

Businesses and workers succeed when employers offer

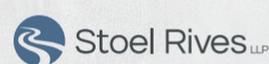
QUALITY JOBS



GETTY IMAGES

VALUES MISSION COMMITMENT

HOW OREGON WORKS: QUALITY JOBS | PRESENTED BY:



HOW OREGON WORKS SERIES LEADERS

THOUGHT LEADER ROUNDTABLE

SPONSORED CONTENT

As part of the Portland Business Journal's ongoing How Oregon Works series, PBJ Publisher and President Candace Beeke gathered business leaders to talk about how employers can create quality jobs that help them attract and retain great folks. Here are excerpts from her discussion with Sara Cromwell, Unemployment Insurance Division Deputy Director for Benefits Oregon Employment Department; Melissa (Missy) Healy, Stoel Rives labor and employment group partner; J.T. Hutchinson, PNC Bank president for Oregon and Southwest Washington; Andrew McGough, Worksystems executive director; and Mark Mitsui: Portland Community College president.

CANDACE BEEKE: The No. 1 topic on business leaders' minds is talent. What is a quality job?

SARA CROMWELL: Developing and retaining talent is vitally important to business leaders, and providing quality jobs is key. When we think of quality jobs, we immediately think of internal compensation packages that offer traditional benefits such as medical, dental, retirement, bonuses, and paid time off. Businesses offering quality jobs also plan for economic downturns to ensure the best interim solutions for both their business and their employees. The secret ingredient of providing quality jobs is being

aware of external resources and programs, like the Oregon Employment Department's Work Share program, that can offer this support so that employers don't lose their skilled workers when they have temporary slowdowns.

Businesses make significant long-term investments in their well-trained employees. Yet businesses can also experience seasonal or periodic fluctuations, equipment failures, supply chain backlogs, etc., that temporarily slow or stop production and impact employers' ability to retain staff. While companies are redefining what best practices in a quality job look like, having an



"A quality job tries to keep employees engaged so that they're motivated to stay, advance in the job and support the organizational mission."

ANDREW MCGOUGH

external safety net in place is a gold standard. Work Share allows businesses to continue to employ staff at reduced hours, while



MODERATOR

CANDACE BEEKE

Market president and publisher, Portland Business Journal



MELISSA HEALY

Attorney, Stoel Rives LLP

Melissa Healy is a traditional labor and employment attorney at Stoel Rives LLP. She frequently counsels employers on a wide range of issues involving family leave, disabilities, harassment and discrimination, conducts internal investigations, and provides training to employees and management. She represents clients in state and federal courts, in arbitration, and before the National Labor Relations Board. Melissa is a member of the Firm's Recruiting Committee. She is a frequent speaker in the community and was selected a recipient of the Portland Business Journal's "40 Under 40" award in 2020.



MARK MITSUI

President, Portland Community College

Mark Mitsui became President of Portland Community College in September 2016. He is the first Asian-American president in the history of PCC, which educates approximately 50,000 students annually and is the largest higher education institution in the state of Oregon. Prior to PCC, he served in the Obama Administration as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges in the U.S. Department of Education.

Mitsui is on several boards, including the Governor's Workforce and Talent Board and the Portland Business Alliance. In 2018, he was selected as an "Executive of the Year" by the Portland Business Journal. In November 2021, Mitsui was honored by the Portland Business Alliance with the William S. Naito Awards, in recognition of his philanthropy and exemplary community leadership.



J.T. HUTCHINSON

Regional President, Head of Corporate Banking, PNC Bank

J.T. Hutchinson is regional president and head of Corporate Banking for PNC Bank, Portland. In this role, he is responsible for all aspects of PNC's presence in Oregon & SW Washington including community engagement, as well as having direct responsibility for leading corporate banking, which serves middle market and large corporate companies in the region. JT currently serves on several local boards including the Portland Business Alliance, Sport Oregon, and Social Venture Partners.



ANDREW MCGOUGH

Executive Director, Worksystems

Andrew has been the Executive Director of Worksystems since 2006. He brings 25+ years of workforce development experience to the organization and has been engaged with workforce and human service programs and policy at the national, state and local levels.

Prior to joining Worksystems, Andrew started two successful non-profit organizations and worked as a consultant offering a variety of management and organizational development services. He is a recognized expert in workforce policy, program development and performance management and is a frequent speaker at national, state and regional events. He is active on several local and state Boards and is the immediate past President of the US Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council.

When he's not thinking about the workforce, Andrew enjoys playing drums with his band Western Yew.



SARA CROMWELL

Unemployment Insurance Division Deputy Director for Benefits, Oregon Employment Department

Sara Cromwell joined the Oregon Employment Department in 2004 and has served as the Benefits deputy since 2020. Among other things, she is responsible for oversight of the Employment Department's Work Share program, which was created in 1983 to help enrolled employers avoid layoffs and retain talent by supplementing wages for employees whose hours are reduced during temporary business interruptions. Prior to joining the Employment Department, she worked as an attorney in private practice.



impacted employees' wages are supplemented by unemployment insurance benefits. During the pandemic in 2020, the Work Share program helped more than 2,000 businesses avoid layoffs and potential closure, saving 37,623 jobs with a total of \$96,716,603 in supplemental wage replacement paid to their employees.

ANDREW MCGOUGH: Part of what we do is prepare people for jobs and for economic self-sufficiency. What does it mean to be economically self-sufficient? Earlier definitions of poverty were based on how much you spend on food and family size. But that doesn't take into consideration geography, whether you need child care or other things. So we adopted a self-sufficiency standard that considers a broad array of characteristics. It's based on family circumstances for about 700 different family types, so it's highly accurate.

A quality job has to provide sufficient income to afford a decent standard of living, safe working conditions and worker engagement. It offers employees dignity and respect and engagement. Also, predictable hours to minimize hardship on the employees and their families. Other (factors) are comprehensive benefits that increase economic security, improve health and well-being; training and advancement opportunities; accessible hiring and onboarding practices. And then, there's retention. A quality job tries to keep employees engaged so they're motivated to stay, advance in the job and support the organizational mission.

These criteria align with a lifecycle of an employee, from onboarding to retention and advancement. There are specific actionable strategies we can interject along that pathway to improve the number of quality jobs in the region.

BEEKE: What percentage of the jobs available would fit the quality jobs standard you've laid out?

MCGOUGH: Gallup did a recent poll,

and only about 40% of Americans felt like they had a good job. In our region, there are 99,000 families that don't achieve self-sufficiency wages, and those are working people. My guess would be it's around 50% now.

J.T. HUTCHINSON: We also would consider providing a platform for impact and positive change, internally and externally. The second is sequential learning curves, rather than hitting someone with five or six steep learning curves all at once. Then, making employees feel they're part of something bigger. In any job, there are going to be components that employees find challenging. Being part of a team and conveying to our employees how they contribute to the well-being of all our stakeholders is critical for generating job satisfaction."

BEEKE: What are Portland and Oregon's unique challenges or advantages in creating quality jobs?

HUTCHINSON: One of the current challenges is that it's not the most robust labor market. There are good quality people here, but there's not a ton of bench strength across sectors. This is not a challenge that is necessarily unique to this region, but one that will need to be addressed nonetheless.

The advantage is we've balanced our team with both homegrown Oregon talent and with legacy PNC employees who raised their hand to move to Portland. What's attractive about this area? Diversity of sector, work-life balance, people here are genuinely kind to one another.

Some of those things are intangible but critical.



CROMWELL: Oregon businesses face unique challenges due to the region's seasonal wildfire and severe weather trends, which can interrupt business operations and introduce instability or uncertainties into their workforces.

MCGOUGH: We'd be remiss if we didn't talk about housing costs and the general cost of living. We've seen significant increases

"In any job, there are going to be components that employees find challenging. Being part of a team and conveying to our employees how they contribute to the well-being of all our stakeholders is critical for generating job satisfaction."

J.T. HUTCHINSON

across the board, but housing is such an enormous driver related to affordability. It's tough to keep up with housing prices that are rising 15% to 20% a year.

MISSY HEALY: Historically, Portland had this reputation of having a lot of the perks of larger cities with a more affordable cost of living and better work-life balance. But we're rapidly catching up to Seattle, the Bay Area. Combined with the reputational hits the Portland area has suffered in the last couple of years, that's made it a real challenge.

MARK MITSUI: Housing costs definitely are impacting our students' ability to come back to school. But we still have a robust technology sector, advanced manufacturing, strong innovation and higher education with the accommodation of community colleges and universities. We also have some advantages regionally through postsecondary education and integration with the employer base.

BEEKE: What role does mentorship play? How do we handle that in a hybrid workplace?

HEALY: I don't think you can have a quality workplace without both mentorship and sponsorship. Mentors are the people you learn the job from, who you look up

to, who answer your day-to-day questions. Sponsors are the more senior people who give you opportunities and advocate for you to advance and are invested in your success. Both are really important. If you don't feel like someone cares about you, or you can't see a path for long-term success, you're more likely to take a job with another company because they're offering you more money. Often it's relationships with the people we work with that keep us doing jobs day in and day out, even if we don't always like those jobs.

The remote or hybrid workplace has caused all sorts of challenges. It's great for employers to have formal programs, but it's equally, if not more important, for employers to foster ways for those connections to form organically. Since the most important work relationships are built on everyday workplace interactions, it's hard to replicate them in a virtual environment.

There are disparities in who works from home. More women, particularly of childbearing age, or women with young children, are working remotely and often juggling multiple responsibilities at home as well.

My advice is to be very deliberate about making connections if you're hybrid. Focus on those who do the mentoring and sponsoring and make sure they're in the office side of the hybrid arrangement as much, if not more, than anyone else.

BEEKE: Was remote or hybrid work part of that quality job definition?

MCGOUGH: It probably underpins some of the other criteria, like a flexible work environment, being able to accommodate outside work demands, child care. When we did interviews and convened the council, we were in the throes of the pandemic and had a broad mix of people. For many, remote work wasn't an option. It's not an option if you're pumping gas. The majority of low-quality work is jobs where there aren't remote options.

BEEKE: How should an employer begin to do what's needed to adapt?

HUTCHINSON: The first would be

"The remote or hybrid workplace has caused all sorts of challenges. It's great for employers to have formal programs, but it's equally, if not more important, for employers to foster ways for those connections to form organically."

MISSY HEALY



HOW OREGON WORKS SERIES LEADERS

THOUGHT LEADER ROUNDTABLE

SPONSORED CONTENT

having the right culture in place and not be static. Your culture has to be sustainable through economic cycles, growth, acquisition and other changes your company is experiencing. With the right culture, generally, you're going to have employees who trust that their leaders have their best interests in mind and will be willing to adapt their roles and goals in a positive way.

The second piece is very intuitive. Having a leader who's empathetic, who understands that people and situations change and are willing to adapt is critical to making sure employees are served in a positive way.

MCGOUGH: The lifecycle of employment starts with recruitment. Employers can look at the processes to make sure they're accessible, accurate, equitable and transparent. Offer comprehensive benefits, regardless of position or skills, and benefits that help support household needs, including child care. You can't pay everyone massive amounts of money, but think long and hard about what it takes for an individual to devote 40 hours of their week to a job and what it means if that 40 hours doesn't allow them to adequately meet their bills. Look at your hiring practices and make sure you're not unnecessarily screening out people who otherwise might be good employees.

Think about how you are bringing employees on to your worksite, making sure they're welcomed and have sufficient access, whether through mentoring or creating an environment that allows people to develop relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Think about retention practices, work-life balance and training opportunities.

HEALY: People want to feel like they're treated with dignity. Even if they don't agree with the way something turned out, they want to feel like they were heard, that they are given a chance to improve when things aren't going well. They want leadership that is transparent when the company's having challenges.

CROMWELL: Challenges in business are inevitable. Employers can adapt by taking the opportunity

"The skills students need to flourish in the workplace are shifting. Having leading-edge information for educational institutions is really important. Data needs to have enough predictive value so institutions can be ahead of the curve ... to meet demand before it's there."

MARK MITSUI

during prosperous times to identify seasonal or periodic fluctuations that could impact their employees, and put safety nets in place to protect them during the worst of times. Pre-planning will allow employers to avoid delays in providing resources and options to their employees; having your Work Share plan ready for when you need it will provide an added layer of insurance to support, stabilize, and retain talented employees.

BEEKE: Where are employers going to have the hardest time creating and maintaining quality jobs?

Healy: Recruitment is a huge problem. We're seeing organizations that simply don't have the bandwidth to make these monumental shifts. Recruiting the people they need to make these big shifts in how the company operates is the first challenge. Also, making big shifts in the way people do their day-to-day work and how people manage and lead takes time and is often met with resistance.

BEEKE: Any other thoughts on where employers may struggle in creating these jobs?

MCGOUGH: If you pay people more and offer benefits, your labor

costs are going to rise. We would argue that productivity ultimately would improve as well. It's hard for employers to quantify things like recruitment costs and replacement costs.

Right now, employers see it as additional costs that they either have to pass on by increasing the cost of the product or they have to figure out how to say to shareholders, "our profits may be slightly lower initially while we implement some of these things, but over time, we think they're going to increase because our workforce is our most important asset."

Convince them that this is an investment that will pay off over time, but be patient.

BEEKE: How do we train people so they can land these quality jobs?

MITSUI: The skills students need to flourish in the workplace are shifting. Having leading-edge information and data for educational institutions is really important. Data needs to be timely and have enough predictive value so institutions can be ahead of the curve and able to shift direction to meet demand before it's there.

What we're hearing from employers and others is that the skills that make us better humans – communication, empathy, creativity, innovation, ability to work in diverse teams, cross-cultural competence and technical knowledge, along with employability skills like being reliable, taking responsibility – all of those combined are needed.

We recently received an \$800,000 grant from Congress for developing an artificial intelligence curriculum. We're looking at how automation is changing the workplace and the skills required. We're finding that in a more highly automated workspace, the ability to synthesize information and those human skills that make us better people are hard to automate. Mentorship and being in person speaks to important skills that students need.

The other challenge is we have 43 million adults in this country at

level one literacy. These folks are smart, capable, hardworking, but just haven't had the educational opportunity that others have had.

We only have enough public funding to provide basic education for 1 million out of the 43 million. This lack of educational opportunity means a vast majority of Americans in low-wage jobs are at risk of being locked out of the U.S. economy. Future Ready Oregon is the governor's \$200 million investment in reimagining the workforce and is the bridge to opportunity through workforce development.

So, Future Ready Oregon has community college investments in Career Pathways that put individuals on the path to good jobs. And these pathways include coaching, mentorship and navigation support. Several surveys of Oregon community colleges have shown that over 60% of the respondents indicated basic-needs insecurity. At PCC, surveys indicated 50% of the respondents have faced housing insecurity, 40% have dealt with food insecurity, and 19% have experience with houselessness. It's hard to focus on school when you're not sure where you're going to sleep. So Future Ready Oregon incorporates wraparound supports so students can focus on school and graduate.

BEEKE: Thoughts on how the return-to-the-office movement will affect retention?

HEALY: We're seeing a delicate balance of trying to preserve the intangible benefits that come from having everyone together but also ensure that valued employees who want the flexibility to work remotely stay happy. A lot of clients, with the rise of remote work, are having their employees poached or taken by non-Oregon companies who not only offer 100% remote work, but also much higher salaries.

If you can't compete on salary, you have to figure out what else you can compete on and remind employees what sets you apart. Something doable in every workplace is to remind employees that you care about them.



"A quality employer plans for economic downturns and prepares for uncertainties to ensure the best interim solutions for both their business and their employees."

SARA CROMWELL