

greater

MANKATO *this month*
growth

Talent Essential to a Vibrant Greater Mankato

What an exciting time to be a part of the Greater Mankato community! A recent study by the U of M identified us as a Level 1 regional center with higher retail and service sales growth since 1990 than any other regional center in the state. Many of our businesses are growing and adding employees, with November seeing the highest job numbers since March 2008 and unemployment at 4.0 percent, the lowest rate since November 2008.

But with this good news, comes an important opportunity. Our future vitality is dependent on our employers' ability to find, develop and keep employees with the necessary skills they need.

With the recession dissipating and employers ramping up production of goods and services, the themes we were seeing 4-5 years ago are re-emerging, and faster. So, as the economy continues to strengthen and employers continue to create jobs, matching employer needs with employee skill sets will be critical.

Fortunately, we are well positioned for success in this area.

For years, our higher education institutions, K-12 school system, workforce center and Greater Mankato Growth have recognized the importance of aligning academic programs with real world needs. Some significant progress has been made, with many programs developed at higher ed. institutions and high schools to offer training in specific high demand areas.

To truly be successful in getting employers the employees they need



Jonathan Zierdt
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 President & CEO

and our graduates the opportunities they want, this effort needs to be expanded further. A comprehensive study of the needs of employers now and long term, aligned with the education and training delivered by our high schools and colleges, will provide a roadmap for our region's future success.

Our schools, the workforce center, business community and GMG are committed to putting the resources in to advance this work.

This is something we have talked about doing for a number of years, and it appears that all forces have aligned to make now the time to get it done. It's about simple supply and demand. We need to determine the demand our businesses will have for employees and their necessary qualifications, and opportunities for our schools and colleges to supply graduates with those skills.

Through this effort, I am confident that we will be able to utilize the talent we are producing right here to meet the majority of the needs of our employers, while positioning our market as a destination for those with talent.

For more information about talent development in Greater Mankato, see the February issue of *Minnesota Valley Business*.