

Reach For the Summit

by Kathleen Gage



With an uncertain economy, unemployment rates remaining at an all time high, and a sense of uncertainty for both employers and employees, many are asking, "What can I do?" and "What comes next?"

For years I have admired and respected Darin Brush regarding his philosophy about work, respect of his team and desire for the economic well being of the state of Utah. Darin Brush is Deputy Director, Workforce Development and Information Division for Utah Department of Workforce Services.

The following comes from an interview I conducted with Mr. Brush.

KG: When you think of the current economic situation, what area do you feel is ripe for improvement in many companies?

DB: Few Utah companies have remained unaffected by the slow economy. Positive job growth needs to return soon, as I am certain it will. That will be the single most important labor market indicator that we are moving again.

Companies often behave just like you and I. They evaluate their income or revenue and watch their costs closely. They cannot hire more people until they have the confidence that their growth is solid. And, more than anything else right now, we need to get companies, small and large, hiring employees again.

KG: Governor Leavitt rolled out a 1000-day plan over a year ago to address these very issues. What is the Governor's plan?

DB: Just over 400 days ago when we were involved with final preparatory details of the Winter Olympic Games, Governor Leavitt announced a "1000-Day Plan" - a visionary blueprint for turning Utah's Olympic moment into an Olympic legacy, or, in the Governor's words, "to turn 17 days of attention into a 1,000 days of progress."

The 1000-Day Plan outlines a set of inter-reliant strategies to ensure statewide economic prosperity. These include: investing in people, creating quality jobs, building livable communities, creating online government, and

strengthening families/fostering self-reliance. Clearly, workforce and economic development are important components of Governor Leavitt's plan. The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) takes so seriously its commitment to the 1000-Day Plan that its boards of directors and both the State and Regional Councils on Workforce Services have drafted strategic plans to achieve our contributions to the 1000-Day Plan. What is more, we have realigned many of our functions at DWS to ensure the greatest workforce development impact. I head that new division which we have named Workforce Development and Information.

One of the many important contributing events we have planned is a Workforce Summit for the fall of this year. Set for September 25th, the Workforce Summit will benefit Utah employers, job seekers, and youth.

KG: Tell me more about the Summit.

DB: Five years ago, DWS hosted the first annual Utah Employer Conference. This year's Utah Employer Conference will again provide great information such as the most current economic data delivered by some of the state's finest experts, labor law primers, work/life best practice exchanges, and much more. The cost is only \$49 per attendee. You can register at www.jobs.utah.gov.

In addition to the Utah Employer Conference, we will host a Job Seeker Resource Fair and a Youth Career Fair. These three events together make up the first ever Workforce Summit.

KG: What is the benefit to employers in attending?

DB: Employers get information they can use - everything from what the economy is doing to labor law primers to cultural integration initiatives to work/life best practices to online state government services demonstrations, and much more! It's the one event each year focused on giving employers the information they need because they are employers.

KG: What about the job seeker?

DB: The Job Seeker Resource Fair will provide everything someone needs to know to find a job. There will be open-entry, open-exit workshops running throughout the afternoon on topics such as winning résumés, effective online job searches, successful interviewing, staying motivated, and more. Plus, we hope to have employers there that are hiring. We have a couple of surprises planned, too. And, there is no cost to attend!

The Youth Career Fair will have dozens of activities and mini-workshops geared toward older kids, their parents, teachers, and school counselors, to help them make wise career decisions.

Still asking, "What can I do?" Now you have your answer: plan on attending the Workforce Summit on September 25, 2003.

Columnist Kathleen Gage is a business advisor, keynote speaker, and trainer working in areas of marketing, PR, customer relations and employee satisfaction. She is the operations director of "How To Get a Million Dollars Worth of FREE Publicity", featuring Dian Thomas. Visit www.kathleengage.com or email kathleen@turningpointpresents.com or call 801.466-3630.