

Mobilizing South Carolina....Focus on WORK, not JOBS

It's hard to miss the rhetoric of "we need to create JOBS" from Obama to every governor hopeful. I'd like to offer a broader perspective on how America and South Carolina can get people back to work even without another government program.

I believe the current system assumes people need a paycheck from the Government in order to find an employer who will give them a paycheck. Under the current arrangement, the Government's paycheck is for time spent looking for an employer. Granted, this system was designed for an America that was "The Great Jobs Machine" in the last century but I believe the *new normal* requires an enterprising solution, one that rewards people for *working*, not *looking*.

Statistics continue to show the majority of new jobs will come from small businesses and at the same time the job market is shrinking. A recent article in *Economy* Magazine called: *Freelance Work: Why Permanent Jobs May Not Come Back*, by Charles Hugh Smith, reported that the sum total of jobs has continued a declining trend since the 1970's. Some examples include robotics replacing workers in manufacturing, self-help check-out lanes at grocery stores, and administrative work being performed by managers.

Like you, I read and listen to the media talk about the plight of the unemployed. In my work as a small business owner in Professional Search, I have also interacted one-to-one with over 200 knowledge professionals who have lost their jobs in this downturn. This group has included CEO's, senior engineers, salespeople and even entrepreneurs who've had to close their businesses.

Recently, I began to recognize a troubling pattern. Most of these individuals are desperately seeking a *job*, preferably a full-time job that pays similar salary, benefits and bonuses as their last job. Our current system encourages this mindset. Our unemployment system *requires* these people to look for *jobs*. Month after month they search on the internet (where less than 3% find

employment), and report back to the ESC in order to receive their unemployment check. Our dilemma is **too many people are looking for too few jobs.**

I don't believe people have been encouraged to look for **work**. Many businesses could benefit from the talents of the unemployed knowledge workers.

Unfortunately when I ask people "what about working for a growing business for less pay to start?" more than 90% answer "I really want a salary and benefits".

Most entrepreneurs work at least 60-70 hours a week and could use some additional talent to help keep them going through this downturn. Entrepreneurs who still have faith in their product/service and believe the money is on its way are the **enterprising** future of South Carolina.

So, here's my idea. Pay \$300/week, typical unemployment wages for these professionals, to those who are enterprising and let them **work** for an entrepreneur who could really use their technical skills, their sales, marketing, and business acumen. Help them become a stronger organization that can eventually offer more opportunities to others.

Let's stop forcing people to **look for jobs**. Allow them to **look for work**. Most people don't really like "hand-outs". Instead work, where they are needed and wanted, gives people the discipline, the encouragement and the spirit to keep going. Let's use the "hand-out" as an investment in their future, not a token of their past. Let the entrepreneur foster this "entrepreneurial muscle".

Thomas Friedman, the author of **The World is Flat**, recently wrote in **The New York Times**, as a recommendation to President Obama, "*You want more good jobs....then spawn more Steve Jobs*". Maybe the next Steve Jobs is currently collecting unemployment in South Carolina.

I believe **we** can fix South Carolina by providing opportunities for the many talented "knowledge professionals" and by providing resources for small business. Give those who want to work, an opportunity to do so by matching them with small business owners who need their help and keep paying them their

\$300.00/week. Let the small business owners report to the state the outcome of this program and set guidelines for performance.

Let's put South Carolinians back to work, and give small business owners a "people credit" vs. a tax credit.

Jane Allen is CEO of Smart Work | Network, a retained professional search and employee assessment firm. You can contact her at Jane @smartworknetwork.com.