

Skills Gap: The Focus of this Issue of **SalesNews – Sales Mentoring Solutions™**, LLC's Newsletter; Pub. Second Quarter 2006

Introduction to this Newsletter -

The featured article in the February 2006 issue of *Training and Development Magazine* (T+D) dealt with the skills gap. This article was based on a 2005 Skills Gap Report issued by the National Association of Manufacturers' Manufacturing Institute/Center for Workforce Success and Deloitte Consulting LLC.

Although the focus was on manufacturing, this is a problem that permeates every segment of the American economy. It merits being addressed in all aspects of our economy—public and private enterprise, government and education. This is not simply an American problem. Rather, it is rapidly evolving into a concern of worldwide proportions. It will only get much worse before it *may* get better.

Upon receiving February's T+D, I read the skills gap article with both interest and personal incrimination. For many of my years in the sales profession (especially during the 14 years that I built sales and customer service organizations for technology based corporations), I added to this problem. Often I was associated with firms that employed a "buy it rather than build it" personnel acquisition policy. My actions in this predatory recruitment practice contributed to the problem.

Maybe you share my experience. For many reasons, this has become an all too common practice in American business over the past 20 plus years. While it is not the only cause of today's skills gap problem, it is a significant contributing factor. This is a business practice which is short sighted. It undermines the long-term stability of not only the American economy but also each individual business, especially those that perpetuate the practice today. It doesn't have to continue, and it really shouldn't.

It has been said the tough times require bold measures. A firm needs very good reasons to change a business practice—growing its talent rather buying it—especially when the competition isn't doing the same. Here are four reasons to consider:

- It will differentiate your firm from the competition.
- Your firm will have more success attracting and retaining quality people.
- It will bolster productivity and positively impact your firm's business growth.
- Instead of exacerbating the problem, your firm will be a part of the solutions.

This practice is far from the only reason we have the skills gap problem today. Changing it (even if done throughout the American business infrastructure) won't solve the entire problem. It will, however, improve it, perhaps significantly. Because the skills gap problem permeates every segment of our society, all sectors must do their parts. This issue directly threatens the stability of American business at every level. None of us can afford to sit back and let someone else do it for us. We all must become a part of the solution.

In the previous edition of **Sales*e*News**, I focused on employee recruitment and retention explaining that it is one of today's seminal business issues. Therein, skills training and professional development were cited as key business strategies for attracting and retaining great employees. As you read this quarter's edition, you'll find that training and development is also a core strategy for bridging the skills gap.

Thank you for your interest in **Sales*e*News**.

Bobby L. Butler, President and Founder of **Sales Mentoring Solutions™**, LLC

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