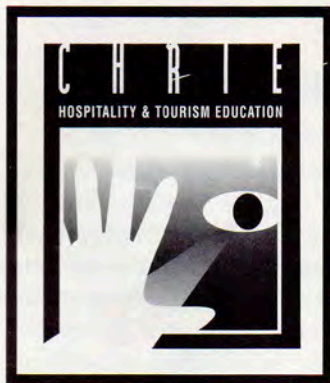


SKILLS UPDATE



Call to Action

Increasingly today's front-line worker is viewed as an asset rather than a cost. Like any asset, its value must be maximized to create the greatest return for workers, employers, shareholders and ultimately, the economy. To maximize this human asset, industry must initiate a dialogue and begin to communicate its needs with its strategic partners—educators and trainers supporting the industry.

The development of national, voluntary skills standards is the start of this dialogue. I hope this newsletter, The Skills Update, will serve to encourage your participation in the dialogue as well.

I would urge you to make a personal commitment to workforce excellence by following our efforts, keeping us on track, and helping us to remain constantly aware of the needs and concerns of our strategic partners—employers, educators, trainers, workers and government representatives of the hospitality and tourism industry.

Sally Conway

Sally Conway,
Project Director

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Feature

What Are Skills Standards?

One of the biggest problems facing employers and workers today is the lack of connection between the skills needed in the workplace and the skills imparted through education and training.

The hospitality and tourism industry recognizes that if businesses are to be competitive here and abroad, employees must be educated and trained to adapt to changing work environments where quality, variety, customization, convenience and timeliness of delivery are being increasingly emphasized. Front-line/front-of-the-house workers need to be more

responsible for identifying and solving problems, as well as, being more responsive to customer needs.

An expanse in the breadth of the knowledge, skill and ability levels of all workers, especially those on the front-line, is critical to achieve success in the emerging high-performance, high quality service work organization.

By identifying the levels needed to successfully perform a given job, standards of performance will arise which can be tailored to any industry to reflect its particular needs or cut across industry and occupational lines. Broadly defined skills standards provide the framework needed to ensure that workers have the portable skills necessary to make the transition from one career to another in today's rapidly-changing, global economy.

When skills standards are connected to educational curriculum, they will serve to create a seamless system of lifelong learning opportunities with certificates of mastery and competency that are recognized and accepted by employers.

In an effort to formulate national, voluntary skill standards across industry, the Department of Labor has awarded a year-long grant to The Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE), in conjunction with the Convocation of National Hospitality and Tourism Industry Associations, to lead the skills standards project for the hospitality and tourism industry. The industry, as defined by CHRIE, includes food services, lodging services, recreation services, and travel-related services.

While these segments have

historically been viewed as separate industries, the time has come for them to be recognized as components of a single, unified industry character-



"I'm a hunter, but I've been cross-trained as a gatherer."

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ized by providing guest service. Every business's success in the hospitality and tourism industry rests on the ability of its workers to anticipate and provide for the needs of guests.

Confusion about the nature and scope of the industry has given rise to a lack of perceived common identity especially in the eyes of government, the educational community, and the general public. Often, the significance of the industry's aggregate impact on the economy and the work force is understated.

As the world's largest industry, hospitality and tourism plays a crucial role in the workforce development system. In the US, the industry employs more than 10 million people, and provides one of the first real opportunities many people have to acquire valuable skills that can be utilized through a lifetime of work experience.

Incumbent Workers Aid in Developing Task Lists during Focus Groups

Front-line workers from lodging and foodservice operations convened in a two-day series of focus groups to develop comprehensive lists of tasks performed in their positions which will be instrumental in developing skills standards.

The focus groups, held Sept. 9 and 10 in Washington, were attended by workers who represented the range of positions involved in frequent guest contact and customer service. The sessions assumed a round-robin approach, as participants went in turn, detailing the full scope and range of the tasks performed in their various positions. This exhaustive approach yielded detailed task lists and also lent itself to lively discussions among the other attendees about the commonalities of tasks shared in their differing positions.

"No one knows better, or can communicate more clearly, about what it is that they do than the workers themselves," according to Dean Prigelmeier of Proactive Technologies, Inc., who facilitated the two focus groups. Prigelmeier, an expert in job/task analysis with over 15



Dean Prigelmeier (right) with Cornelius Phillip during focus group of foodservice workers.

years of experience in human resources and certification program development, skillfully orchestrated the high level of communication and participation which characterized the sessions.

Surveys compiled from these task lists will be distributed nationally and are designed to measure the levels of frequency and criticality behind the performance of the tasks. Once the survey results are tabulated, a trend will emerge indicating which tasks are crucial in providing high-quality guest service.

A second set of focus groups, will convene in November, to determine

the levels of knowledge, skills and abilities needed to successfully perform the tasks considered most crucial from the survey results, thereby yielding the skills standards. The participants in these focus groups will be incumbent workers from operations recognized by the National Skills Standards Board for the Hospitality and Tourism Industry as exemplary high-performance work organizations and renown for providing high-quality service.

Legislative Update

On April 22, 1992, President Clinton sent to Congress the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, S. 1150, which includes the National Skill Standards Act (Title V).

The bill serves to respond to the dual challenge of education and workplace reform. The goal being to develop the skills necessary to compete in today's global marketplace, continuously, from the earliest grades through an individual's working lifetime.

The National Skill Standards Act (Title V of the S.1150 Bill) reflects a commitment to the reform of our workforce development system. Currently, a disjunction exists between the skills workers need to be acquiring and the ones being imparted through the multitude of education and training programs. The National Skill Standards Act will address this problem by establishing a structure which allows for continuous exchange of information among workers, employers, educators and trainers concerning the skills that workers need and the skills that they possess. Skill standards will

History of the Skill Standards Legislation

be the vehicle of this information. These standards will be set and driven by industry with participation from employers and job incumbents. When in place, educators and trainers will be accountable to train in accordance to these standards, and participants in these programs, once certified, will be able to earn credentials that are portable and validated across industry by a wide range of employers. Trainees/incumbent workers will have more timely information on the skills re-

quired for positions or those needed to

enhance their security in their existing jobs. Employers will have a more reliable basis to evaluate workers' skill levels and training needs, and government agencies will be able to use the standards to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of their investments.

A National Skill Standards Board will be created to serve as a catalyst in stimulating the development of a national system of voluntary occupational skill standards. The membership is designed to be inclusive in nature. The main functions of the Board will be to conduct relevant research, serve as a clearinghouse for skill standards information, develop a common framework and nomenclature for skill standards, encourage the development and adoption of relevant curricula and training materials, provide technical assistance to the voluntary partnerships, and facilitate coordination among these partnerships to promote the development and acceptance of a national skill standards system.

The Board is to be comprised of 28 members, represented by:

- 8 members of business
- 8 members of labor
- 8 members of education
- The Secretaries of Labor, Education, and Commerce; and the Chairperson of the National Education Standards and Improvement Council.

Reich Endorses Hospitality and Tourism Industry, Cites Need for Setting Skill Standards

In a video address to the participants of the 1993 Annual CHRIE Conference, Robert Reich, the U.S. Secretary of Labor, recognized the importance of the hospitality and tourism industry as "a point of entry into the work force for millions of people." His praise of the skills endemic to the industry reflected his overriding message that the U.S. work force needs to achieve higher skill levels and continuously improve upon them.

"Your industry currently has access to one in 12 workers in the American work force," Reich

said, which translates into the employment of over 10 million workers, making hospitality and tourism the single largest employment sector in the United States. "The skills critical to the hospitality and tourism industry"—communication, problem solving and the delivery of customer-oriented service—"are repeatedly identified as the same ones needed in high-performance work environments."

Reich called for the formation of a "public/private partnership" in which government, labor, industry and



U.S. Labor Secretary: "The public sector can't do it alone, and the private sector can't do it alone. We need each other."

the educational community work together to enhance the systems of "education, job training development, and on-the-job skills development." The goal of this partnership would be the implementation of a national skill standards system similar in scope to those in place in such countries as the U.K. and Australia.

Reich summoned these groups for help in "upgrading our education system; upgrading our skills system; creating a transition from school to work; and providing, at the end of that, a credential which advertises to all

employers that this young person *does have that* credential."

Reich illustrated the increasing difficulty of financing a post-secondary education. "This cannot be the only gateway to success," the secretary said, adding that 75 percent of jobs do not require a baccalaureate degree. "We cannot insist that every young person goes to college. A gateway through skill standards is a critical gateway to success."

"I want to congratulate CHRIE on the success of the work you have done," Reich said, "and I look forward to working with you."

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