Workforce Innovations

March/ April 2000

News and insights to meet the needs of an evolving community of employers, job seekers and educators

Feature Article:

Nurturing a Local Labor Force

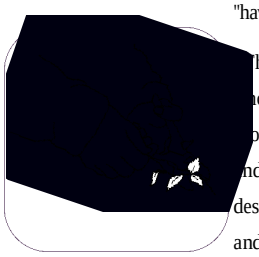
It takes innovative partnerships to grow a strong regional labor force. By working together, educators, private industry, and government propose a strategy to "grow our own" local talent.

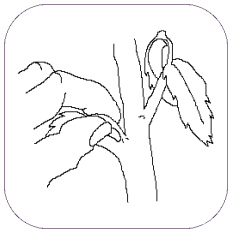
There has been much discussion in the media recently regarding the congressionally approved increase in H-1B non-immigrant visas. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) describes the recipient of this particular visa as someone "who is coming temporarily to the United States to perform services in a specialty occupation...," which itself is clarified as a position requiring "theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge." By definition, many of the careers affected by this law reside within the realm of high technology.

Silicon Valley, despite its phenomenal economic growth, does face serious challenges that threaten our present quality of life and the future development of the region. The question of locating and training workers with appropriate and applicable skills directly relates to the issue of overseas recruitment and hiring.

Those who support the increase in visas argue that there is a deficit of appropriately skilled workers domestically and that overseas recruitment is a workforce necessity. On the other side, many at the community level fear that local workers will not be considered if employers can more cost-effectively fill positions from overseas.

NOVA Private Industry Council, in cooperation within the State of California Employment Development Department and





local corporate sponsors-including Sun Microsystems and Cisco Systems-has proposed a strategy to provide high-level technical skills training to 200 individuals from within the region over the next two years. The project outlined in a grant application to the Department of Labor will not only serve dislocated workers with a high level of education, but will recruit from among some of the poorest neighborhoods in Silicon Valley in an effort to help bridge the ever-widening technical gap that separates the "haves" and the "have-nots."

The training itself will follow two main tracks. Individuals who show basic aptitudes will be enrolled in an exciting new program known as STEP (Systems Administration Training and Employment Program). This innovative project has been designed by a team of representatives from private industry and local education to enable individuals to become certified systems administrators in less than one year.

The bulk of the technical skills training will be provided by Mission and Evergreen Valley Colleges, University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) Extension, and Opportunities Industrialization Center West (OICW), a non-profit vocational education center.

Training may be in such diverse areas as network management and engineering, semiconductor engineering, and software technologies—all skills in high demand locally.

While it may be unrealistic to think that all high-tech hiring

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Connect! Partner

Mission College - Workforce and Economic Development Collaborative

The Mission College Workforce and Economic Development Collaborative delivers creative solutions in support of business and industry. To succeed in today's highly competitive and constantly changing business environment, the Collaborative assists small and large businesses through partnership, leveraging of resources, customized training, capacity development, and information dissemination.

- Community Education offers a series of low-cost business, technology-related and general interest courses for small to medium-sized businesses that desire retraining in new skills and technologies taught by working professionals.

- The Corporate Training program of Mission College works to identify employee and organizational performance needs, from consultation through customized classes at the worksite.

- The Regional Environmental and Business Resource Assistance Center (REBRAC) advances the region's environmental technology industry by partnering with businesses to assess the knowledge and skills needed for hazardous substance technicians.

- The Regional Health Occupations Resource Center (RHORC) serves as an economic development resource to the health care industry by conducting employment and business needs assessments and job analysis.

- The Networking and Telecommunications Technologies Industry Collaborative (NTT-IDC) meets the emerging workforce needs of the region's information technology industry by developing trained faculty, curricula, and college programs in networking and telecommunications technology.

- The South Bay Regional New Media Center assists employees in gaining skills in the fields of visual arts, computer graphics, 3D animation, sound technology, and web design.

- The Workplace Learning Resource Center (WLRC) assists individuals and corporations to acquire the basic skills and tools necessary to work more effectively. Using occupational-specific skill assessment services, task analysis, basic skills, English as a second language, analytical and problem solving skills, and teamwork, the WLRC prepares workers to meet the challenges of a changing work environment.

Contact us today at 408-522-1030 for further information about Mission College's innovative services.

Growing a Local Labor Force

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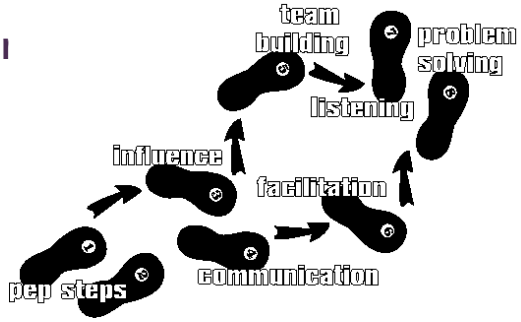
demands might be met through the efforts of this proposed training program, progress can most certainly be made through enhancing the existing skills of local workers and providing entry-level skills to individuals who may not have the opportunity to get a foot in the high-tech door. Working together we can make a difference in meeting the needs of local employers and serving the local community.

NOVA Program

Professional Effectiveness Progı

NOVA's Professional Effectiveness Program is a training program that provides assessment and development in the key "soft" skills employers are requiring: communication, team-building and problem solving. These essential skills promote success on the job for taking the steps toward career development.



While Silicon Valley has little difficulty locating the technical skills that so identify the region, many employers are finding it increasingly difficult to find the "soft" skills—the interpersonal skills of communication and leadership that allow an individual and an organization to flourish. With funding through the Department of Labor's Job Training Partnership Act, NOVA Private Industry Council has established the Professional Effectiveness Program to help resolve this widespread issue.

The Professional Effectiveness Program, or PEP, has been providing assessment and training for workers throughout the valley for nearly a year. Those participating in the program have benefited from the full soft skills training process—from initial assessment through training and feedback. Currently, skills development workshops concentrate on six major areas: facilitation, influence, commitment to quality, customer service orientation, problem solving, and listening. The courses are beneficial to Silicon Valley workers both technical and non-technical. As the nature of work is becoming more team oriented, employees need to possess good communication, listening, and problem solving skills.

Although the initial focus of the program was for individuals who have been dislocated and in potential need of skills upgrading, there is a great deal of excitement from the employer community to provide these same essential skills to workers currently employed. To date, several organizations within Santa Clara County have benefited from PEP's soft skills training.

If you have any interest in these invaluable workshops for yourself or for your company, please contact NOVA at 408-730-7232 for additional information. Also, watch the San Jose Mercury News Sunday edition in late February for an article focusing on soft skills and NOVA's PEP-y solution.

Bulletin Board

E-Commerce for Small Business
The Conference that Answers the Big Questions About Planning, Developing, Designing and Deploying E-Commerce

e-commerce is the new business environment of the future, but many small businesses may find the shift online daunting. The University of California Santa Cruz Extension, a partner of Connect!, is hosting the three day E-Commerce Conference for Small Business March 17-19 at the Santa Clara Marriott Hotel to address concerns of small business entering this new marketplace. The Conference will provide a comprehensive overview of the opportunities e-commerce offers small businesses, entrepreneurial ventures and start up companies. Workshops will address issues of business, marketing, design and infrastructure.

UCSC Extension's E-Commerce Conference is sponsored by the San Jose Mercury News. Registration by March 15 is $425, late registration is $495. For detailed information and to register online, visit www.ucsc-extension.edu. To register by phone, call 800-660-8639. For additional information, call 408-566-4582.

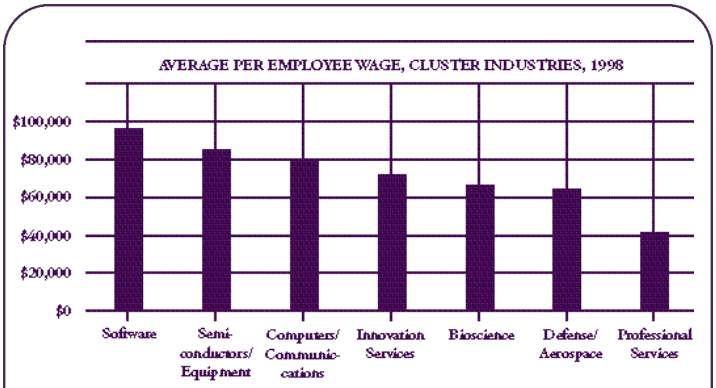
Labor Market Information

The Average Wage for Software Cluster Exceeds $95,0000; Largest-Employing Sector—Local and Visitor Services—Remains Below $23,000

Labor Market Information is valuable to employers due to the current low unemployment rate. Older workers are often overlooked as a viable workforce when, as the following article explains, they have received very high job performance ratings and are motivated employees.

Why is this important? Average annual wage increases in driving cluster industries are an indicator of the wealth-generation impact that outward-oriented industries have on Silicon Valley. Healthy cluster industries can stimulate local-serving industries, as companies and the people they employ spend money on goods and services offered within the region.

How are we doing? Of the cluster of industries, software continues to have the highest average annual wages, reaching $95,800 in 1998. The second highest cluster is semiconductors/equipment at $86,300, followed by computer/communications at $80,200 and innovation services at $72,300. For the second year in a row, computer/communications demonstrated the largest absolute ($7,160) and relative (9.8%) increase from the previous year.



Source: Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network/ Employment Development Department

Featured Website

Joint Venture : Silicon Valley
www.jointventure.com

Joint Venture is a non-profit regional collaborative established to enhance the economic vitality and quality of life in Silicon Valley.

The Joint Venture web site is intended to provide a network of information and contacts concerning transportation, training, labor market activity, and the Silicon Valley.

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