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## “Welcome to The Room”

### Summary of Employer Session - June 21, 2017

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#### Overview

East Central Ontario Training Board (ECOTB), in partnership with the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA), sponsored a local Employer’s meeting entitled “Welcome to the Room” (WTTR). This was the first of two meetings, the second being scheduled for September 27, 2017.

The purpose of the WTTR initiative is to bring local employers and other members of the business community together to collaborate on:

- i) Identifying and prioritizing the most pressing workforce challenges employers face
- ii) Generating innovative ideas to address/solve the challenges
- iii) Developing a Regional Action Plan that will guide the development and implementation of the plan
- iv) Establishing accountabilities and relationships amongst various community stakeholders to ensure there is follow-through on the plan

In addition to the ECOTB and HRPA, this initiative is being led by an Advisory Committee with representation from the various regional Economic Development offices - Belleville, Quinte West, Prince Edward County, Lennox and Addington, Hastings County, and local Chambers of Commerce. On behalf of their respective organizations, members of the Advisory Committee expressed commitment to the objectives of this initiative.

People Minded Business, a local consultancy, was hired to facilitate the two sessions (June and September), to write a summary document and a Regional Action Plan.

The first session was held on June 21, 2017, from 8:00 am – 12:30 pm. This document summarizes the first session and provides a foundation for the next meeting, planned for September 27, 2017.



## Attendees

Members of the Advisory Group sent out invitations for WTTR to local employers, through their respective networks. Invitations were sent out to companies of all sizes from across the region, from all industries, including for-profit and non-profit.

A decision was made to extend invitations to the first session **strictly to employers or their representatives**. This decision aligned with an earlier request from employers to have an opportunity to meet together as a group and discuss common issues that relate to workforce issues in the local area. Additional attendees, including representatives from the Economic Development offices, Chambers of Commerce, secondary and post-secondary institutions, and other organizations who work with employers, will join the second meeting in September.

23 employers attended or sent representatives to the session. A list of employers represented is included in the Appendices.

## Summary of WTTR

Over the course of four hours, participants took part in a highly-interactive session that focused on clarifying the challenges facing employers in the local area. People Minded Business employs a Creative Problem Solving framework when facilitating sessions where issues need clarification and new thinking is needed to address and solve challenges. Creative Problem Solving (CPS) follows a four-stage process:

- Identifying & Clarifying the Challenges
- Generating Ideas about Potential Solutions
- Developing the Most Promising Ideas
- Implementing the Ideas through Action Planning & Prototyping.

The session on June 21<sup>st</sup> focused on the first stage of CPS - identifying and clarifying the workforce challenges employers face. In addition, the key challenges were prioritized to assist with focusing the future Regional Action Plan on the most pressing issues.

### Activity 1: Identification of Challenges

At the outset of the session, it was acknowledged that many of the employers had attended other meetings and consultations where workforce challenges were identified and

discussed. It was clarified that the purpose of WTTR was not to have the same discussions again, but to enable participants to have a joint conversation that spans previous consultations, then quickly moves to the identification of common challenges they face, and to prioritizing issues they wish to address in a Regional Action Plan.

As a way of quickly bridging from other consultations and to ensure those who had not attended previous consultations also had a voice, session participants were asked to individually record the most pressing workforce issues they currently face. Once issues were identified individually, participants reviewed the responses and collaboratively identified the common issues and themes that were emerging. Seven key themes emerged:

#### **COMMON WORKFORCE ISSUES /CHALLENGES**

1. Soft skills and expectations
2. Regulations
3. Engagement and retention
4. Attracting employees to the local area
5. Hard skills and education
6. Succession planning and knowledge drain
7. Competitiveness and automation

### **Activity 2: Clarifying the Challenges**

Participants then further clarified the issues associated with each of the seven workforce challenges, and the impact of the challenges on their respective businesses. Seven ‘stations’ were established around the room, each of which had one of the identified challenges as its focus. Participants were able to provide input into each of the challenges by moving through the stations, where they were asked to answer a series of questions:

1. **Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?**
2. **Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?**
3. **What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?**
4. **What are your gut feelings about this challenge?**
5. **What’s stopping you from addressing this challenge?**
6. **What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge? Phrase them as “It would be great if...” statements**
7. **How often does this challenge surface?**

The notes from each of the seven stations are included in the Appendices.

### Activity 3: Prioritizing Issues for the Regional Action Plan

Based on the complexity and number of challenges facing employers in the local region, there was recognition that all of the workforce challenges could not be addressed concurrently, and that the issues would need to be prioritized. The challenges that were identified by the group as priorities would form the basis of discussion at the follow-up session.

Participants were asked to review the information that had been discussed and recorded at the seven stations, and vote on the four challenges they viewed as being the most pressing and most important. Through discussion, it was agreed that two of the challenges – Engagement and Retention, and Attracting Workers to the Area – were interlinked and could not be addressed as separate priorities. The two challenges were then combined as one.

Through this activity, the **four priority challenges** that participants came to consensus on were:

- “Softskills” and Meeting Employer/Workplace Expectations
- Regulations
- Engagement and Retention, and Attracting Employees to the Area
- “Hard Skills” and Education

### Activity 4: Defining the Ideal State for the Priority Challenges

For each of the four priorities, participants were then asked to again review the information at the stations, and define the ‘ideal state’ (outcomes) that they would like to see achieved. To enable this, participants completed the statement: **“It would be great if...”**.

Once statements were written for each of the four priorities, participants had an opportunity to select and vote for the statements that they believed:

- Would have the most impact on the region,
- Is within the ‘realm of control’ of the employers & other stakeholders within the region, and
- Was the most important/ pressing issue to address.

Below is a list of the “It Would Be Great If...” Statements, and the number of votes each received:

**It would be great if...**

- I can attract qualified candidates right away, and training was barrier free (i.e. costs, justification, funding red tape application of training, training availability) (27 votes)
- Education institutions understood and responded to our needs (25 votes)
- The educational institutions had programs to develop a culture of accountability/life skills (25 votes)
- An easily available resource could simplify/clarify regulations to implement changes and see opportunities (22 votes)
- There was better alignment between educational institutions and the business community (21 votes)
- Understood the benefits of doing business in Ontario (21 votes)
- Location campaign – target to working public – County/Municipality – branding of the area (13 votes)
- Colleges and high schools work with local employers and promote opportunities + possible career paths available (12 votes)
- Align management (employer) + employee expectations/motivation – communication (9 votes)
- Employees could see a future in the company ⑦ work toward their succession + development (8 votes)

The facilitators were asked to work with the highest priority statements to further refine and wordsmith the top-rated outcomes, and to reframe the key points as “How Might We” questions that will form the basis of the next meeting. The phrase “How Might We” (HMW) is commonly used in the innovation and CPS fields as a way of sparking creative thinking and collaboration. Often, when talking about challenges, language is used that can inhibit creativity instead of encourage it. By using the phrase HMW, it is possible to defer judgment and open up more possibilities.

#### **Four “How Might We” Statements have been developed:**

1. How might we work collectively to attract, recruit and retain qualified candidates to our region?
2. How might we work collectively to build a more skilled (soft skills and hard skills) workforce?
3. How might we work collectively to clarify, simplify, streamline and address regulations in innovative ways?
4. How might we create a greater understanding of the benefits of doing business in our region?

## Activity 5: Invitees to the September Session

The purpose of this initiative is to collaboratively address the most pressing employer workforce needs, and to create a Regional Action Plan that addresses these needs. In order to execute a Regional Action Plan there needs to be significant collaboration and commitment from a range of stakeholders from across the region. Stakeholders include employers, economic development offices, chambers of commerce, secondary and post-secondary institutions, employer membership groups, government at all levels, as well as community organizations. Without this collaboration and commitment, it will be significantly more challenging to address these issues, which will result in the region being less competitive and employers continuing to struggle.

The final activity of the WTTR session was to brainstorm a list of organizations that would be extremely important to engage with and invite to the September session – the session in which potential solutions will be identified, developed and co-designed. It was also seen as being integral to success to invite decision-makers (C-Suite personnel) from the various groups, to ensure that the organizations attending are able to commit to next steps and to actionable items.

Potential invitees to the September session, as requested by employers, are:

- All Advisory Committee members
- Quintevation
- Loyalist College representatives
- Boards of Education
- CFIB
- More small + medium employers, and a greater cross-section of sectors in the area
- City/ Municipality representatives
- Ministry of Transportation
- United Way (Brenda – Chair)
- Tourism
- Downtown Business Associations
- Immigration representatives
- MPPs
- Ministry of Labour and WSIB representatives
- Legal firm
- Employment agencies, eg. META
- Trenval and the Small Business Centre
- Hospitals
- Ministry of Health/medical coordination personnel



## Final Notes and Messages from Attendees

All attendees at the WTTR session were very generous with their time and energy. There was, however, a clear message that they wished to impart to the organizers of WTTR: they are not willing to offer any further support to initiatives such as these, without a clear direction and action resulting from the meetings.

In order to keep this initiative moving forward, the attendees also requested adding additional seats to the Advisory Committee, so that employers were also at the planning table. It was also seen as being of vital importance to, in advance of the session, to have commitment from those who will be in attendance to:

- 1) Listen to what the employers are saying (read and reflect on the information in this report and the other reports, and not make assumptions)
- 2) Collaborate on new solutions and possibilities, rather than letting employers know what is already planned and underway (i.e. develop solutions together)
- 3) Develop accountability into the Action Plan that will ensure goals are acted upon quickly and collaboratively. The development of 180 day actions was suggested as a reasonable timeframe to expect action.

There is guarded optimism that new action will be taken and that the Region will be able to move forward in a proactive and positive direction.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Attendees

Attendees at WTRR were from the following organizations:

- Beclawat Manufacturing Inc.
- Belleville Chamber of Commerce
- Cloud Bookkeeping Services
- Convergys
- County of Hastings
- CRA
- Emmerson Packaging
- GFL Environmental
- GH Manufacturing Inc.
- GlobalMed Inc
- Hanon Systems
- Hastings Prince Edward Public Health
- HRPA Quinte and District Chapter
- Impacto Protective Products Inc.
- IS2 Workforce Solutions
- Executive Leadership Consultant
- Parmalat Canada
- Quinte West Chamber of Commerce
- Rillea Technologies Inc
- Sigma Stretch Film Of Canada Co
- Team Eagle Ltd
- Trenton Cold Storage
- Trenton MFRC





## Appendix 2: Notes from the Seven “Challenge” Stations

### Station 1. Soft Skills and Expectations

#### 1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?

- Clients
- Managers
- Employees
- Trainers

#### 2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?

- Impacts engagement
- Impacts service
- Internal relationships
- Cost ⚡ expect high pay out of school
- Impacts efficiency and effectiveness
- Impacts suppliers/vendors
- Increases negative employee relations
- Social media – impacts brand
- Competitiveness
- Ability to discipline
- No loyalty ⚡ disconnect from company ⚡ high turnover
- Clearer expectations during onboarding
- Generational
- Management needs to adjust too
- Continuity
- Communication
- Work ethic impacts bottom line
- Impact on change management

#### 3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?

- Onboarding orientation with clear expectations reinforced
- Consistency in management (training)
- Generational awareness training
- Internal communication plan and matrix
- Big picture engagement and buy-in
- Goals oriented job description
- Coaching model vs formal performance appraisals

#### 4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?

- It’s a huge issue that’s getting bigger
- Should start in elementary school

**5. What's stopping you from addressing this challenge?**

- Community culture - high rate of social services
- Government bureaucracy
- Cost to train
- Sense of entitlement
- Prioritizing of training amongst all other tasks (running the business)
- People self-awareness 🚫 admission of problems

**6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?**

Phrase them as “It would be great if...” statements:

It would be great if...

- The educational institutions had programs to develop a cultural of accountability/life skills (25 votes as high priority)
- There was better alignment between educational institutions and the business community (21 votes as high priority)
- Less government bureaucracy
- We had a connected community that makes employees accountable

**7. How often does this challenge surface?**

1. All the time – very common	<b>20</b>
2. Often – it's a common challenge	<b>5</b>
3. Some time – it's not a common challenge	<b>2</b>
4. None of the time – not common at all	<b>0</b>

## Station 2: Regulations

### 1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?

- Employers/future employers
- Employees
- Community

### 2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?

- Decrease profit/competitiveness
- Community impact
- Employer competition increases
- Internal competition
- OH and S
- Funding support
- Cost to company for accreditation etc.
- Complexity – application ⚡ government/agency support vs download ⚡ clarity needed, user friendly
- Information dissemination
- Wage compression ⚡ increased cost of living

### 3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?

- Getting educated and understanding impacts of regulations
- Glean different perspectives from different sources
- Looking at how to reduce cost
- Changing operational strategy
- Implementing training on regulations

### 4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?

- There will be no manufacturing in Ontario
- Decrease competitive advantage
- Wage compression – why educate yourself
- Expectation that minimum wage goes up and all levels will need to go up

### 5. What's stopping you from addressing this challenge?

- Cost
- Lack of alternatives
- Short term thinking
- Lack of collaboration between employers
- Lack of knowledge/complexity/poor communication
- 'Ostrich' mentality
- Resistance to forced change
- Inconsistent enforcement
- Don't see as opportunity

### 6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?

It would be great if...

- An easily available resource could simplify/clarify regulations to implement changes and



- see opportunities
- Understood the benefits of doing business in Ontario
- Regulations focused on outcomes not paperwork

**7. How often does this challenge surface?**

1. All the time – very common	14
2. Often – it’s a common challenge	1
3. Some time – it’s not a common challenge	6
4. None of the time – not common at all	0

### **Station 3. Engagement and Retention**

#### **1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?**

- Employers
- Employees
- Customers
- Geographical/economic area

#### **2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?**

- Labour cost, training cost, recruiting cost, lost productivity
- Quality decrease, lost opportunity for innovation
- Loss of business/employment/customers in Quinte area
- Overall economic downturn, lack of growth
- Impacts ability to innovate/streamline
- Expert development
- Absenteeism & Presenteeism
- Employer relations
- Cost of recruitment
- Importance in business continuity
- Reputation
- Lack of accountability
- Unrealistic expectations of advancement
- Loyalty
- Retention defines reputations (impacts)
- Maintain customers
- Attract + keep new generations
- Constantly re-adjusting and training

#### **3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?**

- Incentive programs
- On the spot feedback
- Encouraging interaction between levels of management
- DCC plan increases
- Educational subsidy
- Non-work related team building
- Relaxation in strictness
- Support employees in fundraising activities
- Make employee feel valued

#### **4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?**

- Huge problem
- Individualized problems
- Area issues
- Business + employees

#### **5. What's stopping you from addressing this challenge?**

- Different motivation – how do we address them all?
- Cost of retention
- Honest communication
- Ongoing commitment
- Realistic expectations (both employee and employer give and take + not willing to change mindset)

**6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?**

It would be great if...

- Align management (employer) + employee expectations/motivation – communication (9 votes as high priority)
- Employees could see a future in the company 7 work toward their succession + development (8 votes as high priority)
- Employees enjoyed their workplace

**7. How often does this challenge surface?**

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. All the time – very common              | 15 |
| 2. Often – it’s a common challenge         | 8  |
| 3. Some time – it’s not a common challenge | 4  |
| 4. None of the time – not common at all    | 0  |

## **Station 4. Attract Employees to Area**

### **1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge**

- Employer/potential employee
- Local economy – promote area, tax base

### **2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?**

- Want to stay and retire here
- More diverse ee pool
- Increase access skills
- Builds community
- Spousal/family support
- Encourages fresh perspective/innovate
- Invite different approaches

### **3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?**

- Attracting younger workers + families who want to stay
- Keeping young people – changing perception/branding “hip”
- Offer entry level jobs with room for advancement
- Finding opportunities for young people (i.e. giving them first chance)
- Our ability to recruit talent – cultural challenge in Belleville/Quinte area – attracting new talent will stale complacency
- Competition with neighbouring municipalities/areas
- Housing shortages – co-op students short term rentals
- Transportation
- School special services, ethnic, disabilities, etc.
- Spousal employment
- Bring talent from other countries
- Look to non-traditional employees – immigrants, hearing impaired
- Work with local college – new graduates
- Under employed group – take away excuses not to work
- Partner with CFB Trenton – employ military spouse

### **4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?**

- Area challenge

### **5. What’s stopping you from addressing this challenge?**

- Financial resources
- Corporate directives

- Retention of out of area candidates (stepping stone)
- Transportation (public) and support of city and chamber

**6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?**

It would be great if...

- Location campaign – target to working public – County/Municipality – branding of the area (13 votes as high priority)
- Colleges and high schools work with local employers and promote opportunities + possible career paths available (12 votes as high priority)
- Transportation/city buses/intercity transportation available/affordable/service employer locations/schedule according to shift starts/ends

**7. How often does this challenge surface?**

1. All the time – very common	<b>10</b>
2. Often – it’s a common challenge	<b>7</b>
3. Some time – it’s not a common challenge	<b>9</b>
4. None of the time – not common at all	<b>0</b>





## **Station 5. Hard Skills and Education**

### **1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?**

- Employers, employees
- High schools, universities, colleges (public and private)
- Community groups – i.e career edge, meta, job connect
- Training consultants (WSPS)
- Online training

### **2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?**

- Unskilled labour force requiring internal training (lack of facilities)
- Difficult to source from local labour pool
- Increased training cost = lost investment if they leave
- Educate to appreciate the work (value) – automation will increase
- Literacy skills
- Change in recruiting procedure
- Dying skills – not taught in schools
- Specific skills – mech (eg)
- Apprenticeship (outdated regulations)
- Basic math skills
- Better educational curriculum
- Accountability + time management
- Addiction to personal technology (phones, tablets, etc.)

### **3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?**

- Training – in house, ongoing
- Governance board CLA (Literacy Agency) – connecting to educators (colleges + universities disconnected); institutions need to reach out to employers
- Attracting apprentices – challenge 1:1 ratio
- Qualifying everyone as millwrights
- Grade 12 GED – not everyone interested
- Earning high school credit while working (paid) full time

### **4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?**

- Lack of HS + education inhibits our ability to grow
- Frustration – disconnected (EE/ER/local college)
- Lack of motivation/understanding to educate themselves

### **5. What's stopping you from addressing this challenge?**

- Costs and time (for training)
- Availability of training

- Disconnect
- Lack of education skills affects out recruitment pool (settling)
- There’s no guarantee of ROI for training – risk of bad fit after training
- Red tape for application and follow up subsidies –increases restrictions in the process – too “stats” heavy
- Quality of training/continued education
- Online can be impractical/not effective to success

**6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?**

It would be great if...

- I can attract the qualified candidate right away and training was barrier free (i.e. costs, justification, funding red tape application of training, training availability) (27 votes as high priority)
- Education institutions met with our needs (25 votes as high priority)
- Retention increased (attract, recruit, retain to local area)
- See some soft skills + education

**7. How often does this challenge surface?**

1. All the time – very common	9
2. Often – it’s a common challenge	14
3. Some time – it’s not a common challenge	4
4. None of the time – not common at all	0

## **Station 6: Succession Planning and Knowledge Drain**

### **1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?**

- Employers
- Employees
- Organizations as a whole
- Geo/eco local area

### **2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?**

- Looming retirement and knowledge transfer
- Organizational continuance and success
- Lack of innovation and younger workforce leaving area – affects organizational competency
- Change to a sharing culture
- How to transfer knowledge (experts may not be trainers)
- Time/cost of planning/execution – too expensive to job shadow
- Generation gap – new learning strategies
- Senior employees looking for easier
- Can't afford retirement
- Accommodation
- Mentoring
- Work ethic is different for older/younger generations
- Lose the business – no one will take over
- If older workers forced to continue working due to economic reasons, then less motivated
- Higher benefits, etc.

### **3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?**

- Mentoring
- Job shadowing
- Adding positions
- Second career
- Maintain status quo
- Development plan
- Clear goals and communication

### **4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?**

- Ignored
- Who (temporary/long term)
- Not serious NOW
- Threatened
- Overworked



- Position elimination
- Information hoarding

#### 5. What's stopping you from addressing this challenge?

- Time and money
- Employee engagement and trust in process
- Lack of resources
- Hard – not an easy process
- Concerns at leadership level
- Effectiveness of process/outcomes
- Lack of employee interest in opportunities for succession
- Increased marketability of identified and trained EBS

#### 6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?

It would be great if...

- Our organization had a cohesive, specific, actionable succession plan to ensure:
  - Longevity of organization
  - Knowledge capture (the right knowledge)
  - Timely application of plan (when are folks retiring?)
  - Employee engagement
- Our organization had the resources and the will to achieve the above plan – funding, time, money, organizational buy-in
- Managers and employees viewed organizational/job knowledge as “shared” not “owned”
- People understand how to transfer knowledge effectively (learning strategies)
- People stayed once they have had succession planning

#### 7. How often does this challenge surface?

1. All the time – very common	11
2. Often – it's a common challenge	6
3. Some time – it's not a common challenge	10
4. None of the time – not common at all	0

## **Station 7: Competitiveness and Automation**

### **1. Who is involved with, or impacted by the challenge?**

- Management
- Supervisors
- Customers
- Potential layoffs
- Workers
- Community
- Increase skill requirement, safety, engagement

### **2. Why is this challenge a concern for you? Why is it important to you?**

- Funding issues
- Financial issues
- Longevity of organization
- Impacts on labour pool
- Efficiency, training on new equipment
- Impact on community as a whole
- Community branding (Timmins)
- Business will leave if can't attract/maintain customers – need quality staff
- Employee expectations – pension/benefits/wage
- Automation – capital costs (ROI), skilled labour – technical training, increased customer costs, globalization
- Ability to grow business in some cases

### **3. What have you already thought of, or tried, to address the challenge?**

- Job fairs don't always coincide with work schedules
- MFG'G competes for same labour pool
- Collaboration with other manufacturers
- Applicant sharing for specific positions

### **4. What are your gut feelings about this challenge?**

- Automation only applicable to certain industries
- Directly related to employers

### **5. What's stopping you from addressing this challenge?**

- Budget
- Funding gaps
- Internal competition
- Competing against cheap international companies
- Economic situation

- Made in the USA trend
- Poor leadership
- Poor strategic planning
- Poor communication from above
- Lack of employee involvement/respectful engagement
- Lack of interest in partnerships (co-op students, co-op immigrants)
- Lack of communication within community about opportunities for apprenticeships, jobs, etc.
- Lack of appropriate skills/training

**6. What would be the ideal goals or outcomes for dealing with this challenge?**

It would be great if...

- We could clarify how company strategic plan recognizes local challenges, and how it is applied locally
- Governments listen to needs of local businesses and consider for their strategic plan

**7. How often does this challenge surface?**

1. All the time – very common	2
2. Often – it’s a common challenge	7
3. Some time – it’s not a common challenge	8
4. None of the time – not common at all	5

