

# New Year, New Resolutions, New Workforce Strategies

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'Tis the season for New Year's resolutions - personal as well as professional. Not only do we want to finally sign up for that exercise program, start saving more money, and begin on those home improvements, we also want to improve things at work. After all, we spend a good part of our lives there. But how to go about it? To help you along, here are several workplace resolutions for your consideration. All are aimed at improving employee performance, upping your bottom line, and making your work environment a better place to be.

**Resolution #1 - Find the talent of the future.** Investing now in connecting young people to career and skill paths is essential so that they will become mainstream labor force contributors as adults. Create your long-term talent acquisition strategy now and include career exploration activities in your planning.

**Resolution #2: Invest in High School and College Interns.** Employers rate internships as among the most tried and true methods for attracting new graduates into permanent positions. One reason is that a former intern is more likely to remain loyal to a company longer. Interns can also bring state-of-the-art skills, cutting-edge knowledge and new energy to a company.

**Resolution #3: Know The Berkshire Labor Market.** The labor market is constantly changing and it is critical to stay ahead of the curve with employment trends. Did you know that the regional unemployment rate stands at 7.9% (November 2009) while the MA rate is 8.8%. While this may seem that there is an abundance of talent for picking, there are more people vying for the same positions. At the same time, the baby-boomer generation is retiring, the workforce is aging, there is a decline in the number of workers expected to enter the workplace and the only growing population in Berkshire County are immigrants and

those age 55 and older. It becomes clear that finding and keeping a qualified talent pool will remain a high priority.

**Resolution #4: Know your Workforce.** Become more proactive in collecting data to better articulate the workforce trends in your organization. In addition to the changing demographics of the workforce the notion of career planning, training and job retention go hand in hand. Strategic organizations recognize that understanding what matters most to employees is a cornerstone for retention. Past sure-fire indicators such as compensation, opportunity for advancement, training opportunities, and leadership remain as strong benchmarks.

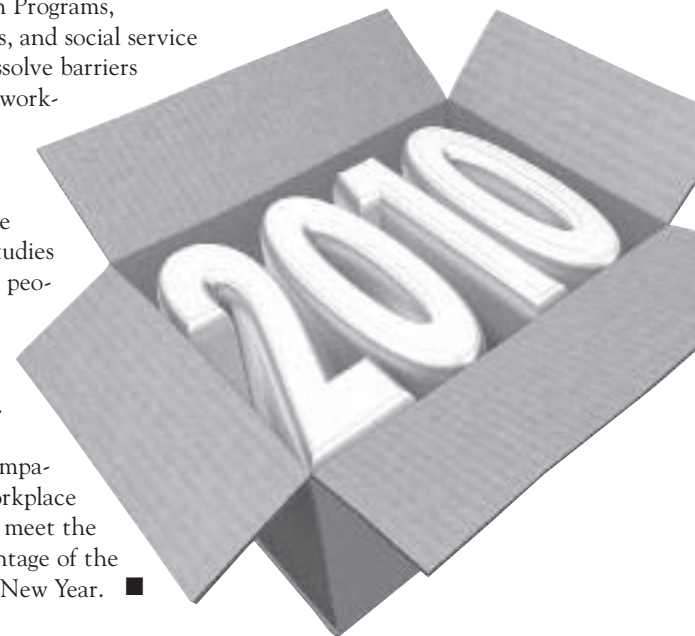
**Resolution #5: Become a Diversified-Friendly Company.** Consider hiring seniors, immigrants, Veterans and persons with disabilities to fill your workforce needs. Today, almost half of the workforce is 40 years or older - and aging. Meanwhile, America is developing a labor gap projected to be 4.8 million workers within ten years, and almost 36 million within 30 years. Given the two trends, companies are beginning to court older workers, returning Veterans, the growing immigrant population, and persons with disabilities because they recognize the greater value they bring - more reliability, higher productivity, lower training and recruitment costs, and an ability to mentor.

**Resolution #6: Know What to Do Next.** Keeping on top of employee expectations, recognizing strengths and talents needed to grow your team, and understanding what factors of the workforce environment will impact your retention strategies are resolutions that every organizational leader should incorporate into their HR strategy in 2010. Utilize education and training programs to continuously upgrade the skills of your workforce. Access social service agencies to help dissolve any barriers that may exist when hiring non-traditional employees.

A well-skilled, literate workforce is critical to a healthy economy. The BCREB can help companies access training dollars and incentive resources, and put you in contact with

ESL Workplace Education Programs, Immigration organizations, and social service agencies that can help dissolve barriers that may exist with your workforce and help maximize opportunities for your employees.

Creating resolutions are often worth the effort. Studies show that two out of five people (some say about half) make and keep New Year's commitments, turning them into action. So, whatever 2010 has in store for you and your company, here's hoping your workplace will continue to help you meet the challenges and take advantage of the best opportunities in the New Year. ■



## A World of Opportunity in a Day of Work Ground Hog Job Shadow Day kicks off February 2, 2010

One of the best ways to market your company and attract a young person into your industry and/or occupation is to provide a structured work and learning experience for students. One such activity is through **Job Shadowing** - an academically motivating project designed to give kids the unique opportunity of an up-close look at the world of work and provide the answer to the commonly asked question, "Why do I have to learn this?" Beginning with a nationwide kickoff on February 2, 2010, and continuing throughout the school year, students throughout Berkshire County will "shadow" workplace mentors as they go through a normal day on the job. The program invites students to see firsthand how the skills learned in



school relate to the workplace. *Our hope is that even if Punxsutawney Phil, the official Ground Hog, doesn't see his shadow, hundreds of Berkshire employees will see theirs!*

For the past 14 years, Berkshire County schools have been participating in job shadowing activities. To date 1,200 employers and more than 7,500 students have participated in Shadow Day. The goal is to help young people explore first hand the skills and education needed to succeed in current and future job markets, and to encourage the development of relationships between students and caring adults. Visit [www.JobShadow.org](http://www.JobShadow.org) and help make a difference in a young person's life.