



N.J. Employers Focused on Workers

BY DAVID P. WILLIS

BUSINESS WRITER The quality of a company's workers has emerged as a major issue among New Jersey's employers.

It's trumping other concerns such as rising costs for health care and energy, according to a Rutgers University survey released Thursday.

"Your core success is really your talent, the core people you have now and those you can bring in the door," said Carl Van Horn, professor and director of Rutgers' John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development in New Brunswick.

The survey, undertaken by the center with support from New Jersey Resources in Wall, questioned 300 employers in New Jersey, including 38 in Monmouth and Ocean counties.

"It is crucial," said Pat Scanlon, president of Shamrock Communications LLC, an Atlantic Highlands television production and marketing company. "It is all about relationships and the quality of work that you do by having the right people working on the project and creating that uniform sense of customer satisfaction and creating a constant presence."

For instance, Scanlon has hired a new production coordinator with video experience as well as editing and technical skills. "Finding the right person for that job was very significant for me," he said. "Now I can delegate a number of projects to her."

He promoted the former production coordinator to head of sales. "She knew the client base and knew the projects and knew the business," he said.

Among those companies surveyed, 88 percent of the businesses believe the quality of job applicants as very important.

The survey also found that: Nearly two-thirds had difficulty finding job applicants for the openings they had; 34 percent had difficulty retaining skilled workers.

Nearly half strongly support state tax incentives to encourage both employers and employees to participate in work force training programs.

Eighty-five percent of New Jersey employers said they were improving the skills of their workers by using on-the-job training either in-house or through an outside source.