

GORDON REPORT, August 2021
White Paper
Job Shock: Solving the Pandemic & 2030 Employment Meltdown

Part VII: Final Word: A Decisive Skilled Talent Decade

The Great Job Awakening

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a pivotal time in history. It has caused disastrous disruptions to the world's economies including that of the United States and radically shifted people's priorities. During the pandemic many who lost their jobs when their employers downsized or disappeared were struggling to find good paying jobs. As pandemic restrictions started to be lifted in the spring of 2021, sizeable numbers of people have not been returning to the labor market. The rate of baby-boomer retirements accelerated during the pandemic. Some workers (especially in the leisure and hospitality sectors) seem to have decided that they do not want to return to their former jobs and instead want to seek employment in other industries.

As the number of job openings have swelled to unprecedented levels, businesses cannot find workers with the skills needed for their vacant jobs. In many businesses sectors and parts of the country, employers report that finding qualified workers is their top business problem. To attract employees, many employers are raising wages, offering flexible hours, and using a variety of other strategies to find the workers they need.

The purpose of this Job Shock White Paper is to trigger a major mindset change about the wide gulf between education and skills needed for the in-demand jobs of today and tomorrow and the current state of the nation's education-to-employment systems. Past history tells us that when people are emerging from a great crisis, they are more open to considering systemic change. Suddenly people realize how important education and job skills have become for them and also for their children's future.

Enlightened Leadership

During the First Industrial Revolution, education reforms were needed to support the new math and literacy demands in the offices and factories of rapidly expanding cities. Starting at the regional and state levels, enlightened community leaders spearheaded the expansion of compulsory tax-supported primary and secondary education. By 1918 all of the then 48 states mandated this standard of public schooling backed by tough truancy laws. The United States was the first nation to do this!

This education-to-employment system is now out of date as a larger percent of jobs in the Fourth Industrial Revolution require higher levels of reading and math comprehension and some form of post-secondary education. During the U.S. Civil War, Abraham Lincoln said, "Enlightened leaders and publics can create together sane and inclusive policies that strengthen our vital institutions at home and abroad." This is another era of great upheaval and crisis. To help our communities survive and thrive, sweeping reforms are needed. "Job Shock" has identified regional leaders who are already at work in many American communities to update community talent-development systems. They need our support to bring these efforts to scale across the United States.

Building RETAINs

“Nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come.” RETAINs can form the bridge that connects people to jobs. RETAIN building requires 3 steps:

1. Awareness – finding solutions for skills-jobs shortfalls.
2. Alignment – facing the challenges of partnership formation by learning how to work effectively with others.
3. Action – implementing training and education programs for adult workers as well as career education and information initiatives for K-12 students.

We can’t afford to wait for others to take concerted action in our communities. The passive attitude that somehow America will muddle through has hit the hard wall of reality.

We hope that “Job Shock” will motivate readers to ask, “What action can I take to relieve this skilled worker shortage?” The opportunity for making this a decisive skilled talent decade may well hinge on your answer.

The time is now. The urgency is clear! The challenge can be met!

This is the final segment of the White Paper that has been the focus of the monthly Gordon Reports since January 2021. In September a complete, updated “Job Shock” White Paper with an extensive bibliography will be available on this website.