

# State of the Workforce Conference Goes Virtual, Flips Script on 'Business as Usual'

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, Communications Manager, CareerSource CLM



Business as usual? For good or bad, there's probably no going back; Covid-19 has seen to that.

Business practices held in good stead across many decades, and even straddling centuries, must now be re-thought, re-configured and re-deployed. No one's saying that everything must go, but not everything that worked pre-pandemic works today, as we continue to reckon with the coronavirus, nor will it work once we are shut of it.

No, the reality is our new normal has clearly flipped the script on what we thought of as "business as usual." And how we recognize and leverage that is the focus of the 2021 State of the Workforce Conference, *Recover, Redesign, Rework*.

The conference will be virtual and held in partnership with the Ocala Human Resource Management Association. It takes place on April 22 from 8 a.m. to noon. Individual tickets are \$25 and available at [bit.ly/2021SOTW](http://bit.ly/2021SOTW).

I know, we all long for in-person interaction, but honestly, going virtual makes sense right now and has its advantages. No travel to and from a venue in another county. No restrictions on the number of attendees due to crowd capacity. You will also have access to the full, recorded conference for 30 days afterward.

Here's what you need to know, and why you should attend if you are a member of the business community, an HR professional, and/or an economic development, education, or public partner: *Recover, Redesign, Rework* is designed to identify ways the region's businesses may begin to recover from the impacts of the pandemic on the workforce, redesign how the workplace may function moving forward, and rework ways to build the talent pipeline to meet in-demand and emerging needs.

In addition, the annual *Bridging the Gap* award will be presented to area businesses that have gone above and beyond to build the regional workforce by closing gaps in skills, training, and opportunity.



Our CEO Rusty Skinner said that in working with OHRMA to plan this year's conference, it became clear that it should focus on ways businesses can emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever.

"In dealing with COVID-19, businesses were forced into a so-called new normal which today, for better or worse, requires companies of every size and every industry sector to rethink 'business as usual.'" Skinner said. "Our goal with *Recover, Redesign, Rework* is to help the region meet our most pressing workforce development needs."

Donna Healy Strickland, OHRMA board president, added that Covid-19 forced many to "pivot and juggle, becoming parent, teacher and star coworker."

"It is incredible how we can adapt and make things work (even) as Covid-19 threw us into a new dimension ...(but) as we advance, we do need the tools to handle our current workforce best."

That means, Strickland continued, learning how to help employees be better at their job and their home life.

Conference speakers include Matt Havens, nationally renowned generational and leadership expert; Adrienne Johnston, director of Workforce Services for the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; Dr. William Beach, commissioner of Labor Statistics for the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics; and Chad Sorenson, president and founder of Adaptive HR Solutions, president of the HR Florida State Council and two-time past president of the Jacksonville chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management.

In addition to an overview of the State of the Workforce in Florida moving into 2021, the conference will cover:

- Leveraging technology and new thinking to more efficiently conduct business;
- Insight into who is telecommuting and how working from home impacts productivity;
- How the economic collapse/recovery has affected different industry sectors unevenly and what that portends moving forward in the post-pandemic world;
- Recommended training to manage and support teams that continue to work remotely or in hybrid workplace; and
- Strategies to deal with emerging employee relations concerns.

The conference culminates with the *Bridging the Gap* awards. Presenting sponsors for the 2021 virtual conference are Benefit Advisors and the Ocala/Marion County Chamber & Economic Partnership. Citrus County sponsors include AutoZone, the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, Duke Energy and Re-Max.

As the region's recognized workforce leader, CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion collaborates with local economic development, education, and community partners to develop world-class education/training and employment services to meet regional workforce needs.

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*Recover, Redesign, Rework*

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