



Rich Groves

FINDING EMPLOYEES

THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEM FOR ALMOST EVERY BUSINESS

Editorial by Richard P. Groves, Executive Director of the North Kansas City Business Council

Everywhere I turn I see “Now Hiring” or a similar message. Talk to any business owner and you hear the same message. It is almost becoming a tearful plea. The eventual consequence of not having enough employees is not being able to produce or deliver some or all of its products or services. Or at least a delay in delivery. To compensate for this scarcity of staffing the remaining employees (and owners) must carry a heavier day-to-day role in product or service delivery. Often this leads to less income than planned or needed to sustain the business without borrowing money or making drastic changes in the business model. For some, it will mean going out of business.

Here are some of the alleged causes of this problem

- Scarcity of childcare resources
- Accumulation of enough savings due to fewer opportunities to spend during the pandemic, plus financial payments from the government, etc. to defer going back to work for a while
- For some, more in unemploy-

ment insurance payments than they got going to work—or at least enough to offset the loss of salary plus childcare and/or commuting costs

- Skills mismatch between job requirements and skills of applicants
- Better opportunities with other employers, perhaps even in different industries—pay, flexibility, benefits, work environment
- Some employers are reluctant to offer the pay that seems to be needed

What will make this get better?

- People with savings which have allowed them to stay out of the workforce will eventually need to go to work
- The pandemic will ease enough for lives to get back close to normal (maybe a new normal)
- More employers will become more flexible to be more attractive
- More employers will examine their employment practices to make sure their online application process is easy to use and effective

What are some sources for employees that may not have been used much in the past?

- People with disabilities
- Immigrants with legal documentation
- Stay-at-home parents who might have mid-day availability or “gig” project capability
- Better resources for re-skilling people who don’t have the skills for the opportunities that are available
- “Second chance” for people who have served time in jail/prison

Jerry Hickey, owner of the local Express Employment Professionals office, says “Another concern is the availability of “similar” jobs. The vast majority of employers, particularly employers of hourly wage earners, have dramatically increased wages over the past two years (in our office, the average hourly wage is up almost 40%). An unforeseen challenge is that it is now getting difficult for employers to differentiate their pay because the base has come up so much. What

FINDING EMPLOYEES:

THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEM FOR ALMOST EVERY BUSINESS continued from front page

we see now is a bunch of jobs all bunched together in the \$15-\$18 range regardless of required skill, and this seems to be about as high as employers can go for these types of roles and maintain business stability. I'd say they are at the proverbial breaking point, and many are looking to automate because the cost delta is no longer so great. This is a longer-term concern."

Jerry also added, "We are also seeing a lot of people who go through the motions of trying to find a job, rather than really wanting one, in hopes of extending unemployment or other benefits. Hopefully this is something government agencies are addressing. Employers are offering new shifts, new benefits, etc. to attract and keep people. We have not seen an overwhelming success with any of them. People mostly still care about four things: 1) Pay; 2) Location; 3) Job duties and 4) How they are treated at work. If employees don't feel like they are valued and treated with respect, they aren't sticking around. We're also seeing more and more folks specifically looking, and waiting for, remote work. Unfortunately, forklifts and trucks don't drive themselves (yet)."

Here are some suggestions for employers from the Kansas City Business Journal's "Playbook"

- It's no longer enough to just throw together a listing and put it online. Instead, businesses need to be deliberate about how they

write a job posting and emphasize the criteria that is important to jobseekers in this candidate-friendly market.

- Today's jobseeker is much more proficient in trying to drill down and find out if a potential employer is a place that they would enjoy working at. Candidates don't want to waste their time applying for something that's not going to be for them.

- Before they even post a job, business owners should see how they are rated on employment review websites such as Glassdoor. And to have good reviews on Glassdoor, companies need to be deliberate



Jerry Hickey, owner, Express Employment Professionals

about treating their employees well and dealing with potential problems as they arise -otherwise employees will post about those issues online.

- Every successful job posting must also have the following:
 - A salary. Employers are often hesitant to include specific salary information, but that trend is shifting in the Covid-19 era. Many workers will simply not apply if they don't see one listed.
 - Specifics on high-profile policies. Does your company require Covid-19 vaccinations? Does it have a specific return-to-work policy? Are there monthly or quarterly meetings to discuss progress and course-correct?
 - Job title and exact location. Online job boards will not be kind to

postings that do not contain those elements.

- Remote or hybrid policies.

Workers want flexibility. If you are not able to offer some sort of flexibility you are going to lose that great candidate to someone who does.

- Company culture and mission. Talk about what your company is doing outside of work, such as charitable activities. Talk about how it makes a difference in the community. People want to feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

- The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated people leaving for jobs that make them happier, with better work-life balance.

- It is not enough to take the job description from HR and just post it online. The more transparent you can be the better off you are. If you say one thing in an ad or neglect to say something and they come in for an interview and get some different information.

- Businesses and hiring managers also need to prepare for what could be a lengthy hiring process, with only two percent of jobs filled within a week of posting the vacancy online, according to a separate survey of 522 hiring managers by invoicing firm Sky-nova. About three quarters of job postings are taking three weeks or longer to fill — due in large part to the dearth of candidates and intense competition.

- One key, recruiters have said, is that employers must be quick to act in this environment when they have a preferred candidate.

NOCIX: A Name to Remember...and Thank

Free, high-speed internet access is readily available for 21,000 students and 3,200 staff members throughout the 84 square miles of the North Kansas City School District.

This is due to the generosity of one North Kansas City business: NOCIX. This name is unfamiliar to most people, even in its hometown. But as host for thousands of internet servers from customers in 142 countries, it is well-known throughout the internet world. NOCIX is owned and operated by North Kansas City natives Brooks Brown and Todd Burnidge and their partner Aaron Wendel.

The story of this act of generosity began nearly ten years ago when Brooks Brown, whose children were students in the North Kansas City School district, became aware of limited internet bandwidth that was inadequate for digital learning needs at the time. Brooks and his company, NOCIX (formerly DataShack), graciously approached the district with an offer to provide free high speed fiber service. At the time, the North Kansas City School district was using a 250-megabyte internet connection. In January 2013, NOCIX donated a one gigabit internet connection to the district which quadrupled the district's internet bandwidth.

Over the course of the next two years, North Kansas City Schools' need for internet capacity continued to grow as more teachers became acclimated to using technology as part of instruction and as more online resources became available.

In November 2014, NOCIX again came through by increasing North Kansas City Schools' internet bandwidth tenfold from one gigabit to ten gigabits. This generous expansion was a large reason for the success of the district's rollout of 15,000 additional devices purchased in 2017. With close to 29,000 devices on the network, the district was using nearly four gigabits of data at any given moment. Spikes upwards of six gigabits were even witnessed at peak times!

In 2018, NOCIX took over management of the fiber optic network in North Kansas City (KC Fiber / liNKCity). Through a partnership with KC Fiber /

liNKCity and NOCIX, the district was able to ensure the sustainability of its internet by directly connecting to the NOCIX data center with underground fiber. By moving the fiber connection underground, potential points of failure were decreased.

In 2021, NOCIX graciously upgraded the district to 100 gigabits, making North Kansas City Schools perhaps the fastest pre-K-12 school district in the country. In conversations with districts across the nation, others are astounded at what capability the North Kansas City district has, thanks to the thoughtful and generous donation by Brooks Brown and his partners at NOCIX.

In addition to the contribution to internet access, Brooks and his partners have offered assistance through the district's technology advisory committee and a community involvement committee. This assistance is estimated to have saved the district more than one million dollars since inception, providing the highest level of internet access for students, teachers and staff with unmeasurable benefits towards learning and communications.

Some Comments from District Staff:

"Brooks' commitment over the past ten years has ensured North Kansas City Schools didn't have to settle for a lower level of internet access in serving more than 21,000 students. When we talk about being a Champion for All Students, we can point to Brooks as an example by word and by deed."

Dan Clemens, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

"Our students have always shown a tremendous level of comfort with varied devices. Neither the school district, nor the Board, wanted school to be a place one came to "power down." Engaging, relevant and innovative means of learning were necessary to further student achievement."

Rochel Daniels, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent, Organizational Development

NORTHLAND COFFEE CONNECT

Celebrates 8 Years

Intrigued by the Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups initiative supporting entrepreneurs, the North Kansas City Business Council began weekly sessions on Wednesday mornings eight years ago that invited entrepreneurs to tell their story, network with other entrepreneurs and get helpful advice.

In the beginning, Northland Coffee Connect met in a donated event space upstairs next to the Screenland Armour Theatre. For the last five years it has been hosted at iWerx, the entrepreneurial development center and co-working space at 1520 Clay.

Throughout this journey the Clay County Economic Development Council has been a strong partner, along with many volunteer leaders and, of course, the staff and ownership of iWerx.

You are invited to attend Northland Coffee Connect any Wednesday morning beginning at 7:45 a.m. and ending by 9:00 a.m. Stay longer if you want to linger for more coffee and networking. Many great business connections have been made at Northland Coffee Connect the past eight years. If you would like to be added to the email distribution letting you know who will be featured at the next week's gathering contact Bob Martin at bob.martin@iwerx.org.

IMPORTANT BALLOT ISSUE FOR NORTH KANSAS CITY SCHOOLS APRIL 5TH

If you live in the North Kansas City School District, the Board of Directors of the North Kansas City Business Council encourages your support with a "Yes" vote in the April 5th special election to approve a zero tax increase levy transfer and \$140 million bond issue.

North Kansas City Schools is home to 21,000 students and counting! Now the second-largest school district in Missouri, NKC Schools is projected to grow by more than 1,500 students in the next five years.

New and expanded schools are needed to accommodate

rapid growth and welcome new students. Replacing and renovating older schools across the district will ensure all students have the best opportunities to learn in world-class environments. Comprehensive updates



will bring new, modern learning spaces and critical safety

and systems improvements. As more students and families join NKC Schools, additional staff and services are required to meet greater needs. Inflation has also driven the district's operating costs up. Additional support will ensure we continue serving as Champions for All Students.

To make these proposed improvements a reality, NKC Schools asks voters to approve a zero tax increase levy transfer and \$140 million bond issue on the April 5, 2022 ballot. Visit nkcschools.org/2022 to learn more.

THANK YOU TO HYBRID MEETING EQUIPMENT SPONSOR: sipVine

As a tool to offer high quality “hybrid” meetings with both in-person and Zoom attendees, the North Kansas City Business Council welcomed sponsorship by long-time Business Council member sipVine, Inc. to enable purchase of an Owl Pro camera/microphone/speaker.

Quoting sipVine’s VP of Sales and Marketing Mark Greim, “North Kansas City has been sipVine’s headquarters since 2009 and has been an ideal location for our business. Not only are the infrastructure, centralized

access, and amenities ideal for our business operations, but members of the business community are very supportive of each other. Many North Kansas City businesses use sipVine as their VoIP phone service provider and we also use several of the local businesses for services we need. We obviously support technology in business, so sponsoring this meeting technology for the NKC Business Council seemed like another great way to give back to the business community of North Kansas City.”



Thank You to Businesses with Inserts in this Issue

With each issue of this newsletter we offer the opportunity to Business Council member businesses to include an insert to promote their business. Please take a few minutes to view the inserts provided by:

BesaMe Wellness

Blue Oak Technology

Northtown Auto Clinic

Streamline Print & Design

Tech Grove

Vocational Services, Inc.

YMCA

NKCBC ANNUAL BUSINESS DIRECTORY



Though the deadline is rapidly approaching, advertising opportunities still are available in the Business Council’s 2022-23 business directory. If you are interested in having an ad in the directory for greater exposure or as a way to show support for the North Kansas City Business Council, please contact **Chris Teague** at cteague.kc@gmail.com.

NORTH KANSAS CITY BUSINESS COUNCIL

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The Digital Phone Solution
for Smart Business



Hunt Midwest



NKC Business Council
405 E 19th Avenue
North Kansas City, MO 64116



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NEW MEMBERS

3 and Me Boutique

Axis Construction Group, LLC

BesaMe Wellness

Callsign Brewing Company

Flex Fitness Gym

Pure Design, LLC

Quiznos North Kansas City

Rebuilding Together Kansas City

Rexius Nutrition

Safe Haven Security, LLC

SRS Design

WERQ Dance Fitness Studio

COMING EVENTS

First Friday Coffees

April 1

(North Kansas City Police Department)
& May 6

Monthly Membership Luncheons

April 28, May 26 & June 23

Mickey Finn Scholarship

Golf Classic

Thursday, June 2

