



Helping Push the 'Easy' Button on Hiring, Training and Retaining Your Workforce

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC

You know that Office Depot commercial with the big red "that was easy" button? I feel there should also be a "that was fast" button, too.

I mean, where did the summer go? It's already August which means back to school and, gauging by the holiday décor already for sale in area hobby stores – I'm talking about *Christmas* décor – it's time for many employers to ramp up their seasonal help.

Summer, we hardly knew ye. For that matter, where has the year gone?

In September, we'll celebrate one year since the grand opening and ribbon cutting for our affiliate Talent Center, which we operate in partnership with the College of Central Florida.

Talent Center is housed at CF's campus in Ocala in the Enterprise Center. It is, essentially, a standalone brand that grew out of the desire of CF to partner with CareerSource CLM to provide comprehensive placement services for their students and graduates. At the same time our Board of Director's strategic plan calls for enhanced services for professionals and highly-skilled technical talent and our area's businesses in need of that talent.

I'll do a deeper dive into Talent Center next month. For now, just to refresh your memory after the long, hot summer, here's what you need to know: Talent Center services are open to any employer in the three-county region looking for professional-level career seekers and/or postsecondary students or graduates. The services are also available to any postsecondary student and recent graduate in the three-county area, regardless of which school they attend or where they live in the region.

But what of CareerSource CLM in general? Glad you asked!

What we do for Employers – CareerSource CLM offers an integrated talent support solution to help businesses find, develop and keep talented employees. Our team provides the expertise, resources and, depending on eligibility, financial support businesses need to succeed and grow.

While our general services are available to all businesses, certain opportunities are offered in key targeted industries identified as critical to the economic well-being of our three-county area. Specifically, those are Healthcare, Technology, Manufacturing, and Transportation/Distribution/Logistics. That's probably broader than you think. For example, you don't have to a software developer to have needs in technology – perhaps you are a bank that needs to beef up its IT department.

Here's a look at some of our fee-free Employer Services:

Recruiting – We typically hold large Career Fairs for multiple employers interested in meeting the widest possible array of career seekers possible, all on one day in one place. These usually take place in the spring and fall – in recent months we've held Career Expos for middle- and high-school students, spring career fairs in Marion and Citrus counties, and our annual youth job fair. The venues are large enough to accommodate 30 or more employers and hundreds of potential candidates (think CF's Klein and Webber conference centers, Circle Square Cultural Center, and CF's Learning and Conference Center in Lecanto).

You can also take advantage of hiring events customized to meet your unique recruiting needs. These can be held at our Career Centers, at your workplace or at an alternate site, such as at the CF's Ocala campus.

Hiring events are normally smaller than our career fairs, though not always. It depends on the company and its needs. A year ago, we held a two-day event for FedEx in Ocala and 1,800 career seekers turned out. More recently, we held a three-day hiring event for Earth Fare and a four-day event for Rural King.

What's important, however, is not how many employees you want to hire or how large your company, because we can and do tailor exclusive hiring event for any sized business.

As always, whether it's a Career Fair or Hiring Event, we handle logistics, cover any venue costs, provide staff support and help get candidates there.

And while on the subject of recruiting, sometimes it's advantageous to "try before you buy." Our Paid Adult Internship and Work Experience Trainee programs can help you do that. Both programs offer eligible employers the option of trying out potential employees at our cost. Our paid internship/work experience program identifies individuals who are coming out of training, or individuals who may lack experience in certain areas. The program pays participants to work 20 to 40 hours a week for 12 weeks or 360 hours at your place of business. Wages, worker's compensation, and other related payroll costs are paid by CareerSource CLM.

- Internships are for area postsecondary students or recent graduates with technical training, but little or no experience.
- Work Experience focuses on job seekers who have work experience but whose job-specific skills need updating.

Selecting and training an intern/work experience trainee allows employers to train, observe and develop the trainee. By the end of the program, employers can gain a valuable new asset for their organization by offering interns/trainees full-time employment.

Training New Workers – There are also times when you find a job candidate and you just like the cut of their jib. You find they have a proven track record and believe they'd be a good fit for your company. The only problem is they may not have the skills you need for the job, or perhaps no one does yet because you've developed something new. That's where On-the-Job Training (OJT) can help. The OJT program provides a safety net for eligible employers by absorbing much of the financial risk, such as wages and training costs, that you normally invest in taking a chance on a promising candidate.

OJT funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and are limited to private, for-profit businesses in the targeted industries mentioned earlier. Reimbursement is between 50- to 75- percent based on the individual selected and length of training. OJT grants may also cover other costs associated with hiring new employees, such as equipment, uniforms and background checks.

Training Existing Workers – Perhaps you're not in the market to add to your staff just now, but you'd like to invest in more training for your existing employees. That's where the Custom Business Training program can help.

For eligible employers, the program can provide your current employees with new skills important to the success of your business and cover up to 50 percent of your out-of-pocket costs. Significantly, you have the flexibility to choose your own trainer and curriculum or training course as long as it results in a qualifying certification. There are income and tenure requirements, but basically it can cover any employee that makes less than \$52,000 a year (or \$25 and hour) and those who have been on your payroll for at least six months.

If any of these programs seem right for you, please visit the employers section of our website at www.careersourceclm.com or call our Business Development Team at 352-873-7955 or 800-746-9950. If you want to learn more about the Talent Center, please call 352-840-5762.

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