	10:30am–Noon	The Big Give Pee Dee	Marlboro Civic Center	---
5	5:30pm–7:30pm	Pregnancy Health Fair	W. R. Dulin Center Laurinburg	Free
5	7:00pm	MCHS Concert Band Performance	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
6	Noon	Mother's Day Basket Drawing	Marian Wright Edelman Library	\$1
10	7:00pm	MCHS Dance Performance	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
11-12	---	Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinic	Marlboro County Animal Shelter	\$9-40
12	7:00pm	MCHS Choral Concert	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
17	4:00pm–7:00pm	Eastside Center for Advanced Manufacturing (ECAM) Update	801 Country Club Drive, Bennettsville, SC 29512	Free
17	6:00pm	MC School of Discovery Dancers	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
18	9:00am–11:00am	Veterans In The Know	Veterans' Affairs Office	Free
19	8:00pm	MCHS Jazz Band Concert	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
20	5:30pm	Cancer Survivors Day	Laurinburg Presbyterian Church	Free
21	1:00pm–6:00pm	Classic Car/Bike Show & 3on3 Basketball Competition Man Up	Old Blenheim School Hwy 38 S	\$10-20
21	1:00pm & 6:00pm	Academy of Movement 2 Dance Recital	Marlboro Civic Center	\$5
22	3:00pm	Academy of Movement 2 Dance Recital	Marlboro Civic Center	\$5
24	6:00pm	MC School of Discovery Choral Concert	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
26	7:00pm	Adult Education Graduation Ceremony	Marlboro Civic Center	Free
27	10:00am–2:00pm	50th Anniversary Vietnam Era Veterans Cookout "Part One"	Veterans' Affairs Office	Free

June 2016 Events

Date	Time	Event	Location	Cost
2	7:00pm	Crystal McInnis School of Dance Recital	Marlboro Civic Center	\$10
4	2:00pm	Crystal McInnis School of Dance Recital	Marlboro Civic Center	\$10
11	11:00am–2:00pm	MWE Library Summer Reading Kickoff	Bennettsville Community Center	Free
15	9:00am–11:00am	Veterans In The Know	Veterans' Affairs Office	Free
17	6:30pm	Steppin' Out Dance Recital	Marlboro Civic Center	---
23	6:00–8:00pm	Men's Health Event	The Boys and Girls Club	Free



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