**Workforce 3One**

**Transcript of Podcast**

**Business Services**

**Challenges and Advice**

*Transcript by*

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SCOTT CUBBERLY: My name is Scott Cubberly. I'm with the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and we're the administrative agency for MichiganWorks! Southwest and I currently serve as the project manager for the Workforce Innovation Fund Round 2 through the Department of Labor.

DAVID NIERMANN: And I'm David Niermann. I oversee the one-stop operations in Minnesota we call the Minnesota Workforce Centers and I also direct the Wagner-Peyser program yield operations efforts. And Wagner-Peyser, in our state, funds 25 business services representatives across the state. These positions report directly to the local job service managers who report to me. And I collaborate very closely with our Employer Services Director Jackie Buck who also works here at DEED in the workforce development division and I'll let Jackie quickly describe her job.

JACKIE BUCK: I'm Jackie Buck and I'm the director of employer services, as Dave Niermann indicated. I have the 25 business services reps who dotted-line report to me and they're the individuals who are out contacting businesses every day doing in-person and on-the-phone consultations helping them solve their workforce challenges. I also have some other federal programs that are programs and services for businesses, such as the Federal Bonding Program, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program as well as Foreign Labor and Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

MR. NIERMANN: We really try to focus on those small- to medium-sized businesses that don't have big HR departments. We just kind of figure we will, of course, help a large business, like a 3M or a Target Corporation when they call on us and we do work with them, but we also understand that they have vast resources and human resources departments that don't need us as much as the smaller or medium-sized businesses will need. So those are a couple of examples with some challenges that we've seen.

I'd say another thing is that in developing the partnerships, oftentimes, politics and personalities are a difficult thing to overcome. So if you can't partner with everybody, I'd say don't worry about it. You can try, but sometimes you need to focus on the people who are really willing to partner with you. And when you have successes with partnerships, others will eventually get onboard that might be reluctant to join up with you in the initial phases of the development of a partnership.

MR. CUBBERLY: Yeah. I think one of the things Dave also mentioned was in those metropolitan areas, there's a lot of nonprofits, there's a lot of organizations that are trying to do very similar things with targeted populations. So it's really important and a feature of WIOA to leverage partnerships and work with different organizations and try and coordinate as much as possible. And so sharing information and making sure that we reduce as much as possible the number of contacts calling on employers.

And so if we convene meetings that are very regular and we share the information that's coming out, it really helps reduce that noise that those companies are hearing. And so we can really make sure that we're targeting them with the best solutions or best opportunities to meet their needs. I think that's really key.

MR. NIERMANN: I think that's a very good point, Scott and it just reminded me that one of the things that we have done is that I mentioned sales force before is what our database is where we record all of our employer visits' data information, we share that database with some other statewide organizations so that we can do a better job of coordinating with them. So we share our salesforce database with the statewide chamber of commerce and with the Greater Metropolitan Economic Development Organization. And internally here at DEED, we also share it with our economic development office and also with our Minnesota Trade Office.

And what that means is that we all enter all of our employer information into the same database and we can actually look at each other's information before we go out and visit an employer to see if anybody else has visited them already, at least among those organizations that we share that database with. And that helps us do a little better job of coordinating and making sure that we're not tripping over each other.

So if we do have to go visit a business, at least we can say, hey, we know that so and so has already been out to see you and we know that this has happened and this has happened, well, here's something we can do. We are working on getting more people. A lot of our local workforce investment board partners are now paying for a portal so they can view that information also before their staff go out and visit businesses.

Not all of them are doing it yet, but we're working on getting more and more partners onto that database so we can do more of what Scott just described where we can share information and do a better job of coordinating. And the other thing is the communication and being very clear on what you're doing with your external partners and communicate, communicate, communicate. You just want your partners to have a really clear understanding of what your role is so they understand that you're not coming into do their job or duplicate what they're doing.

And I think it's really important to do as many written agreements as much as possible that articulate the roles, articulate how you share data and things like that and a lot of this can be done through the local unified plan that the workforce investment boards put out every year, but you can also do other written agreements with other organizations, depending on who you're working with to make sure everybody understands roles.

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