

# WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLES OUTCOMES REPORT

During August 2015, Bank of America sponsored the Workforce Roundtables with over 120 participants from a diverse group of Dallas Regional Chamber member companies in small focus groups to collect frank and useful information about shared workforce issues facing the Dallas region. Dallas business leaders from all industries shared challenges and best practices that arise from rapidly advancing technologies, generation gaps, special populations, and talent demands.



## KEY THEMES & FINDINGS

Although each roundtable focused on specific workforce issues in the Dallas region, three prominent themes emerged across the roundtables:

### Hiring Manager Training and Education

Special populations such as Veterans, millennial workers, and non-traditional applicants require hiring managers to be better educated when recruiting. Many employers expressed interest in diversifying their workforces, but “there must be a motivation for the hiring managers to take a risk on a non-traditional applicant.” Hiring managers must learn to translate specific language used in special populations’ cultures such as military experience, middle-skills training potential, and millennial activities into corporate competencies.

Employee Resource Groups are particularly “valuable for military and millennial workers.” Having a peer group (even just one ally) that has made the transition and serves as an informal advisor is very helpful in engaging and retaining these workers. Companies that ask for special populations’ feedback on specific issues, such as recruiting and marketing, gain great insight and make the employees feel valued. Great employee matches and high-quality employees can often be overlooked without this specific engagement.

### “Not Knowing What You Don’t Know”

Employers stressed the importance of investing in the responsibility of mentoring new employees, acknowledging that employees “don’t know what they don’t know.” Specifically talking about employees who are participating in on-the-job training or additional skills training, employers found success when mentoring and “respectfully being honest” with suggesting creative and targeted professional development opportunities. Giving existing millennial workers early mentoring responsibility provided additional recognition that helped retention.

### Soft Skills vs. Hard Skills

Employers expressed a deep need for employees who are adequate in soft skills rather than simply having the education or technical skill criteria needed for the position. Employees who showed the “ability to learn, collaborate, problem solve, ask questions, and adapt” are highly desirable. When hiring for “personality fit over skills,” the employee is more likely to stay at the company longer and have the drive to learn the needed technical skills for the position. The challenge is that human resource departments are typically required to “focus on technical skills for job match, and the actual hiring managers often do not meet candidates who might better fit the position criteria” but have a technical deficiency that could be addressed with company training and investment.



## WORKING WITH MILLENIALS

Employers found success working with millennials when providing “collaborative open working spaces” where millennials can foster their natural “craving for information and access to people.” Millennials are more productive when “expectations are very explicit early” in the process. Millennials particularly enjoy being a part of a group that allows for relationship building and providing feedback to their organization. This generation also values opportunities to be “out of the office and travel” when possible and appropriate for their work.

### BEST PRACTICES:

Alliance Data Systems | Etihad Airways | HKS | Toyota



## EVOLVING WORKFORCE SKILLS

Many of the employee training sessions offered at larger companies are “online and developed outside of the organization,” where smaller businesses have contracted in-person training for individualized development. Employers stressed a conflict in recruitment theory needing now to both “find talent and work to develop the talent you have.” As the job market tightens, employers are trying to find more ways to upskill current workers rather than looking for new talent.

### BEST PRACTICES:

Bain & Company | Bank of America | Texas Instruments



## ADDRESSING THE MIDDLE-SKILLS GAP

Middle-skill jobs are not currently “seen as viable professions to students, parents, and school counselors,” although they can provide living-wage careers after certification. Successful organizations have partnered with public school districts to combine career technical education with academics, providing the opportunity to show students “how to apply those skills to a real-world job.” More internship and job shadowing opportunities are needed as well as better training of counselors and teachers on workforce opportunities.

### BEST PRACTICES:

Axxess | Fluor | Imprimis | Per Scholas



## ATTRACTING AND ENGAGING VETERANS

Veteran workforce transition programs are often “not practical and more about checking boxes” than preparing for the civilian workforce. Veterans do not know and hiring managers do not understand how to “translate leadership experiences or skills” to corporate workforce language. Veterans are also often at high levels in the military but “only offered entry-level employment at companies.” Companies willing to understand military leadership experience can quickly leverage experienced and valuable veteran hires.

### BEST PRACTICES:

AT&T | Guardian Mortgage | USAA |  
Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas