

Expeditors



Business Outcomes

- Established high school recruitment program
- Talent exploration
- Creates community connections
- Mentoring opportunity for employees

Employee Impact

- Professional development,
- Gain full-time job with benefits
- Stable work history
- Postsecondary opportunity

Opportunity Knocks

- Professional skills development
- Part-time to full-time employment
- Support for continuing education

Developing Entry-level Talent Through Youth Professional Improvement Expeditors – Opportunity Knocks

Vision, leadership, and passion for developing young, raw talent changes individual lives, grows future talent, and impacts an organization.

Expeditors, a Fortune 500 company, delivers global logistics management solutions for all aspects of supply chain management to other organizations including customers such as Walmart, General Electric, Cisco Systems, and Target. Expeditors marked their 30th anniversary in 2009 with over 12,000 employees in 60 countries and \$4.1 billion in annual revenue. Celebrating a culture of organic growth and a history of promoting from within, Expeditors faced the recent economic downturn by implementing a “no layoffs” policy, choosing to cut costs through a hiring freeze and attrition. It is this focus on employee relations and commitment to maintaining the highest caliber of employees that Expeditors Chairman and CEO, Peter Rose, believes will stand the company in good stead as the economy turns around. Their focus on building long-term stability has grown a domestic workforce of 3,616 in 57 offices in the U. S. It was into this corporate ethic and future-focused strategy that Expeditors launched “Opportunity Knocks,” a programmatic commitment to change the lives of marginalized youth and grow future talent.

Giving back through Opportunity Knocks

Opportunity Knocks seeks out high school students who are not currently considering going on to higher education for reasons such as lack of motivation or lack of financial capacity. The students are offered a part-time job with the opportunity to obtain a full-time job with benefits upon meeting or exceeding expectations of the position and graduating high school. Students are strongly mentored to develop marketable jobs skills and establish

a stable work record in a professional environment. The program, designed to identify aptitude and recruit undeveloped talent, established a formal high school recruiting program that was needed and formally lacking at Expeditors.

PERSONAL STORY

Muhamed Manhsour’s parents are immigrants from Cambodia and Vietnam. Although his parents stressed the importance of education, Muhamed’s friends “were into violence” and he felt torn between these two paths. He came to Opportunity Knocks through the Youthforce program at his alternative high school. Muhamed has been part of the program for over 2 years and is now working part-time while taking classes at Seattle Central Community College. He earned a raise, which is helping him pay tuition, and was given night hours to accommodate his class schedule. Expeditors is encouraging him to complete a 4 year degree.

The concept for Opportunity Knocks is based on the personal experience of Senior Vice President, Dan Wall, who began entry-level employment with Expeditors at 18 years old and worked his way to his current position. Crediting the mentors and professional development support he received within the organization, Wall created Opportunity Knocks to formalize the experience in a way that allows it to be replicated throughout Expeditors and serve as a skilled talent source for the company. Wall seeks to prove

his hypothesis that investing in an employee creates loyalty to the company—particularly when the individual begins with few prospects of success and a lack of personal career and/or educational direction. Expeditors is establishing comparative metrics to determine efficacy of Opportunity Knocks.

■ “Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill”

The program began in Expeditors’ Corporate Headquarters in Seattle, WA where leaders went to youth-serving, community-based organizations like Youth Force and the Boys and Girls Club to identify and recruit participants, with a focus of offering the opportunity to those youth who needed the most professional development. It was reasoned that these students are at the lower end of interviewing skills and most in need of support. If they showed an attitude of commitment, skills could be taught, exemplifying the Expeditor motto, “Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill.” Initially, temporary summer employment was offered with the stipulation that defined performance benchmarks must be met in order to continue part-time employment while completing a high school diploma during the school year. For those participants who met expectations and graduated, a full-time position with a Fortune 500 company was waiting. Early in the program it was clear that in order to succeed the students would need structure and strong mentoring. A formalized process of development opportunities with the company was constructed for participants, clarifying responsibilities of managers and mentors including discussing options for continuing post secondary education. The template has now been further codified in the form of a detailed manual that is being used to roll out Opportunity Knocks to other branch offices of Expeditors.

■ Emerging Learn and Earn Best Practice

Opportunity Knocks is in the early, formative stage with 14 students having gone through or currently participating in the program. Several of the students have gone on to college with one student who was in the program over a year, receiving a scholarship to Howard University and a send off from Expeditors with a new laptop. One has accepted full-time employment with the company while several others continue to work part-time while attending college. The program has been picked up in the Dallas and Seattle - Airport offices of Expeditors with the expectation that Atlanta and San Diego will soon adopt it as well.

“I was like these kids—from a working class family trying to make ends meet. My father was and still is a truck driver and my mother worked as a waitress. There were no expectations for college as none of my family had ever gone. I am a first generation college grad. Now I have started a different cycle with my kids who are expected to go to college and Expeditors is extending that to others through Opportunity Knocks.”

— Dan Wall,
Senior Vice President, Expeditors

While the program provides a small beginning of a talent stream, it is also proving to have a profound effect on managers/mentors who take pride in making a difference in the lives of at-risk youth. As Opportunity Knocks grows across Expeditors, it is a practice to watch for multiple Learn and Earn characteristics: significant impact upon young people; the role of an internal champion; the talent contribution made to the organization; and the impact on incumbent staff of this people-focused corporation.

For more information about Expeditors, visit www.expeditors.com

SECTOR: Global logistics management over 30 years

EMPLOYEES: Over 12,000 employees/over 3,600 in 57 U.S. offices

ANNUAL REVENUE: \$4.1 billion in 2009

Funded, in part, by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

About Corporate Voices

Corporate Voices is the leading national business membership organization representing the private sector on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policies that reflect collaboration among the private sector, government and other stakeholders.

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Find Out More

Corporate Voices is committed to identifying and spotlighting businesses supporting postsecondary completion while making significant contributions to internal company goals. “Best practice” talent development models that increase access to career opportunities through education and training are being examined for characteristics that are transferable and replicable to other employers. This research is being conducted with the guidance of the Corporate Voices Learn and Earn Business Leadership Team consisting of business executives leading promising models and those interested in peer-to-peer learning. If you are interested in joining, contact Peggy Walton at pwalton@corporatevoices.org. Team members include:

- Pacific Gas & Electric
- UPS
- Northrop Grumman
- KPMG
- TJX Companies, Inc.
- AOL