

Move Over Computer: At Goodwill and Boston Career Link Face-to Face is Key

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Imagine being a job seeker and being able to meet a recruiter face to face early in the process. In 2017, when almost all initial steps in the job search process are done online, it's hard to imagine, is it not?

In this hyper-technological world, where smart phones and the internet have made job seeking largely impersonal, Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries and Boston Career Link, the one-stop career center it operates, have found a way to bring employers and job seekers face-to-face.

As a provider of labor exchange services in a society that is increasingly technology-based, Goodwill's most important innovation has been orchestrating a strategy that leverages technology while creating a welcoming environment where individuals who face barriers to employment can meet with employers directly and early in the process.

As the role of technology increased in the job search process, Boston Career Link responded by offering job seekers the tools they needed to apply online, from

access to computers to training. The career center offers workshops on crafting and improving resumes as well as searching and applying for jobs online. It also offers a workshop on creating a LinkedIn profile so job seekers have a professional online presence. Yet, many jobseekers submitted hundreds of resumes online and were rejected without a chance to speak with a human being. It was discouraging.

In response, Boston Career Link figured out how to offer job seekers something that isn't always as accessible as it once was: the opportunity to meet directly with employers who are hiring, to shake hands, and to put a face to an otherwise anonymous name.

Why is this important or particularly innovative? Because people with barriers to employment often need a chance to tell their story in order to be considered. In a state with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, it is critical that career services are offered in a way that engages the hardest to employ and connects them with openings.

How does Goodwill do this? Simple. Goodwill puts people -- and social interaction -- at a premium.

Boston Career Link engages hundreds of employers with available entry-level jobs to come on-site at Goodwill's Roxbury headquarters in order to connect with candidates face to face. The employers are from a broad range of

industries and include companies and organizations like Brigham and Women's Hospital, Delta Air Lines, Eataly Boston, Mass Audiology, and Tufts University.

As part of this process that values direct, social interaction, Boston Career Link offers job fairs, mass hiring events, and more than 215 employer-specific recruitment events annually. These events are key to Goodwill's social approach to job search. They offer the best opportunity for job seekers who might have gaps in their work histories to meet directly with employer representatives. It is this model that has made Goodwill and Boston Career Link leaders in employer engagement and on-site recruitment among career centers across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Boston Career Link has always deployed job fairs, mass hiring events, and on-site recruitment events as a way to connect job seekers and employers. But in 2011, with unemployment decreasing steadily, Goodwill and the career center began to put greater emphasis on on-site recruitment events as the most effective way to connect the job seeker and the employer.

The on-site recruitment events also served another purpose: they became an effective means for the career center to expand and enhance its base. As the model succeeded, the career center reached out to more and more employers and job seekers. This helped solidify Boston Career Link's role as the career center that can

best support employers in finding diverse candidates for entry-level jobs while helping individuals who are underserved find great opportunities.

Since its founding in 1895, Goodwill has been a leader in social innovation. It has always found a way to help those who need help the most. As an organization, it has held steadfast to the idea that people come first and direct, social interaction is the best way to create opportunity. Put another way: sometimes the most disruptive solution is the most basic one. In this case, it is a solution that balances technology with human relationships, engagement, and interactions.