Worker Learning Pathways in the time of COVID
JVS Digital Divide Forum

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The impact of the current crisis is not equally distributed.

Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment

- Less than a high school diploma: 5.7% (20-Feb), 19.9% (20-May)
- High school graduation, no college: 3.6% (20-Feb), 15.3% (20-May)
- Some college or associate degree: 3.0% (20-Feb), 13.3% (20-May)
- Bachelor's degree and higher: 1.9% (20-Feb), 7.4% (20-May)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
... with disproportionate effects across race, socioeconomic status

Characteristics of Those Who Generally Work Closely Together

- Below median income
- Part-time employed
- No employer healthcare
  - Non-white
  - Age <50
  - Single
  - Rents home
  - No college degree
  - Born outside US
  - Unemployed at all last year
  - Non-US citizen
  - Small firm (<500 emp.)
  - Male

Source: Mongey & Neiman 2020
These trends exacerbate the implications of the digital divide.

- **Access**: 18 million households do not have broadband internet.
- **Skills**: 32 million adults cannot use a computer effectively.
- **Resilience**: 1/2 of Americans aren't comfortable using technology to learn.

*Source: Digital US*
We entered the crisis with declining federal investment in training & job search assistance.

Source: Wandner 2018
How can we convert this moment into an opportunity?

The New York Times

Opinion

Use the Coronavirus Shutdown to Train Workers

We can use this stoppage in the economy to upgrade our nation’s productivity.
“The internet has so many different options for learning, but it's hard to know where to start or how to spend my time if I want to get a better job.”
Existing offerings are overwhelming and difficult to navigate; and typically target the top half of the labor market

- Significant information required to sign up (intimidating)
- Many prerequisite questions about education and skills
- Not mobile-friendly
- Training programs with costs
1) In the uncertainty of crisis, some skills are still “safe bets”

**Top “baseline” skills sought by employers:**

1. Communication skills
2. Organizational skills
3. Writing
4. Customer Service
5. Microsoft Excel
6. Word & Office
7. Problem Solving
8. Planning
9. Comp Skills & Typing
10. Research

Skills consistently requested in job ads across broad swaths of industries and occupations

Source: BurningGlass *The Human Factor*
2) Credibility and trust matters

When it comes to getting more education or training, please rank how valuable advice from each of the following would be for you personally, where a rank of 1 is “most valuable” and a rank of 7 is “least valuable.”

- Family: 29% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 29% (No postsecondary degree or credential)
- Colleges/universities or community colleges: 19% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 23% (No postsecondary degree or credential)
- Employers: 18% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 18% (No postsecondary degree or credential)
- Internet search: 11% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 14% (No postsecondary degree or credential)
- Church/faith community: 5% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 9% (No postsecondary degree or credential)
- Information provided by state or local government: 5% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 11% (No postsecondary degree or credential)
- Community organization: 4% (Postsecondary degree or credential), 4% (No postsecondary degree or credential)

Source: Strada Institute; May 2020
Ex:
Trusted Source Examples
3) Provide curation and pathways – prioritize ease of navigation

Our platform

What do you want to learn?

Career and Job Search
Prepare for your next step with job hunting strategies, resume writing, interview practice, and business etiquette training.

Going Digital at Home and Work
Practice using computer tools every day and build skills used at many jobs.

Learning English for Work
For English Language Learners. Sharpen your English language speaking and reading, with a focus on professional vocabulary and style.
4) Curating “good” digital content (our rubric)

1) Cost
2) Digestibility
3) Interactiveness
4) Ease of Use
5) Reputable Source
6) Platform Adaptability
7) Language Adaptability
5) Effectively segment needs and complement with personalized support

- After the last Recession, 82% of states reported increasing automation of employment assistance.
- Most respondents stated they could *serve more customers*.
- However, responses on *service quality* were mixed:
  - More technically savvy “customers” can do well with self-service
  - Those without digital skills feel alienated by lack of staff support

Wandner 2015; Survey of National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA).
6) Work alongside partners!

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM

Educators
(Non-profits; community colleges; training providers)

Employers

Public Sector
The Project on Workforce is a cross-disciplinary, collaborative project between the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, the Harvard Business School Managing the Future of Work Project, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Our mission is to chart the course for a postsecondary system of the future that creates more & better pathways to economic mobility; and, to catalyze action across leaders in business, education and policy to collectively address America’s shared skills & employment needs.
THANK YOU

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