

Economic Development Insight

Want a Better Job?

By Joan Bethell

Okay. So we're in a recession. Beyond a vague hope of not losing our job, or being able to get another quickly if we've lost one, what can we do to be pro-active?

Smart companies recognize that their most important asset is their human resource so, in times of recession, they capitalize on the opportunity to refine their workforce by retaining the most qualified, if layoffs are necessary, or if they're in a more fortunate position, hiring the 'best of the best' from the glut created by other companies' layoffs.

With the amplified attention that NSWC Crane and the WestGate@Crane Technology Park are getting nationwide and their allure to relocating companies, Greene County should fare better than most communities. Although not immune from company cut-backs, overall we should emerge from this recession with an increased number of quality jobs of all types, not just the high-tech type but also clerical, maintenance, service support, etcetera. Nonetheless, a major factor in attracting those companies is the quality of the existing workforce and the ability of the local community to provide customized training.

Those who have adopted a 'lifelong learning' approach, who are continually active in developing further their job skills, will be better positioned to improve the quality of their job. According to the January 2009 release of the U.S. Census Educational Attainment report, "The median earnings ranged from about \$19,000 for those with less than a high school diploma to over \$60,000 for those with an advanced degree. High school graduates earned about \$27,000, while those with a bachelor's degree earned about \$47,000.

Besides a traditional degree, though, many opportunities to improve desired job skills are available, all of which improve the chances of securing, maintaining and advancing in a job. A good starting point is to think about a career versus just a 'job' and some excellent information can be found at www.careervoyages.gov for those thinking about starting or changing their career. For those without a home computer, public libraries can provide access to the internet plus a wealth of other associated resources.

Governor Mitch Daniels stated in a letter copied from the Indiana Career Guide, "In today's global economy, the skills and knowledge of Indiana's workers are critical to the state's economic success. For Indiana to compete on a global scale and achieve its full economic potential, we must increase the average wage of Hoosiers to at least the national average by 2020. And in order to earn more, Hoosiers must learn more ... The guide focuses attention on "Skill Pathways", which illustrate how increased skill development and continued education can bring increased wages and greater job opportunities ... (It) highlights 10 basic skills employers seek in all candidates, for all types of occupations, and at all levels of employment. It will help you make informed choices as you contemplate your skills and career development." The full guide can be downloaded at: www.in.gov/dwd/files/x_820_web.pdf.

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The Greene County Community Learning Center in Switz City features small classrooms, computer labs, and televised learning centers through which you can learn from great schools like Indiana University, Purdue University, Indiana State University, Ball State University, University of Southern Indiana, Ivy Tech State College, and Vincennes University. Whether you work toward a certificate, degree, or enhance your skills through customized training, you can do it all close to home and at your own pace. For more info, contact Cam Trampke at (812) 659-3862 or www.clcinfo.org/greene.php.

The Indiana Career Guide also states that “Computer skills are becoming a basic fact of life for most workers. More and more jobs are demanding that workers become increasingly familiar with and comfortable using a wide range of computer applications. Increasing your level of computer literacy, and improving your technology skills can bring you increased employability and greater earnings potential. Regardless of your career choice, you will benefit from knowledge of computer hardware and software.”

Through the WorkOne Linton office at (812) 847-4479 or www.workonelinton.org, you can attend free monthly classes in computer (and resume/interviewing) skills, plus receive a free registration for MindLeaders that provides over 700 online business courses, or explore the varied options for education and training or online learning and skill development that are available through the Indiana Career Connect program (many of these are also free or low cost.)

So the bottom line is, if you want a better job with more pay, you simply need to give some time to preparing yourself to offer your present or future employer the most desirable skill set.

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