

Using Marketing As A Force For Good To Connect Students To Purposeful Careers

by Roy Spence

How the make it movement is inspiring and connecting students to high-skill careers.

In the United States, every generation is called to do whatever it takes to leave the next generation with a country that is safer, stronger, and more united. These days, it can certainly feel like we are on the path to not living up to that calling.

At a moment when Americans seem to disagree about everything, is there any issue on which we can come together?

Welcome to the MakeItMovement.org. We deeply believe that there is one thing that unites all of us, and that thing is right in front of us. We can't see it because politics, not purpose, is driving the issues of the day, but it is there. The one thing that unites every parent and grandparent, regardless of politics, is that we all want our children and grandchildren to be successful — personally, professionally, and financially.

We want our kids to have the opportunity to use their unique giftings and talents to create value for society and to be well compensated for it. Every parent hopes their child can find meaningful work doing what they love. Simply put, we all want our kids to pursue their passions, find purpose in what they do, and be better off than the generations before.

But too many parents and grandparents — not to mention students — also worry that this



future success isn't possible. They wonder: Is the American Dream still alive?

Yes, it is. In fact, the American Dream is more alive and possible for young Americans from all walks of life than ever before. That's because for the first time in U.S. history, we have a massive surplus of high-skill/high-income careers open right now where millions of young Americans can make \$50,000 to \$100,000 by the time they are 20 or 22 years old, doing what they love to do. The problem is young Americans (and their parents) they have no idea that these careers even exist.

Why not?

Because while we've told them about the jobs, we've never inspired them that these careers could be their purpose.

That's where MakeItMovement.org comes

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in. Our purpose is to use marketing and the power of awareness as a force for good to support school counselors, CTE Instructors, teachers, and parents helping students discover their purpose and talents while they are still in middle and high school. Using a fun and interactive platform, students are connected to a whole new world of high-skill/high-income careers that they didn't know about. Watching students, we have found that when they discover these careers, they are blown away.

And now, we have the experience and data to know that for sure.

For more than two years, with the enthusiastic support of educators and parents in Austin and central Texas, we have used digital tools and event marketing to reach thousands of middle and high school students. Our data shows that because of the positive marketing impact, students are now much more confident that there is a high-skill/high-income path for them to use their talents to make a good living after high school.

The MakeItMovement.org is on a mission to scale, first all over Texas and then all over the United States. So, if you believe that most of the country's problems can be solved if the next generation of Americans respects the dignity of all work and has the chance to build a great living and life doing what they love to do and are good at, we agree.

Let's band together around purpose, not status-quo; around the one issue all Americans actually deeply believe in: that we want our children and grandchildren to be successful personally, professionally, and financially. When we do, we will have at least tried to live up to our duty to leave the next generation with a real opportunity to make a good living and a good life in this country.

We are the MakeItMovement.org. Please join us. We've got work to do.

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Early Learnings From Implementing A Skills- And Aptitudes-First Mindset

by SHRM Foundation

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Every day, businesses miss out on talented people because their gifts, aptitudes, and skills are not as easy to identify as a degree on a resume. Ninety percent of HR professionals value skilled credentials, yet they are between two and three times more likely to progress a candidate with a degree than one without, even when the job posting does not explicitly indicate a degree is necessary.

Why this disconnect? Because shifting from a degree-centric to skills-centric organization requires overcoming significant barriers that can be expensive or arduous for HR leaders to navigate on their own.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is working to tackle those barriers by providing employer partners access to tools, training options, and action pathways that ease adoption of skills- and aptitude-based hiring and retention strategies.

Through a series of high-touch pilots, SHRM is connecting employers with “whole human” talent strategies that align hard skills, soft skills, and aptitude to more fully and fairly match jobseekers with opportunity. These pilots serve dual purposes: they create a growing number of exemplars for would-be skilling champions to point to, and they allow employers to identify and assess the tools and training options to help them shift their talent paradigm.

Pacxa, a technology provider and systems integrator based in and focused on helping



local businesses in Hawai'i, participated in the Employer Collaborate for Skilled Credentials (ECSC) pilot program, which was conducted by the SHRM Foundation in partnership with Jobs for the Future, and made possible by funding from the Charles Koch Foundation.

Employers who participated in the ECSC pilot indicated improvement across all core measures, including increased recognition of the role of skills- and aptitudes-first strategies in driving talent goals; knowledge of where and how to find qualified, skilled candidates without degrees; acknowledgement that their current education requirements are excessive; and increased alignment around a skills-first approach from the C-suite to the hiring manager.

In addition, the HR leaders involved in the pilot reported across-the-board increases in new hiring and promotion practices at their employers, which implies that enacting one skills-first strategy sparks others.

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Jean Schneider, Executive Director of Workforce Development for Pacxa, was the driving force for their involvement with the ECSC pilot. She recently sat down for an interview about the program, Pacxa's

reasons for participating in the pilot and more generally embracing skills-first strategies, and where the company goes from here. Read the interview below.

Give me a little background on Pacxa and why you joined the Employer Collaborative for Skilled Credentials pilot program.

Pacxa harnesses the power of world-class technologies to help local businesses realize their full potential. We deliver customized solutions that enable nearly 400 commercial, government, and nonprofit organizations across Hawai'i to maximize opportunities and pursue innovation.

We joined the Employer Collaborative for Skilled Credentials pilot program because of the opportunity to accelerate our early talent program progress and learn more about how we can integrate credentialing into our retention strategies.

How ready would you say Pacxa was to shift your practices towards a skills-inclusive mindset when you started?

During COVID, Hawai'i had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, reaching

a high of 37%. Tourism is one of our largest economic drivers, so the impacts to hotels, restaurants, retail, and other service industries were dire. Our CEO and President wondered if we might provide opportunities for those in service and other industries to enter more recession-resilient IT careers.

We wanted to recruit career changers, high school grads, college grads, and anyone with potential and equip them with the skills to succeed. We also wanted to help our existing staff continue to develop their skills and progress in their careers.

Each employer in the ECSC conducted a different project. What was Pacxa's?

Our project focused on mapping competencies and certifications in one of our internal career pathways as a skills-based retention strategy. We mapped the beginning part of the pathway starting from our entry as a fellow (similar to an intern) through several positions in our Managed Services pathway. At the same time, we instituted a Certifications Incentive Policy that provides monetary incentives for staff to attain IT industry certifications.

Why do you think skills-based hiring and retention strategies are important?

Not everyone has the opportunity to take a traditional degree path. There is a lot of diverse talent that we would be missing if we only looked at those with degrees.

Skills-based retention strategies are important

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especially in IT where technologies change quickly and skills need to be constantly updated. Continuous investment in our staff's professional development is critical to meeting the needs of our customers, and at the same time conveys to our staff that we value them and support their career development.

As you were going through the ECSC pilot and implementing your project, what were the biggest barriers you came up against? How did you address those?

The biggest challenges were leadership's capacity to work on the project. In any organization, there are many competing demands and daily fires that often push back strategic initiatives. We tackled that by asking to work with on-the-ground staff for vital information.

Our teams are always willing to help whenever they can, so I did not expect resistance. But I did expect time constraints—and they did come up. So gentle tenacity and follow up was key here.

Do you plan on continuing to implement skills-based hiring and retention strategies for Pacxa going forward? What are you working on next in that space?

Yes, with the ECSC project we mapped the beginning part of one pathway. Pacxa will continue to map competencies and credentials along that pathway and use it as a framework for pathways in other business units.

If you had the ability to wave your hand and have 1-2 things at your fingertips that would make your efforts to shift towards skills easier, what would those things be? Why?

Hmm, access to funding would help us scale these efforts and help expand our training program. At this time, we are training for our internal needs but our long-term goal is to help build a local IT talent pipeline for our community. For private industry, public funds are difficult to access.

Finally, if you were talking to someone who was just starting to drive a shift towards skills-based hiring and retention practices in their employer, what advice or guidance would you give them?

Get buy in from the top levels and have your leadership champion it — this will pave the way for the on-the-ground work.

This article originally appeared on Forbes BrandVoice.

Unlocking The Full Talent Market By Expanding Opportunity

By The Charles Koch Foundation

Does your current hiring strategy ignore half of the available talent – and you don't even realize it? It's time for a rethink.

Every individual has unique aptitudes, interests, and talents that allow them to contribute to and improve their own life and the lives of others. When this inherent and equal dignity is respected, societies flourish. Too often in the workplace, however, hiring managers overlook an applicant's aptitudes, skills, and mindset by basing their potential to contribute on proxy measures like having a bachelor's degree. These requirements can be insurmountable roadblocks for millions of Americans seeking to advance on their career journeys. Opportunity@Work is fighting to change the status quo.

“Our research shows 50 percent of the U.S. workforce are STARS (Skilled Through Alternative Routes such as community college, partial college completion, military service, workforce training programs, skills bootcamps, or learning on-the-job versus a bachelor's degree),” says economist Byron Auguste, the CEO and co-founder of Opportunity@Work. “If companies don't have a STARS talent strategy, they only have half a talent strategy.”

Auguste sat down with Ryan Stowers, the executive director of the Charles Koch Foundation, to discuss creating a hiring strategy based on a belief in the dignity and potential of all individuals and how Opportunity@Work is building a national movement to Tear the Paper Ceiling. Check out the full conversation between Stowers and Auguste below.



Watch the video on the Charles Koch Foundation youtube channel or use your phone camera to scan the QR code.

This article originally appeared on Forbes BrandVoice.

Identifying Overlooked Talent In Your Community

By The Charles Koch Foundation

A conversation between Charles Koch Foundation’s Ryan Stowers and University of Chicago Medicine’s (UCM) hiring team, Director of HR Services Erin Mandel and Director of Talent Strategy Betsy Rahill, regarding their partnership with Skills for Chicagoland’s Future (Skills).

Access, eliminating barriers to employment, and creating pathways to opportunity are the founding principles of the jobs-first model that formed Skills for Chicagoland’s Future (Skills). Chicago employers are looking for solutions to take their inclusive hiring plans and turn them into action. Skills makes it happen. Deep employer relationships and a robust team of HR and career development professionals set Skills’ job-first model apart from traditional training-focused workforce agencies. Since 2012, Skills has helped change the lives of thousands of individuals — placing them into quality jobs, providing strong recruiting in overlooked communities, and facilitating robust partnerships with local employers. Key to Skills’ model is an inherent belief that if employers change the way they think about hiring and the potential of all individuals to contribute, they will be able to find hidden talent in their own communities to fill in-demand roles. This model proves that good talent is everywhere and seeking often overlooked talent can result in more opportunities for under or unemployed workers and successful outcomes for employers.

The University of Chicago Medical Center (UCM) is a leader in both health care and civic leadership in Chicago. Their focus on community impact can be seen throughout the

organization. When UCM recognized a need to hire more local talent from under resourced communities surrounding the medical center, they knew they needed Skills to help find quality local talent quickly. The partnership has resulted in hundreds of Chicagoans being hired into quality jobs at UCM.

The Skills model continues to have a significant impact, both in Chicago and at affiliate sites in Rhode Island and Phoenix. Skills for America’s Future endeavors to expand nationally so it can take its unique model to other regions that need a jobs-first model that brings together the local workforce and community businesses.



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Ryan Stowers: What qualities are you looking for in new talent and how did you know you could find that talent in the local Chicago community?

Erin Mandel: Essentially, we're looking for individuals who share the mission, vision, and values of UCM.

We're seeking individuals who are committed to excellence and embody equity, take ownership, and make a difference for our patients and the community that we serve. We know that we have amazing people in our communities surrounding the University of Chicago Medical Center who have these qualities.

In addition to those qualities, we're also seeking individuals who have a passion to really enter the health care field to be part of some of our pathway programs.

Stowers: There is a unique dynamic to the partnership with Skills and UCM. It is not common for an organization to focus on local talent in the way UCM has been able to. How have you been able to focus on local talent and place qualified individuals who may have otherwise been overlooked?

Betsy Rahill: We're an anchor institution in the community, and one of the largest employers in southside Chicago. So, it's difficult for our recruitment team to be able to touch every single one of those applicants alone. Our partnership with Skills creates the opportunity for candidates who might otherwise get overlooked to have an opportunity to be able to put their resume in front of UCM. We prioritize

those applications because we know that they've been looked at by Skills.

Essentiality, Skills is an amplifier of our talent team.

Mandel: We know we have amazing, talented people in our communities surrounding the University of Chicago Medical Center. Skills has helped us connect to them. Skills ensures candidates meet the minimum qualifications for the roles we are targeting and make sure the candidates are coached and ready for the interview process, which is key.

The candidates excel in the process and our hiring managers really enjoy interviewing those candidates. They typically have drive because they want to get to work. They are from our community and are under or unemployed and ready to serve UCM patients, who are basically their neighbors from their community.

Stowers: It is incredible to hear you all talk about this dynamic. It's reflective of challenges employers across the country are facing with the roles they are trying to fill. Can you talk about the mutual benefit between UCM and the local talent hired through the partnership with Skills?

Rahill: Skills targets local hires. From an employer perspective, we know we have higher retention rates when we hire somebody local. The retention rate of Skills' hires is usually around 90 percent, consistently.

It's also a huge priority for UCM to invest in a local workforce so that employees represent

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the patients we serve. We want to make an economic impact in the community since, as we know, employment is a social determinant of health and we're committed to improving the health of our community.

And then for the employees themselves, as an employer, we provide amazing benefits. There's a lot of opportunity for growth in health care. Our tuition reimbursement plans are substantial. It potentially allows someone to become a nurse at UCM at no cost.

There is also the pride of working for an organization that is in your backyard and invested in your community.

Stowers: That is powerful. Let's take a step back. From your perspective, how can hiring managers, chief human resources officers and other HR professionals change how they think about hiring and the potential of all individuals to find hidden talent in their own communities?

Mandel: We need to let leaders know they need to be open-minded and consider candidates who align with the values of the organization. A lot of jobs, ours included, provide on-the-job training. So, aligning on values first can allow focus on the soft skills of the person rather than the job specific skills.

We need to look at the person, rather than making sure that they meet all the job description requirements. We need people who want to show up and contribute and who are invested in the organization. We can teach a lot of the skills that come along with positions.

It is hard for hiring managers and leaders to pivot. Many of them think they need someone who has done the exact job before. But I always tell hiring managers, these are green individuals that you can teach the way you want. You can mold them. A lot of it is just changing that mindset to be able to look at these individuals differently and get them into jobs that maybe they have not done before.

Stowers: What did hiring look like before your partnership with Skills and how has the partnership changed how you view talent? What value have the individuals hired through the partnership brought to UCM?

Mandel: We started working with Skills in 2014. Prior to that, we spent a lot of time vetting candidates to ensure they met the minimum qualifications and that they had the skills to perform the jobs.

Now, with our partnership with Skills, there is minimal screening that really needs to happen on our end because they are doing a lot of the work for us. They are handing over candidates who check all the boxes already. This helps us as an organization and as a recruitment team to really find good, qualified candidates quickly because Skills is doing a lot of front-end work.

These are invested employees from the community. They have a passion; they have empathy for the people in their community that they're taking care of. We are benefiting them, but really, they are benefiting us.

Rahill: From a quality standpoint, our

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organization has become invested in looking at patient outcomes with our Black and brown patients compared to our white patients. Now that we are tracking the data, we're able to see progress, improvements, and overall outcomes.

A part of that conversation has been that some of this movement is correlated to the employee, right? When you have a local workforce that looks and comes from the same community as our patients, you are going to see more synergy, more comfort, and more trust. I think you will see that there is a correlation and one of the benefits of having a local workforce is that there is a lot of pride and a lot of commitment to their work. When you have a committed organization that's proud of the work they do, you are going to have results from those employees.

Stowers: I am so impressed with how you both talk about the opportunities for change you have in your roles. Your whole approach is based on the dignity of the individual and what that individual brings to the table. What would you say are the biggest challenges or barriers to driving this kind of hiring change in their organizations or at societal level more broadly?

Rahill: In health care, it is very easy to think about the immediate need and the short-term solution. As Erin mentioned, when you take a different mindset and hire someone with potential and hire for the right behaviors and allow training to meet the skill level, that is a long-term strategy.

We know we need to increase the labor force

in health care. We need to look at these nontraditional talent pools to fill pipelines, and that will take time. These individuals are not going to come in with the five years' experience that hiring managers want.

But if we do not take the time to build up a new workforce, then we are going to continue to be shorthanded. Investing in the long run and investing in these nontraditional talent pools and using organizations like Skills to find these talent pools is going to be critical to our long-term success.

Following the conversation with Rahill and Mandel, Stowers reflected on the impact of the relationship between Skills and UCM. "This partnership highlights the mutual benefit that comes from an employer recognizing the dignity and potential of those in their community to contribute," said Stowers. "UCM recognized that there were individuals in their own neighborhood who could fill these jobs but were facing barriers that prevented them from applying or completing the application process. By partnering with Skills, UCM found overlooked talent, created opportunities for workers, and boosted their local community. That's a recipe for success that more employers should replicate."



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Building Your Own Sustainable Tech Talent Pipeline

By The Charles Koch Foundation

A conversation between Charles Koch Foundation's Executive Director Ryan Stowers and Mark Thain, Americas Head of Citizenship at Barclays, regarding their partnership with Per Scholas.

Per Scholas has spent more than 25 years empowering individuals to unlock their potential through rigorous training for tech careers. Since 2016, Per Scholas and Barclays have partnered to establish a cybersecurity curriculum tailored toward entry-level individuals wishing to join the cybersecurity field. Partnerships like these result in tremendous mutual benefit since both sides create value for each other.

The field of cybersecurity is complex and many existing training programs do not provide the skill sets needed to enable an individual to succeed in entry-level roles. Barclays partnered with Per Scholas to help their learners develop key skills and unlock employment opportunities, including in roles at Barclays. Per Scholas provides specialized, interactive training designed to equip participants with the necessary skills for entry and mid-level cyber jobs. This comprehensive program not only enhances technical expertise but also focuses on professional development and facilitates valuable connections with potential employers. Rooted in evidence-based practices, this model stands out as one of the few proven solutions to meet the increasing demand for cybersecurity professionals.

This type of partnership benefits employers and workers alike. Barclays and other employers

solve talent shortages, and the individuals filling these roles are positioned for success in a field they may not have considered or thought they could meaningfully contribute. Businesses are expanding their horizons beyond conventional recruitment channels. Attracting, retaining, and training the right talent have become top operational priorities for businesses. Many have started to build their own talent pipelines, which often involve recognizing the potential of previously overlooked or underestimated populations.



Ryan Stowers: What challenge was Barclays facing that led you to explore a new partnership with Per Scholas?

Mark Thain: Barclays is playing an active role in supporting communities and is committed to building a stronger and more inclusive economy

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that's better for everyone. As well as being there for clients and customers, we want to help individuals develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed and help businesses scale up and grow to create jobs. A big part of that is LifeSkills, which is a global program that helps to unlock skills and employment. We've helped millions of people around the world develop the skills, confidence, and connections to get a job and to succeed in the workplace. So, we were interested in finding programs that had a track record of success and that place people into upwardly mobile careers.

We first partnered with Per Scholas in 2012 by supporting their New York City employment initiatives. In 2016, a few years into our partnership, we identified an opportunity to partner with them around cybersecurity talent, which ultimately led to us helping Per Scholas expand to Brooklyn. In 2019, we helped them expand to Newark, NJ and in 2021, our support for their satellite model now means they're reaching learners in all five boroughs of NYC. It's been so exciting to see the partnership grow and the learners that have been so positively impacted by Per Scholas.

Stowers: So, let's take a closer look at your partnership with Per Scholas. What is different about working with them that you felt would help you find new sources of talent to meet your needs?

Thain: One of the reasons Per Scholas is so successful is because they have what we call a "demand-led approach." They understand the skills employers are looking to hire. I think there's something like 700,000 open cyber security positions in the United States alone this

year. So, it's not just companies like Barclays looking for cyber talent.

Our Cyber professionals at Barclays worked with Per Scholas to co-develop a cybersecurity curriculum. Since we worked so closely on the curriculum, we knew the individuals coming through that program would be ready for jobs in Barclays and beyond.

Per Scholas also focus on the softer skills and the professional development skills needed to be successful in the workplace in addition to the very technical skills.

I think the secret sauce in Per Scholas is the close partnership with employers really helping to understand what skills employers are looking to hire for.

All these things combined is why I think Per Scholas has been so successful. They have 85% of students graduating going on to get placed into work and earning three times what they were before the program, on average.

Stowers: If I understand this correctly, you were working with Per Scholas on the social impact side, but you saw a way in which, through what they were offering, there was an opportunity to deepen your partnership and create mutual benefit and a division of labor based on comparative advantage.

Thain: Yes. It was a win, win, win. It's a win for Barclays because we were looking to expand our hiring pipelines in cybersecurity and find talent in new places. And it's obviously a win for the individuals going through the program

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– they get access to opportunities in places that otherwise may not have even been on their radar. Then for Per Scholas, it's a win in terms of the new curriculum and being able to keep their learners up to speed on the latest trends, that are most relevant and in demand for roles.

Stowers: What ways has Barclays shifted how it thinks about and sources good talent because of this partnership? Has it driven culture change?

Thain: It's led to positive change in Barclays in terms of how we think about recruiting, hiring, and different pipelines of talent. It's not unique to Barclays, but we see that many businesses tend to have their fairly traditional hiring channels. When you do most of your recruitment from the same places, you will tend to find people with similar perspectives and life experiences.

Changing how we think about this has given us the opportunity to tap into diverse pools of talent. We can bring in people who have very different life experience and it is only going to be a good thing. All businesses benefit from having that additional diversity of thought and diversity of experience in the team.

More than 85% of Per Scholas grads are people of color, and in areas like Technology which have traditionally struggled with diversity this is a valuable additional pool of talent and a huge win for everyone involved.

The other thing I would say is when you invest in individuals at that early stage, when perhaps no one else is providing support to them or investing in them in the same way, when they

do come into the business, they're amongst our most engaged and energized employees.

We've had hiring managers at Barclays who come down to our resume workshops or mock interview events to volunteer, and they meet the students from Per Scholas and from other partners and get so excited about the talent they've met. We've had instances where they immediately send an email saying they've got open roles.

It's really opening the eyes of our colleagues to the talent that exists out there that we wouldn't otherwise have seen or had the opportunity to hire.

Stowers: Earlier you used the words, "win, win, win," which I love. It's really getting at the mutual benefit of this partnership. So, let's talk for a minute about the worker/learner dynamic. From your perspective, what impact are you seeing in their lives?

Thain: We hear so many times from the individuals coming through the Per Scholas program that they would never in any world imagine themselves working in a global bank, let alone the role that they are in.

Many of them were working multiple jobs just to stay afloat. And for many of them Per Scholas opened up tremendous opportunities for them. They would have never had the opportunity to progress and build a career.

We've seen many of them come to Barclays at an entry level and they progress and get promoted. They then go back to Per Scholas to pay it forward as volunteers and look for opportunities to bring more graduates into their own teams.

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Stowers: How would you summarize the benefits Barclays receives from the partnership?

Thain: Whoever we meet, we are blown away by the talent they have. We're blown away with their energy, dynamism, ambition, and drive. It's the talent that Per Scholas has been able to curate paired with the role they play in helping to shape those individuals for jobs at big corporates like Barclays.

It's such a unique model. They bring together technical and soft skills, professional development skills, and they work with employers as partners in both delivering the programs but also in hiring their individuals.

It's such a powerful model because the individuals that come out of the programs are ready and they are succeeding in big companies like Barclays. Whereas, in the past, it is unlikely the two would have ever met.

The partnership has created an entirely new mindset, and individuals are more ready to come into the environment and succeed at places like Barclays thanks in part to the wrap around support Per Scholas provided.

It's a valuable asset for us to be able to tap into Per Scholas and the work they do in the partnership that they built with us.

So again, it's a win, win for anyone who's involved.

Stowers: What's your perspective, given that you've gone through this process

and the constantly changing economy, on lifelong learning? As Americans, we've been funneled through this status-quo system that treats us like we've got to do all our learning in four years, and then go into the workforce. In reality, we're seeing a very different dynamic play out. What's been your experience, Mark?

Thain: We see that. But we also see that even folks that who go through that funnel, and do their four-year learning, are still underemployed or unemployed at the end. The promises that are made to them too often don't come true. They might have the education, but they don't have the networks or the access to opportunities. That is why programs like Per Scholas are so valuable in those situations.

There's so much change in the economy with new technologies like AI and the transition to a low carbon economy, which means entire industries are changing. There's no more guarantee of a job for life, whether that's ever existed or not, but certainly not today. Individuals constantly need to review their skills, resources, and talents and to make sure that they're resilient in the modern economy.

We see people coming through Per Scholas who recognize that there are opportunities in areas like technology and they choose to start again and build a whole new career.

Stowers: We hear a lot from employers about retention. There is a perception that if you treat employees like assets and invest in their development, their self-actualization, that it can end up having a negative impact on their ability to retain

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the best talent. What is your take?

Thain: We 100% see the opposite. When you invest in an individual at the early stage of their career and through programs like Per Scholas, they are often our most engaged employees. Of the more than 65 individuals brought in through Per Scholas, we've seen really strong retention rates and many of them are continuing to develop and build successful careers here at Barclays.

Stowers: If you think of other businesses facing similar challenges, whether it's recruiting for something as specific as cybersecurity or just trying to find the skilled and motivated talent they need,

and who are trying to do it in a way that empowers individuals to reach their potential, what advice would you give?

Thain: I would say that businesses need to be willing to see the potential in people who perhaps otherwise wouldn't have been considered, such as those who may not have a four-year degree.

So, hiring for skills and potential rather than qualifications and being willing to open your mind to whole new hiring channels. Then find a partner like Per Scholas who can help bring the two worlds together – that's key.

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Growing The Good In Business And Life: Investing In An Untapped, Diverse Workforce Means Thinking And Acting Differently About The Talent Pool

By Sara Wasserteil and Claire Roehri

Below is a summary of a case study originally published by Cara Collective.

What if enhancing hiring practices could empower financial institutions to tap into a new motivated workforce and make progress for an inclusive society? BMO, a leading North American bank, believed it was possible by aligning their business goals and social impact mission.



When BMO released its purpose statement in June 2019 — to “Boldly Grow the Good in business and in life” — Product Manager Loren Dinneen saw an opportunity. With the bank’s business goals and social impact mission in mind, he believed it could leverage its leadership in the banking industry beyond philanthropic investment in underserved areas by actively sourcing talent directly from the communities

it serves. In fact, he wondered what it would be like for BMO to deviate from current talent acquisition norms, such as hiring directly from universities, internships, or those who already had banking experience. Again, while traditional hiring practices did indeed source talent for the bank, they unintentionally excluded diverse, qualified candidates that could better serve customers because they knew the community they came from.

Dinneen knew that, with a well-thought-out talent strategy, BMO could play a major role in leveling the playing field for untapped talent — but first, it was time to look for a nod of approval.

Tackling Barriers in Financial Services Careers

Before joining BMO, Dinneen led a regional workforce development program for World Business Chicago, a public-private partnership focused on building Chicago’s regional economy. Already aware of how banks typically sourced talent, he was uniquely positioned to pitch his new idea to leadership. While he already had a good sense of what the initial reaction would be, creating a space for a myriad of perspectives from those who oversee lines of business was crucial before determining the program specifics

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and bringing any big new idea to fruition.

One thing was certain: not only was the answer a resounding ‘yes’ – especially from leaders like Erminia (Ernie) Johannson, Head of North American Personal and Business Banking, and Carolyn Booth, Head of Distribution – but BMO also wanted the program to be more than a human resources initiative. It wanted to involve leaders across all departments for it to truly be successful. Hiring untapped talent would benefit job seekers and create access to a new talent pool that could fill and thrive in critically important, vacant roles in BMO’s banks. A program like this would support the company’s overall purpose and long-term success, employing residents who live and work in the same neighborhoods as BMO’s customers.

The name they finally decided on for the program? BMORE.

With Cara Collective, BMO Enhanced its Recruitment for Associate Banker Roles

After engaging a core group of BMO stakeholders to identify the company’s biggest talent gaps and needs, the group quickly narrowed in on BMO’s Associate Banker role for BMORE, an entry-level bank teller job in every branch. Although entry-level, Associate Bankers are essential to a branch’s success, and leadership often worried about how difficult it

was to attract and retain people in that position. After all, it involved high-stakes cash handling and educating the public about the bank’s services, benefits, and financial tools in addition to building solid relationships with everyone who walked through its doors.

With that in mind, one thing was certain: BMO leaders were confident branch managers could help coach, develop, and refine the competencies needed to be successful – but also knew BMO would need help finding and recruiting untapped talent from local communities. To achieve this, BMO engaged Cara Collective, a workforce development organization that had strong ties to community-based talent and an existing relationship with BMO. Cara addressed the whole person, providing coaching and wraparound services in addition to traditional training that ensured participants would succeed in the program.

While Cara had worked with financial services firms before, they created an entirely new kind of partnership with BMO, one where both organizations worked from the bottom up to create change within the company. Before Cara began recruiting job seekers, the teams jointly reviewed the Associate Banker job description to make sure it resonated with job seekers from underserved communities. Cara workshopped the job description with its existing program participants and found a requirement that an applicant have banking experience deterred

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many from applying. Jointly, Cara and BMO created recruitment materials for BMORE with a few adjustments – for example, removing the preference for banking experience – to make the role more attractive to Cara’s candidate pool.

BMO was open to change. Bottom line: it wanted applicants who wanted to learn, were open to growth, and wanted to find a company to which they could contribute year after year.

Cara then worked to create additional awareness of and trust in BMO in the local community. It invited interested candidates to come to Cara to be interviewed by BMO where they could be assessed for their transferable skills instead of previous industry expertise. Cara also co-created inclusive change management practices for the BMO managers to onboard, train, and support its new Associate Bankers. Finally, Cara worked in tandem with BMO to provide coaching and long-term support for Associate Bankers throughout their first year and beyond to ensure candidates stayed and thrived in their roles.

Growing a Good Business Changes Lives

BMORE launched in fall 2020, and within three years, BMO had hired 100-plus Associate Bankers for branches in Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, and Arizona. In 2024, the program will also expand to Southern California. While BMO has a new pool of trained and committed

employees, the program has enormous benefits for the Associate Bankers as well.

“Before BMORE, I never felt like I would have an opportunity to work at a bank,” said one participant. “I had previously applied for a bank job but didn’t get it. Math, numbers, and



computers – they’ve been my thing since sixth grade, so I was disappointed. Cara helped me apply to BMO through BMORE. Knowing that I had Cara and all their resources really helped. I had people who actually cared about me. After I interviewed, I was shocked and excited when BMO called and told me I got the Associate Banker job.

BMORE participants interviewed say they feel they are a part of BMO’s larger purpose. Many Associate Bankers who come through the program say that they see themselves differently

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and have a renewed sense of confidence. BMO also hears stories of how participants are achieving financial stability for themselves and their families.

For a company that is committed to “Boldly Growing the Good in business and life,” that is success.

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