



Strategic Solutions

April 2017

Welcome to **STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS**, a quarterly newsletter from **NOCTI BUSINESS SOLUTIONS**, a world-wide leader in technical competency assessments.

A Message from the CEO



Over the last several months we have been engaged in a small building addition. Fortunately, the weather has been relatively kind to us and our friends outside doing the construction. Watching our addition take shape, I'm reminded of my own background in the construction industry and how many important skills and competencies it takes to complete a project like this. From the footings to the roof line, there are countless operations occurring by skilled, competent individuals who are working from a blueprint while upholding local, state, and national standards. Some would refer to these as "blue collar" jobs; we refer to them as the skills that hold our nation together, maintain our infrastructure, and our quality of life!

Nocti Business Solutions wants to assure that your company is able to find skilled, competent, and proven individuals like those working on our building addition.

NBS is often associated with manufacturing, but it's important to remember that we do much more than that. In fact, we deliver pre-employment testing in fifteen major industry clusters, including hospitality, health, construction, law enforcement, engineering, and many others. We also carry a workplace readiness credential. This credential assesses attributes like teamwork, cooperation, planning, ethics, and one's ability to communicate. [A Blueprint to this assessment can be found on our website.](#) The workplace readiness credential is used by numerous employers as a general screening tool. It is based on the [U.S. Department of Education's Employability Skills Framework](#) and is used throughout the state of Illinois through their WIOA agencies.

Recently, I was talking to a human resources specialist at a large multinational manufacturer who told me that they do not have a problem getting individuals to apply for job openings, they have difficulty finding those with verifiable skills. NBS's sister company, [NOCTI](#) is currently developing a filter that can be used by HR specialists to find individuals with verifiable skills called the Technical Badge of Excellence. It is based on credentials awarded to students meeting industry established standards and passing scores, and those trained by technical programs across our nation. This is an initiative to connect employers with technical workers. If you would like more information on the Technical Badge of Excellence, watch our [YouTube video](#). If you would like to participate in the early stages of this initiative please reach out to Anne Gielczyk at anne.gielczyk@nocti.org, or me at john.foster@nocti.org.

I would like to thank all of the businesses, collaborators, and customers who utilize our services. If you are looking for a way to find employees with verifiable skills or if you are looking for the best way to represent yourself as a potential employee please contact us.

Have a great spring!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John".

John Foster, President/CEO

Are you looking for a new way to test Employability Skills?

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education defines employability skills as "skills required for success in the labor market at all employment levels for all sectors". As companies are challenged to succeed in a competitive global market, hiring skilled employees has never been more important. NBS has a [21st Century Skills for Workplace Success](#) Assessment that addresses the following skills:

- * Reading, Math, Writing, Speaking, & Listening Skills
- * Computer Applications & Digital Media
- * Reasoning, Problem-Solving & Decision Making
- * Understanding the "Big Picture"
- * Work Ethics
- * Positive Attitude
- * Independence & Initiative
- * Self-Presentation
- * Attendance
- * Collaboration
- * Personal Health & Wellness
- * Entrepreneurship
- * Personal Finance

Click [HERE](#) to view blueprint of this assessment

Mike Rowe Testifies to Congress on Blue-Collar Jobs



"I'm gonna suggest that the skills gap is every bit as important as unemployment and the presence of 5.6 million available jobs right now that people don't seem excited about," Rowe said.

[Click to read more](#)

More millennials are skipping college and choosing blue collar jobs instead

For years, the idea of going to college, getting a degree and parlaying that into a stable career was widely accepted as the best possible route for most young people in America.

Now, that might no longer be the case. As recently as 2014, the Pew Research Center released a study that found that a college diploma was worth an extra \$17,500 in salary. But as high school graduation rates increase, especially among lower-income students, committing to four years of expensive higher education doesn't make sense for more and more people, according to research conducted by Forbes.



Read more here: www.miamiherald.com

Increasing Employee Retention in Blue Collar Jobs

[HTTP://WWW.SMITHSHYDRAULIC.COM/AUTHOR/MICHAEL-SMITH/](http://www.smithshydraulic.com/author/michael-smith/)



Employee retention is important to any business: the expense of hiring and training new employees can be very costly. Another cost lies in the productivity lost while seeking to replace the employee who's no longer there. In blue collar jobs, which are generally labor-focused, employee retention is often lower than in office and executive positions. High turn-over rates in blue collar occupations typically occur when employees feel they're under appreciated, under valued, and over worked. These perceptions can make blue collar employees feel unfulfilled and send them searching for better-paying jobs.

Here are four ways to increase employee retention in blue collar fields:

Pay Employees What They're Worth

Blue collar workers are the backbone of the labor industries; salaries should reflect such status. If pay is competitive, workers feel as though they're valued by the company, and are less likely to leave and look for other employment.

Add Benefits & Perks

For some businesses, especially small ones, increasing wages, or maintaining a certain wage level, may prove to be difficult. In cases like these, consider adding benefits and perks. When blue collar employees feel that their needs are being met, they're likely to stay in their current position. Benefits and perks such as affordable health insurance, paid vacation time, and flexible scheduling can translate into loyal, long-term employment and increase blue collar job retention.

Improve the Work Environment

Because blue collar jobs are labor focused, often industrial, and sometimes undertaken in harsh environments, employers should not believe work conditions are being ignored by management. Improving the work environment by adding small comforts and upgrades to the job site can make all the difference. For example, workers who are outside in high heat all day will appreciate an air-conditioned trailer for lunch and coffee breaks. Providing a nicely equipped break room is another way to show care for employees. Finding ways to respect employees in their environment can be the ticket to how they respond to their jobs.

Promote from Within

Many blue collar workers are not content to remain in the same job day after day until retirement. Many have aspirations to grow and move up to better-paying and more satisfying positions. Instead of letting good employees leave to find better jobs, promote from within. Employees already in place have valuable knowledge of the company, trade, and business. With an investment in additional training, plus their own motivation to excel, these employees can become even more of a major asset to the company.

IRC Corner

Are you looking for an approved center to help with your organization's testing needs? More information about sites can be found on the IRC Directory on our website: noctibusiness.com/testing-locations.

Did you know that Industry Resource Centers (IRCs) can also participate in the NBS Prior Learning Assessment Program? That's right! NBS will pay you to proctor PLAs through our program! Contact Kay.Cole@nocti.org for more information!

As an IRC, do you have any best practices or "tips & tricks" that you would like to share with others? Let us know - we would love to post them in our newsletter. Send them to noctibusiness@nocti.org

REMINDER ALERT!!!

Please remember that our testing system is down for maintenance every Thursday evening at 8:00 p.m. Please do not plan any testing sessions between Thursday at 8:00 p.m. and Friday at 6:00 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time).

NOCTI/NBS 2017 Annual Chili/Soup Cookoff Winners'

Congratulations to this year's NOCTI/NBS Soup/Chili Cookoff Winners-

1st place Gold Ladle trophy went to Tina Koepf for her Chicken Cordon Blue Soup

2nd place Silver Ladle trophy went to Stacey Jackson for her Stuffed Pepper Soup



Great job and a big shout out to all the participants!

NBS Updates: Supported Browser Update!

Protecting the integrity of your NOCTI/NBS assessment program, as well as our online systems, is a top priority for the NOCTI/NBS Team! With this in mind, we have updated our supported browser list in an effort to manage potential cybersecurity risks. In order to better mitigate these risks, effective February 1, 2017, NOCTI/NBS online systems will no longer support Internet Explorer (IE) or Microsoft Edge. Several browsers are supported and can be installed at no cost, such as Firefox, Safari, and Google Chrome. Access to the testing system will be prohibited through IE or Microsoft Edge browsers. Current IE or MS Edge users are encouraged to update computer workstations with a supported browser well in advance of upcoming testing sessions. Thank you!

Don't forget to check out our White Paper: [Finding the Perfect Hire: The Value of Pre-Employment](#)

Testing In today's world, costs of on-boarding a new employee have skyrocketed. Each hiring decision can ultimately cost tens of thousands of dollars in salary, training and benefits. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the average cost of a bad hiring decision can equal 30% of the first year's potential earnings. It is also estimated that the average settlement of a negligent hiring lawsuit is nearly \$1 million and that employers have lost more than 79% of negligent hiring cases. [Read More...](#)

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