

A GROWING MISMATCH OF JOBS AND JOB SEEKERS

P. F. Drucker. 1985. *The Wall Street Journal*, Tuesday, March 26.

We face a growing mismatch between jobs and available labor supply. Both are changing. As a result, the job openings increasingly do not fit the available people. Qualifications, expectations and values of people available for employment are changing to the point where they no longer fit the jobs offered.

This applies to the job most people still think of when they speak of "labor", the blue-collar job in manufacturing. Some of the most desirable and best-paid blue-collar jobs are hard to fill. What formerly called for "skilled labor" now increasingly demands a "technologist". Someone who has a modicum of theoretical knowledge.

Changes in jobs and their content are also creating mismatches in management. Technology is one factor. We know how to train people to do technology, but we do not know how to track the management of technology which requires "technological literacy". Technological literacy is increasingly a major requirement for managers, especially in the lower and middle levels.

As more information becomes available, fewer levels of management but more specialists of all kinds are needed.

Shifts in population and age in the population may have an even greater impact on the mismatch between jobs and labor supply. The labor-force participation of women under age 50 is now just as high as that of men. But a very large number of women in the labor force are now reaching their mid-30s. A large proportion switch to part-time work at least until the second child enters third grade.

There is a total mismatch between reality and perfectly normal expectations of young people now entering the work force. We will have to redesign managerial and professional

jobs so that even able people will still be challenged by the job after 5 or more years in it. We will have to heap responsibility on people in junior positions. We will have to find rewards and recognition other than promotion.

Existing businesses will have to learn to be innovative and to create entrepreneurship within the going concern. To attract and hold entrepreneurial people, and to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, companies will have to create new structures with new relationships and new policies, and supplement managerial compensation, benefits and rewards with those appropriate. The most successful planning in the future may well start out with trends and developments in the supply of people rather than with financial goals or market projections.

Companies will have to both step up and considerably change their training. American business is already the country's largest educator. But few focus their training on the company's needs five years out or on their employees' aspirations.

Employers will have to change what they mean by "labor market". It will be the job seeker who is the "customer", with job opportunities and job characteristics having to satisfy the job seeker. Increasingly the available work force is segmenting into a fairly large number of different markets, with considerable freedom for the individual to switch from one to another. Jobs are products that have to be designed for specific buyers and both marketed and sold to them.

Editor's Note: *I find some of Drucker's comments hard to stomach, but it is a different viewpoint which one might think about in today's society.*



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