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RECENT EVENTS

EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION (AUGUST 26, 2021)

LVBCH employers shared the challenges and successes of recruiting and retaining qualified employees while in the midst of the current labor shortage. The discussion was aptly led by Meloney Sallie-Dosunmu, Human Resources Director, City of Allentown, during the live and in person networking event held at Weathered Vineyards and Winery in New Tripoli on August 26. Prior to the meeting, a brief survey of LVBCH members was conducted and found only one-quarter of companies that responded are using some type of incentive, such as a sign-on bonus, to recruit and retain employees, and several employers attending the event said that they have found incentives to be ineffective. Rather, the employers present have found that benefits like flexible work schedules and the option to work from home were attractive to both potential and current employees.

Regarding recruitment, employers responded that social media was the most successful means of reaching potential job candidates, with LinkedIn reported as the most effective platform. LVBCH employers also use Indeed, other external job posting websites, their own company website, and referrals from current employees and other professional colleagues to reach candidates.

A discussion on the cause of the labor shortages provided some interesting insights and differing opinions. Some participants said that poor wages for the low-end earners contributed to the shortage. Others felt that the continuation of the enhanced unemployment benefits deterred people from returning to work. The pandemic itself, especially its effect on work/life balance, has also contributed in several ways. For example, employees who were cut, furloughed, or had their hours reduced, learned to live with less money. Some older workers chose to retire. Other employees found that having extra time was more important to them than having extra money. Also, childcare challenges – both availability and cost – continue to be an issue. As the pandemic lingers, school attendance remains uncertain with students still being sent home due to COVID exposures.

Employers are also hearing about some companies that are actively recruiting employees without bachelor's degrees and providing them with customized vocational training. It is recommended that all companies re-evaluate their work models. The pandemic showed that company leaders don't need to look over employees' shoulders to ensure that work gets done. Despite this, many organizations want to go back to 2019 protocols. "But 2019 protocols aren't going to work in 2022," a participant said. "Employees, especially younger ones, are looking for jobs where they feel they are doing something important," another added. Employees aren't motivated to make the company, or its owners, richer; rather they want to do something meaningful. "If their current employer won't provide that, another company will."

The event was one of two in-person networking opportunities held this summer. A Live & In-Person Welcome Back Networking event was held at the ArtsQuest Center Townsquare at Steel Stack in Bethlehem on July 15. Sallie-Dosunmu also led a similar discussion during LVBCH's In-Person Employer Forum at the Glasbern Inn on Aug. 12.

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