

WorkKeys could unlock hiring, retention for Hobbs Jobs

Did you know your business or employer is able to post job openings to the Hobbs Chamber's website and social-media accounts through an online portal provided to all members? Business memberships start at about 50 cents per day, and posting your "Hobbs Jobs" takes very little time and effort. And since you've already paid for it, why not use this great tool?

Growing the audience of our members' Hobbs Jobs postings is a priority, and the efforts are paying off. On the Web, for example, we know that more than 1,100 unique users visited the Hobbs Chamber's website in September alone. We prominently display the Hobbs Jobs logo throughout our site. Take a look for yourself. And as of early October, nearly 7,000 Facebook users are fans of the Hobbs Chamber's page. We can find very few community chambers – including those of metro cities – that have the kind of Facebook following we do.

In addition to our Web exposure, we are also advertising Hobbs Jobs each week in the Sunday Albuquerque Journal and Hobbs News-Sun classifieds.

Our Hobbs Jobs campaign is an example of cooperative marketing, meaning that we focus a portion of our resources to an initiative that bene-

fits our collective membership and the greater Hobbs-area business community. Even non-members reap benefits of our work, but, if your business isn't a member, let me say, "Support the organization that supports you."

It occurs to me that as more job-seekers see your Hobbs Jobs, and as you receive more job applications, especially from job-seekers outside of the area, you might like a better means of screening applicants' skills. I want to help you minimize the risk and expense of recruiting and hiring faraway job candidates by telling you about a tool that's within your reach, and I encourage members and non-members alike to add it to their hiring toolboxes.

WorkKeys is a "job skills-assessment system that helps employers select, hire, train, develop, and retain a high-performance workforce," according to its website, developed by ACT – the same folks who developed the college-entrance exam by the same name.



Grant Taylor

Commentary

And get this: you've already paid for this, too. New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions Secretary Celina Bussey said so at a recent conference I attended.

Sounds pretty good, right? Well, Workforce Solutions thought so, too, and long ago it invested in an unlimited-license agreement with ACT so that any employer in the state could use this tool without paying any fees.

Basically, the system works like this: an employer registers to use WorkKeys with the local Workforce Connection office. The Hobbs office is located at 204 W. Park and is managed by Reba Zollars. The employer matches company-specific job descriptions with occupational profiles from ACT's massive database of 18,000 job titles. Each occupational profile lists skills and levels of proficiency needed for applicants to be successful.

On the flip side, job-seekers take WorkKeys assessments, the questions of which are based on everyday work situations. WorkKeys can screen for Foundational Skills (communication, problem solving, and interpersonal skills, e.g.) and Performance Skills (i.e., negative work attitudes and risky work behavior).

College admissions offices use the ACT to gauge what high school students have learned in

high school to measure their readiness for their respective colleges. Your HR department can use WorkKeys to gauge what applicants have learned to measure their readiness for your workplace. Since it's standardized and administered across the country, you can have applicants from Hobbs, Albuquerque or Anchorage and be able to make a more accurate comparison of their skills.

Job-seekers who successfully complete the three assessments (Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information) receive a National Career Readiness Certificate, demonstrating a proven level of workplace employability skills. ACT's website says 2.3 million certificates have been issued nationwide. And where the assessments expose skill deficiencies, ACT closes the gaps by educating job-seekers with its online and interactive KeyTrain.

Resolve to contact Reba and her staff at the Hobbs Workforce Connection office right away to begin the process of incorporating WorkKeys into your recruiting and retention plan. She can be reached at (575) 393-5188.

Grant Taylor is the executive of the Hobbs Chamber of Commerce

Hong Kong protesters stage massive rally

HONG KONG (AP) — Pro-democracy protesters were defiant in the face of attacks by opponents and warnings by the Hong Kong government to clear the streets, staging a massive rally Saturday evening in the downtown business district they've occupied for a week.

"Democracy now! Democracy in Hong Kong!" thousands chanted as speakers from the movement seeking wider political reforms for this former British colony urged them to persist in their campaign. The rally lasted hours, with participants at times clapping and cheering as a stream of speakers and singers addressed them and performed popular songs.

"We are not seeking revolution. We just want democracy!" said Joshua Wong, a 17-year-old student leader. "We hope there will be no violence," he said. "It would be unfortunate if this movement ended with bloodshed and violence."

After the rally ended, people grew nervous due to rumors that police would act to clear out the protesters in the middle of the night. But big crowds still filled the protest area after midnight.

Standoffs between the protest-

ers and their antagonists grew ugly during the day, as the two sides traded insults and at times taunted police. The city's leader said streets occupied by the protest must be opened back up by Monday.

Although the mostly student-led protesters have stuck to their pledges of non-violence, holding up their arms to show peaceful resistance, some shouted abuse at people who gathered to challenge their occupation of a major street in the gritty, blue-collar Mong Kok district, which is home to many migrants from the Chinese mainland.

"Go back to the mainland," some shouted, cursing them in the local dialect of Cantonese.

Minor skirmishes broke out constantly, broken up by police or bystanders. Adding to the disorder, some residents dumped water from their apartments onto the people below.

The students accused police of failing to protect them from attacks Friday by mobs intent on driving them away, shouting "Black Police!" — a reference to their claim that the police had allied with "black societies," or criminal gangs, to clear out the protesters. The claim was vehemently denied by the



A woman is protected from the crowd by pro-democracy student protesters after a scuffle with local residents in Mong Kok, Hong Kong, Saturday. Friction between pro-democracy protesters and opponents of their weeklong occupation of major Hong Kong streets persisted Saturday as police denied they had any connection to criminal gangs suspected of inciting attacks on largely peaceful demonstrators.

government. The city's top leader, Chief Secretary Leung Chun-ying, appeared on television Saturday evening to once again urge everyone to go home, saying things needed to get back to normal by Monday.

"There are many problems to be resolved in society, but the right way is through rational communication to seek common ground while holding back differences," he said. "Not fighting on the streets, which makes things worse."

Social Security

Question:

How can I protect myself against identity theft?

Answer:

First, don't carry your Social Security card with you. Keep it secure at home with your other important papers. Second, don't readily give out your Social Security number. While many banks, schools, doctors, landlords, and others will request your number, it is your decision whether to provide it. Ask if there is some other way to identify you in their records.

If you are the victim of identity theft, you should report it right away. To report identity theft, fraud, or misuse of your Social Security number, the Federal Trade Commission (the nation's consumer protection agency) recommends you:

Place a fraud alert on your credit file by contacting one of the following companies (the company you contact is required to contact the other two, which will then place alerts on your reports):

- Equifax, 1-800-525-6285;
- Trans Union, 1-800-680-7289; or
- Experian, 1-888-397-3742.



Mary Frayre

Social Security

Question:

Can I conduct my Social Security business online in the event of a hurricane or other disaster that keeps me from visiting an office?

Answer:

Yes, you can conduct most of your busi-

ness with Social Security online at www.socialsecurity.gov, where you'll find a wealth of information and services. For example, you can create or access your own my Social Security account, apply online for Social Security benefits or Medicare, and check the status of your pending application. If you're already receiving Social Security benefits, you can change your address, phone number, or your direct deposit information, get a replacement Medicare card, or get an instant proof of income letter. You also can get your Social Security Statement online. Your Statement lets you check and verify your earnings record and see estimates of your future benefits. You also can find out if your local office is open at www.socialsecurity.gov/emergency. That site lists any office closings and delays.

Also, make sure you receive your benefits electronically. While the mail can be disrupted during severe weather or other emergencies, electronic payments arrive in your account on time, all the time, no matter what. Go to www.socialsecurity.gov/deposit to sign up or get more information.

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Mary Frayre is the claim representative with the Social Security office in Hobbs.

HAYES

from PAGE 23

Some recent developments in medical sources of x-radiation include the generation of X-rays by accelerating electrons around a circle at high speeds. This kind of radiation is also known as synchrotron radiation and has only niche applications.

Industrial radiography creates X-ray images (of welds and material cracks) using gamma ray sources rather than an X-ray source.

X-rays are photons, just as visible light is made of photons with X-rays simply having more energy per photon. A photon is an electromagnetic wave. A more detailed description of electromagnetic waves will have to be given in a later column.

Robert Hayes of Hobbs is a licensed professional engineer in nuclear engineering in New Mexico, a certified health physicist by the American Board of Health Physics and has a ph.D. in nuclear engineering and a masters degree in physics.



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Experts: Loose e-cigarette state laws may be hard for feds to tighten up

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — In a rush to keep electronic cigarettes out of children's hands while the federal government creeps forward with a proposed national ban for minors, experts say that many states are passing laws that could mean fewer restrictions on the devices. Lawmakers last month made Missouri the 41st state to outlaw selling e-cigarettes to minors. Age restrictions have wide support, but Gov. Jay Nixon and public health advocates opposed a piece of the legislation that prevents tobacco taxes or regulations from being imposed on the electronic devices, which heat liquid nicotine into an inhalable vapor.

E-cigarette makers have been in a tug-of-war with state and federal govern-

ments since the battery-powered devices first were sold in the U.S. in 2007. A 2009 law gave the U.S. Food and Drug Administration the power to regulate a number of aspects of tobacco marketing and manufacturing. It first said it planned to assert authority over e-cigarettes in 2011, but it hasn't yet done so. In April, the FDA for the first time proposed a set of regulations for e-cigarettes, including banning sales to minors and requiring health warning labels, as well as approving new products. The agency has said its proposal sets a foundation for regulating the products but the rules wouldn't immediately ban the wide array of flavors of e-cigarettes or curb marketing on places like TV.