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## To Put Americans Back To Work, The Trump Administration Must Embrace Apprenticeships

By Nicholas Wyman, 8 February 2017, Forbes, US

With an estimated 200 million people globally out of work and 40% of the world's people either underemployed or in vulnerable forms of employment unemployment remains a critical policy challenge Governments globally need to solve.

However, in reading publications like FORBES one hears corporates spanning the globe frustrated that they have job openings, yet they lack the skilled people required to fill them.

Why do companies struggle to find the right talent, despite the fact that we have never been better educated as a society? It all points to a major mismatch between the skills our students are being taught and their relevance to the employment market. Something fundamentally does not, and is not working in the way we educate and train our young people to get them into the workforce.

Getting America back to work and repairing the "rust belt" are key themes of President Donald Trump's administration, which promises 25 million new jobs, signalling this issue as one of its top priorities.

While education and training models and methods have traditionally been determined by the public sector, we are beginning to catch on that the most successful education and training systems are those which seek to align classroom lessons with the needs of industry and local employers.

Parents have always sought to guide their children's career paths, but as the pace of change and the nature of work perennially evolves and quickens, the question of whether or not a child's chosen subjects of study will translate to a job can be answered with hope but not certainty. In today's world of automation and global supply chains, education and employment no longer take on linear paths - jobs can quickly change and so do their requirements.

The methodical and considered processes of bureaucracies are critiqued as too slow to adapt to the pace of change. However, if there is to be reform to the education and training system, the public sector will need support, and this support should come from the main beneficiary of the education and training sector - employers.

Collaboration between the public and the private sector stakeholder is essential to developing a system that works for students and employers and that allows education and training opportunities to be as diverse and flexible as talent and jobs demand. The world is filled with a variety of jobs requiring all kinds of people and skill sets. But the nodes and pathways currently available in education and training sector fails to properly reflect this diversity.

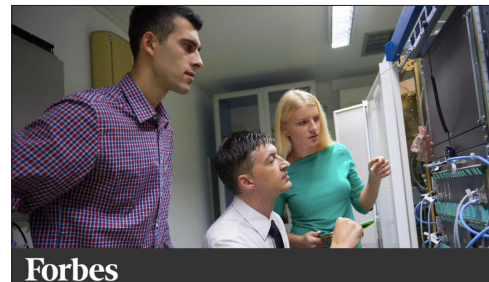
What can this administration do to deliver on the promise of new jobs, without expanding government or federal spending? One solution lies in an age-old practice with origins in medieval times but which has managed to endure through innovating and adapting across numerous sectors, countries, and cultures - the humble apprenticeship. Regular workforce studies shows us that the apprenticeship model works - countries with strong apprenticeship systems (Switzerland, Germany, Austria) have robust economies due to a skilled workforce, and less than half the rate of youth unemployment found in the U.S. Take Switzerland for example, only 30% of youth take the academic path, while the vast majority, 70% follows the apprenticeship route. (Not coincidentally, these economies also have comparatively lower government debt, and higher labour productivity).

Apprenticeships and work readiness programs are great examples of how the public and the private sector can collaborate to plan and build a talent pipeline for jobs in sectors as diverse as IT, health, hospitality, advanced manufacturing, defense, finance, engineering, etc.

Employers which enact apprenticeship strategies not only set up their workforce for the long-term, but also get immediate short-term payoffs. A study in Switzerland showed companies recover their investment in a three year apprenticeship after the first year. In the U.S., it's been found that with every dollar spent on apprenticeship program, yields a return of \$1.47 back in increased productivity and innovation. In a country where young people are increasingly burdened by student debt, the average starting wage for an American apprentice is \$65,000 per year.

The good news is that necessary change is already underway: companies, policy makers and educators have awakened to the power of apprenticeship and employer-driven work readiness programs to redress America's current skills deficit and high youth unemployment. And history shows us great gains can be made quickly. The U.K. for example, re-prioritized apprenticeship and trainee-ship, setting a target of adding two million apprentice positions in the five years, a target it met and exceeded. It plans to reach 3 million starts by 2020.

In the U.S., the comeback and makeover of apprenticeships has already emerged in several states. South Carolina for example, has become a model example of how apprenticeships can cover a broad field of occupations: the number of its companies offering apprenticeships has increased from 90 - 840 in the last decade, an 800% increase.



Partnerships with employers, educators, local community colleges, trusted industry intermediaries, economic development units and the Department of Labor are designing and implementing apprenticeship programs, using innovative methods and approaches to leverage public and private sector engagement.

In addition, companies from various sectors have made commitments to increase apprenticeship and work readiness programs in the U.S. and have called on other companies to follow suit. A great example of this are the numerous companies who supported National Apprenticeship Week by promoting such programs through career fairs and workshops.

The progress necessary to provide meaningful employment and spark system change must come from our leaders coming together and working together, whilst remembering that no one has a monopoly on good ideas, and no one can singularly predict the future. The more that they interact and engage the more innovation and market alignment we will see, and the more willing and confident industry will be in expanding their workforces to hire apprentices.

Whilst Congress seems likely to be a divided one on many issues, there has been bipartisan support for apprenticeship training initiatives in recent years. Building on this existing momentum to focus on reforming and expanding America's apprenticeship system offers the new administration a golden opportunity to put a down payment on those promised 25 million jobs and truly put America back to work.

This piece was coauthored with Shea Gopaul, Executive Officer at the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN).

### Caption:

Recently approved apprenticeship frameworks in cybersecurity map career pathways on completion toward roles as a security analyst, network security engineer or becoming an information systems security manager.

### Source:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicholaswyman/2017/02/08/to-put-americans-back-to-work-the-trump-administration-must-embrace-apprenticeships/#697459a0780d>

### About the Author

Nicholas Wyman is the CEO of the Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation.

He is the Author of "Job U - How to Find Wealth and Success by Developing the Skills Companies Actually Need" published by Crown - a division of Penguin Random House. He speaks and writes on the business and leadership challenges companies face in finding skilled employees. Nicholas is a graduate of Harvard Business School and is a Churchill Fellow.



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