



## Pushing how we think about workforce to new heights

By: Sandra Dueck, Policy Analyst, Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

Workplace debates can be enlightening. I often incite a debate if I'm working on a policy resolution. It helps test out the recommendations we are considering to put forward to government.

Recently, we had a really good in-depth conversation about workforce. What are the challenges? Where are all the people? How do we find the right fit for the culture in our offices, shops, factories or farms? How do businesses entice consistent productivity from their employees?

For the sake of context, our Chamber office is made up of three millennials, three Gen-Xers and a Baby Boomer (we even had a good debate about that!). So, this article is through that collaborative lens.

At the Chamber's Business Summit a few weeks ago, we hosted a panel about workforce based on a BDC report titled "Labour Shortage: Here to Stay". The report identifies that workforce growth has declined since 2000, mainly the result of the large baby boom generation heading to retirement. Although immigration has been identified as one of the ways to grow the workforce, growth rates for workforce are expected to remain below 0.2% for the next decade.

The challenge is that one of the main business classes, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), driving the economy is bearing the brunt of the impact of a smaller workforce. The BDC survey supporting the report found that close to 40% of SMEs are already having difficulty finding new workers. The report goes on to identify that this is impacting those businesses in a variety of ways from unfilled client orders, to declining competitiveness, and deteriorating product/service quality.

Given the above as the base situation, employers can't sit back; change is afoot. Embracing change with different hiring strategies, developing a value proposition for employees, new operating strategies, and HR policy development will be important.

The research on workforce is also growing and while the BDC report explores the role of employers, a report by RBC entitled "Humans Wanted: How Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption" explores the qualities and opportunities for future generations.

The working definition of a skills economy in the RBC report is "a mobile, skilled workforce, constantly learning, training and upgrading to meet the demands of a changing world." This is a fulsome definition, but not prescriptive in how that learning is accomplished, which, I would say, is disruptive in itself. The source of constant education can come through on-the-job training, returning to school, or working while upgrading and there are a variety of government and non-government programs to access.

The RBC report identifies ten learnings from their research including grouping jobs into six clusters based on essential skills by occupation rather than by industry. Those six clusters are doers, crafters, technicians, facilitators, providers, and solvers. Within these six clusters, RBC identifies that there will be 2.4 million job openings between 2018 and 2021, so the world is a job-seekers' oyster.

That said, this new way of identifying how one fits into the workforce is different for both employer and employee. Society is starting to fully emerge from the cocoon of decades of a consistent approach to hiring and job expectations. Now, employees are more outwardly vocal about their workplace ideals and employers are more open to creating a more collaborative culture to keep their employees and their productivity high.

During our office workforce discussion, we came to the conclusion that we have to stop applying stereotypes to paint a



generation, whether it be millennial, baby boomer, Gen-Xer or whatever. It's been a difficult transition with the biggest challenge being how these two ideals are defined – what is a good employee and what is a good job. The definition of these concepts can be very individual by person and by sector.

So, what can be done to avoid being trapped by a loose-fitting definition, whether you are a job-seeker or hiring for a position? Openness to possibilities. As an employee, maybe the job isn't where you want your working life to end, but what are the qualities that could make it a good place to start? As an employer, maybe the pool of people who have applied are not who you were expecting, but what are the qualities in an employee that are required and who in the pool has those?

Our workforce and businesses are also not trapped by previously held conventions. Success is not solely determined by the length of time with a company. Loyalty to a company is not automatic, but rather something that a business has to earn. Companies have the ability to truly build and define the culture they want to project. Businesses have the opportunity to be leaders and a voice in the communities in which they operate.

It's a shift. It's not wrong or right. It's just different. It's innovative. It's a new way of doing things. And we, collectively, need to figure out how to adapt.

To that end, Si Grobler, Member Relations at the Chamber recently posted this to his LinkedIn profile:

"I have read two articles this past week that got me thinking about what businesses can do to help address their staffing concerns (the most common issue I hear from business owners):

1. Adjust your mind/perspective/attitude regarding a particular generation. Edmonton Oiler's newest Head Coach, Ken Hitchcock, has been open in how he has adjusted his coaching philosophy. Instead of blaming young players about being lazy and/or entitled, Ken has adjusted his coaching style, because as a coach, Ken needs to get the best out of his players so that the team can win. As further proof, you never hear Mike Babcock blame the worldview of his younger players. And Millennials (or the next generation or any other generation) aren't going anywhere, so you better figure out how to make them productive members of your business. This is an attitudinal shift that many business owners still have yet to embrace.
2. Work is about more than money. While salary is the 'show-up factor' (as in 'pay a certain amount so that people will show up to work'), increasing wages does not equate to happiness. There are other ways to motivate your staff and get them more productive. Find out what makes them 'tick' and give it to them."

The RBC report wraps up with Six Things You Need to Know about the Future of Work. This is a good list for businesses and workforce.

1. Analytics are trending
2. Math is a big plus
3. Firms want flexibility
4. Digital is non-negotiable
5. The three C's are crucial – communication, collaboration and critical thinking
6. Mobility is a thing

So let's get moving on adapting and taking the best advantage of our skills.

[peterboroughchamber.ca/blog](http://peterboroughchamber.ca/blog)

## Event Calendar

Put these 2019 events in your calendar!

**CHAMBER AM** **TUESDAY**  
January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**A New Year of Inspiration**  
The Carousel  
116 Lansdowne Street East

Coffee's on at 7:00am  
Speakers from 7:30-8:30am

**Cost:** Pay for your breakfast  
**Speaker:** Heather Doughty, Inspire: The Women's Portrait Project

**Details:** The Chamber Breakfast meetings are a great way to fuel up for your busy workday. Network with fellow Chamber members, have a delicious fresh breakfast and enjoy a short presentation from our guest speaker.

**Note:** Pre-registration encouraged

**Special Date**  
**PBX** **TUESDAY**  
PETERBOROUGH BUSINESS EXCHANGE January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Welcome 2019!**  
Shorelines Casino Peterborough  
1400 Crawford Drive

**4:00pm – 6:00pm**

**Details:** PBX is a great opportunity for the business community, employers, consumers, and community agencies to make valuable connections.

Bring your business cards and get ready to get connected to the Peterborough business community.

**Cost:** Free, courtesy of Shorelines Casino Peterborough

**LUNCHBOX LEARNING** **WEDNESDAY**  
January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
(Chamber & WBN Members only)

**3 Ways Risk Affects Your Business**

**Chamber Boardroom**  
175 George Street North  
**12:00pm - 1:00pm**

**Speaker:** Kelland Sewell, rPM<sup>3</sup> Solutions Canada Inc.

**Details:** This free, noon hour series is open to Chamber members and WBN members interested in professional development and connecting with fellow members. Located in the Chamber boardroom, bring your lunch along, listen to a short presentation, and ask some questions.

**Cost:** Free (Bring your lunch)

**Note:** Pre-registration required

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**Member Milestones**

- Southside Pizzeria & Co. teamed up with Country 105 & Energy 99.7 to offer a free turkey lunch in exchange for a toy drive donation! Way to work together.
- The Peterborough Humane Society has a new cat socialization room that's carpeted out thanks to a partnership with Whelan's Flooring Centre

- The Cornish Laming Insurance & Financial Solutions team dropped off toy donations at Lansdowne Place Mall this month for the Energy 99.7 Miracle Broadcast.
- Diner's Cards are now available in support of Peterborough Musicfest. Cost is \$25 per booklet.
- Principal Consultant at Zero In Dennis Geelen has written two books for business. "Zero In on the Benefits" discusses the need to focus on benefits realization as part of the project management practice and "Zero In on Leadership" is a ten step journey in leadership. He says the best way to find them is by checking out his website [zero-in.ca/books](http://zero-in.ca/books)

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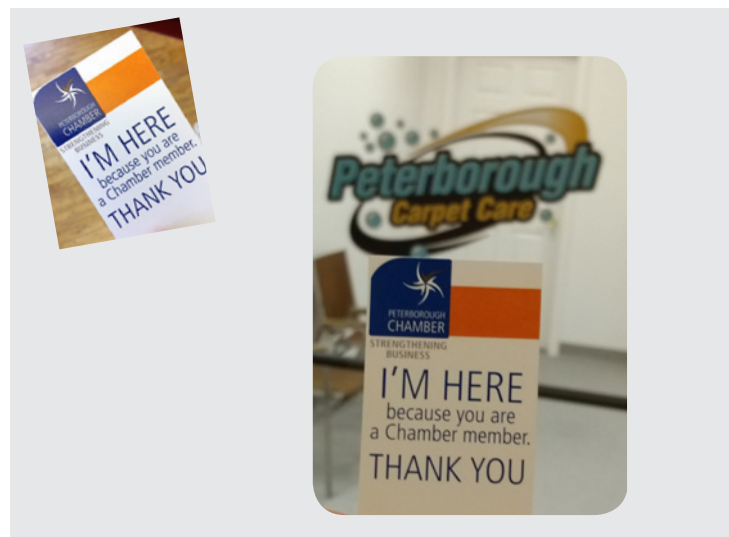
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