



Tara Foods/Kroger Work Ready Testimonial

Before implementing the Georgia Work Ready program, hiring new employees was a “shot in the dark,” according to Donald Bates, human resources manager at Tara Foods/Kroger in Albany, Ga. “Without this program, we would be at the mercy of job candidates who say, ‘Yeah, I can learn that,’ but really don’t have the skills needed to progress through our system,” Bates said.

There are two critical components of the Work Ready program. The first one is job profiling. It requires a certified job profiler from the local technical college to partner with company employees who are considered subject matter experts in each job. Together, they work to define the tasks and skills needed to perform each job successfully. Once the job profiles are completed, the company has a tool to accurately describe the specific job skills needed to educators, students and job applicants.

The second component is the Work Ready Certificate. This assessment, based on WorkKeys® by ACT, analyzes three key skill areas: applied mathematics, reading for information and locating information. The results are then compared to tasks and skills required in each job profile. Bates said the assessment results have helped him better match candidates to his company’s job requirements. “We use the Work Ready assessment to determine whether workers can learn what we need them to learn for the job they are applying for,” said Bates. “The process has been working out very well.”

In fact, Bates has some strong statistics to back up his company’s success with Work Ready. He said before participating in the initiative, his company’s new hire success rate was just 15 percent. Since Work Ready was implemented, that number has shot up to 50 percent. And Bates is confident his success rate could go even higher -- to 75 percent.

One goal of Work Ready is to get more workers to take the assessment on their own, so they can approach employers with a Work Ready Certificate in hand that indicates their skill and knowledge levels. Bates said once that happens, he won’t have to send applicants to take the assessment, thereby shaving up to two weeks off the hiring process.

Bates said there is a strong incentive for workers to take the Work Ready assessment before they apply for jobs: they’re guaranteed to get an application and interview at his company. “Their chance of getting hired is greatly enhanced if they come in with a Work Ready Certificate,” Bates said. “I’d be pretty sure they have the skills needed to progress through our system.”

Bates also looks to the Work Ready initiative to save his company money by reducing turnover and training costs. Currently, Tara Foods/Kroger invests 12 weeks of training in every new employee. That’s more than \$4,800 lost in salary alone if a new hire leaves the company after training.

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