

Ep.36 - Ryan Hundt

Sun, 11/7 8:18PM 23:13

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

michigan, individuals, employers, state, workforce, people, continue, job seekers, workforce development, jobs, association, employment opportunities, talent, network, informed decisions, talking, ed, opportunities, board, demand

SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Ryan Hundt



Announcer 00:01

Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.



Ed Clemente 00:29

Hello, my name is Ed Clemente. I'm your host today. And we're fortunate to have Ryan Hundt, Chief Executive Officer, MichiganWorks! Association. Welcome to the show, Ryan.



Ryan Hundt 00:38

Hey Ed, thank you very much for having me. It's a pleasure to be on. I've listened to, you know, probably all of the podcasts so far, all the episodes on The Michigan Opportunity Podcast. So it's great to finally be a guest. And speaking with you too, Ed.



Ed Clemente 00:41

I should get a punch card to make sure who's listened to all the shows, one other person claimed to have done that. So I thank you for that. I appreciate the subscribing that you do. [5-star review, all the way] It's been fun. I'll tell you that. And it's helpful when you have really good guests. And it's interesting, it's because it's conversational. I think everybody learns from this process. And let's talk a little bit because you do have one of the unique organizations that you represent. I don't think a lot of people know exactly what MichiganWorks! Association is. So if you run into somebody at a party, what would you tell them you do?

R

Ryan Hundt 01:30

Sure. So the MichiganWorks! Association represents the 16, MichiganWorks! offices and agencies across the state of Michigan in all corners of the state. And as an association representing those members, we provide value in terms of voice, knowledge and connection, primarily around advocacy efforts for workforce development policies and priorities. We also hold a number of trainings throughout the year for frontline staff and other workers at the regional offices across the MichiganWorks! network. And then we also hold various events and conferences throughout the year, again, to elevate the and amplify the message across workforce development in reiterating the importance of the work that we do on a daily basis in this industry across the entire network.

E

Ed Clemente 02:14

Yeah, let's just I'm going to digress a little bit first, but what do you call the frontline office? Because you and I might know what that is, but like, who would the average person who probably has to go through any kind of training or unemployment or whatever? What does that mean to them as an individual?

R

Ryan Hundt 02:32

Sure. So as an individual or business across the entire MichiganWorks! network on an annual basis, we serve on average 670,000 job seekers, and a little over 32,000 businesses every single year. So those frontline individuals, the folks that really make the MichiganWorks! network, as good as it is as strong as it is, those are the folks that if you walk in to a door at the MichiganWorks! office in your local community or give them a call, they're the ones that are interfacing, trying to connect jobseekers with resources and employment opportunities, and then also working with employers to connect them to a qualified labor pool by accessing and utilizing various resources at the federal the state, or the local level.

E

Ed Clemente 03:13

Yeah, and let's talk a little bit about your background, because you've just, you know, had a long stint with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and I'm sure they're one of your partners. But the you did similar things right at the MEDC. Right, why don't why don't you talk about how that foundation was laid by experience in what you did?

R

Ryan Hundt 03:33

Sure. Sure. Great question. Yeah, I started for at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation before joining the MichiganWorks! Association. I started at the SBDC back in 2013, on our Talent Enhancement Team, and at the time, that team was tasked with standing up a number of innovative kind of pilot programs focused on different areas of talent, whether it was talent attraction, retention, or training. And one of the first programs I worked on as a project coordinator at the MEDC was the Michigan Advanced Technician Training Program or MAT2. And that was an apprenticeship program that we partnered with about a dozen companies in Southeast Michigan and a handful of community colleges in that region to help individuals who were interested in pursuing a mechatronics apprenticeship, connect them with the educational opportunities and the employment opportunities. So that was really my first exposure to workforce development back in 2013, 2014, working at the MEDC and along the way, I've been able to

maintain contacts and relationships with a number of folks in the workforce development profession here in the state of Michigan. And then over time, in 2016, I moved over to the business development team as a Business Development Manager for the greater Ann Arbor region. And then my most recent job at the MEDC. Before I left to join the Michigan Works Association, was as a Regional Director on our Growth and Development team. I helped manage about eight staff members, eight business development managers who were primarily focused day in and day out on Business Retention and Expansion of companies right here in the state.

E

Ed Clemente 05:07

Yeah. And it's funny, not that you're a cyclical person, but you started working at the MEDC, when we were just coming out of really a bad recession even then. So I'm sure your job was pretty challenging at that time, because we were looking for anyone to be working anywhere at that point. And now you're coming into a tough time too. So you must like challenges, right?

R

Ryan Hundt 05:26

Challenge is a good thing. You know, they say, pressure makes diamonds. But it is an interesting time for economic and workforce development. I think that the difference between what we saw in 2007, 2008, 2009, here in Michigan, where this state was hit harder than almost any other state across the entire country, you know, we saw people kind of hanging on to their jobs, not really focusing on looking for additional work, because they were just so worried about keeping the job that they were in, I think the difference in the new dynamic that we're in now is there are so many job openings, everybody seems to be hiring. And so you see the pendulum has swung, I think back in the favor of if you're a job seeker right now you have plentiful opportunities to go out and pursue a career and you even see people right now that are taking their time not necessarily reentering the workforce maybe as quickly as if there was an economic downturn that we've seen in previous decades. And they're starting to analyze and really assess what do they want to do not just as the next career opportunity, their next job, but where do they want to be in five years, in 10 years and 15 years down the road. And so the MichiganWorks! network as a whole, we're here to assist job seekers and making informed employment decisions. And we're also working very closely with our employers to inform the supply side of the talent equation in trying to be as responsive as possible to the demands that employers have in terms of job openings, and how can we take those individuals who may be looking for new career opportunities, especially in our driving industries across the state of Michigan, get them into employment, so that they can be trained, and they can be, you know, very productive in the jobs not just of today, but certainly the jobs of the future. Like I said, some of those driving industries here in the state.

E

Ed Clemente 07:04

It's really kind of two different sort of groups of people in a way, you've got the people just entering the workforce who, you know, and part of that is a product of what people been telling them, like, get skills, maybe you don't need a college degree, maybe you do you know, but then you've also got technology moving so fast, that you've had huge disruption and mid-career people. So I think you've got both sets of populations both deciding, hey, they told me to take my time, not just take any job, or I want to work where I want to work. So that's it's sort of a weird place that might have never even happened in America before.

R

Ryan Hundt 07:45

Yeah, very true. Like, like you said, or like we've said, this this podcast for the last few minutes. It's a very interesting time to be either a job seeker or an employer. I think the good news is that we have people dedicated in economic development in workforce development, in assisting both sides of that talent equation and making sure that we're focused not just on the career opportunities, but the educational opportunities, the training that is available for individuals and employers to take advantage of, we did just have the new budget that went into effect for the new fiscal year, thanks to Governor Whitmer and the legislature that worked together to sign that budget effective October 1st. And we again, have really great programming across the entire state of Michigan. If you look at Going Pro Talent Fund, for example, that's \$40 million. That's available to employers right now in competitive training grants. And they have until October 28 (2021) to apply for that program. But that just, as again, a testament to the work and to the dedication that we have as workforce development professionals here in Michigan in assisting both sides of the talent equation, the supply side being the job seekers and the qualified labor pool, and the demand side being the employers as well.

E

Ed Clemente 08:55

Yeah, and I think that brokering has never, like if you think about it back in 2007, things like Facebook, and TikTok and everything else didn't exist. So you didn't have the social media dimension like you do now. And so people can look at a lot of different sources, which also could lead to confusion, too, because there's too many sources sometimes as to where you should be going in a career who's giving you real advice. So I imagine that's even more pressure and these workforce boards too.

R

Ryan Hundt 09:31

Sure, absolutely, yeah, it certainly can be, like you said, there's so many different mediums of communication right now, so many various channels or sources that people can rely upon to try and make informed decisions. And so one thing that we've been focusing on is really doing some of the simple things right, and that's talking to one another, sharing similar or the same data sources in many cases, with job seekers and employers. The State of Michigan, the Labor Market Information Office puts out the hottest 50 jobs on a monthly basis and so we rely very heavily on some of the information in those resources that come out from the state level on down, that can be broken out by region that the Workforce Development Boards can rely upon, in order to develop new programming, be responsive to the demands of their local and regional employers, and also help those job seekers that may be transitioning new jobs, you may be looking for employment opportunities coming off of employment, make informed decisions based on those data sources.

E

Ed Clemente 10:24

Yeah, I mean, like, nowadays, like, if I was just coming out of college, I would just do a regular Google search and just say, I got a degree in psychology, what are the top five jobs I'm probably most qualified for, and it might not be so dictated by advertising, that you might get some pretty skewed results. And I think you guys have to weed through those things, to make sure what you're talking about is legitimate and you know, sort of authentic, real opportunities, not just where someone's leading you that may be necessarily.

 R

Ryan Hundt 10:56

Agreed. And that's why we pride ourselves, we've said for a number of years dating back to 2012. We are a demand-driven model. And so while we serve the job seekers and folks that are looking for employment opportunities, at the end of the day, the best way that we can help individuals make informed decisions is by having a demand-driven model and being responsive to the needs of the employers, if they have employment needs, if they have training needs, and we're talking to them, and relying upon continuing to invest and be responsive to that demand-driven model, like you said Ed, we can help them make informed decisions. And that's that's really where the authenticity piece comes into play. And again, getting back to doing some some things very simply just talking to one another, understanding what the needs are across the board for employers, and any given region throughout the state and trying to figure out, Hey, what are the demands? What are the jobs that are going to meet demand, not just today, but what are the jobs going to look like in the next five years or 10 years? And how do we help employers and individuals get from point A maybe entry level employment, up to being trained into certain occupations where they can continue to gain credentials and skill sets along the way. And that way, they will remain employed, they will remain key components of those organizations for years to come, especially as technology and automation continue to shift at such a rapid pace.

 E

Ed Clemente 12:12

Well, I'm gonna change directions a little bit here, but I know you, you might be tempted to want to mention all 16 of your boards that you serve for you. But like who is sort of on your, at least your executive committee right now? Or just the organization's maybe not individual names, you can always give your chair out, by the way, you should always mention your chair.

 R

Ryan Hundt 12:33

We do, we do have a new board chair, effective October 1 of this year. John Kaczynski is the new association board chair and he's the Director of Government Affairs at Saginaw Valley State University. So we're very fortunate and excited to work with him. And I'd also like to give a shout out to the former Board Chair Charlie Mahoney, Charlie was instrumental in not only my my process of the candidate selection, hiring through the CEO search here at the association, but she has just put in tons of sweat equity into the workforce development system over a number of years here in the state of Michigan. So having those individuals and really all the individuals that are part of the association's membership has been a tremendous opportunity for me to grow and learn from folks who have been doing this for a number of years. But as you mentioned Ed, we do have a very robust and comprehensive workforce development system here in Michigan service primarily by those 16 MichiganWorks! agencies. Those 16 MichiganWorks! agencies again, they're in every single corner of the state from Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation down in Detroit. On the west side of the state we have MichiganWorks! West Central, UP MichiganWorks! in the UP, everywhere in between. There's a MichiganWorks! office, those 16, MichiganWorks! agencies, they have 66 service centers and 33 one-stop centers as well, where employers or job seekers can walk in the door, they can call their local MichiganWorks! office, and they can utilize the services that are available in order to identify employment opportunities or training opportunities. So we're very present in all the communities we're not too far away from anybody's doorstep and really right now, especially in the virtual environment that we are still continuing to operate in, to a large degree, we're really only a phone call or a click away.

 E

Ed Clemente 14:15

E Ed Clemente 14:13

Well, let me put a plug in for Charlie Mahoney though, I served with her for I was on the SEMCA Board, which is in Southeast Michigan. And for 10 years, I served on that board, but Charlie was involved with us then, and I know her and Greg Pitoniak. I've done a lot down in that area. And we worked a lot with the Downriver Community Conference, which is one of those spots. I've actually even as a State Rep, I worked a lot for veterans down in some of those places trying to place veterans in work. So I know everything that's done at these Workforce Board, Workforce Boards is much more granular than people have any idea of when you start really seeing where the boots are hitting the ground over there. And that's really a credit for all those organizers. By the way, on that question. I know you do a lot with veterans. Is there any other sort of cutout groups you work with beyond veterans? I know there's, go ahead if there's anything else.

R Ryan Hundt 15:11

Yea, really any, any and all individuals and right now actually, this October, we're observing National Disability Employment Month. And so, disabled individuals that makes up a very significant percentage of the working age population, probably more so than than people recognize or understand. And so one of the partners that we work with is the Michigan Rehabilitation Services or MRS. And we actually have throughout various MichiganWorks! offices statewide colocation opportunities with MRS staff, so they can help individuals and employers who are looking for a qualified yet untapped talent pool, they can help those individuals navigate some of the different barriers that they may have to overcome, either at the individual level or at the employer level, who just maybe not they don't know how to go about hiring or tapping into that talent pool. So in observance of National Disability Employment Month throughout the entire nation, that is one group that we're continuing to focus on, going forward. But this is a really good month to help celebrate that population and really focus on the services and resources available through the MichiganWorks! network to help really any and all populations that are looking for employment opportunities.

A Announcer 16:21

You're listening to The Michigan Opportunity, featuring candid conversations with Michigan business leaders on what makes Michigan a leading state to live, work and play. Listen to more episodes at michiganbusiness.org/podcast.

E Ed Clemente 16:38

Is there any sort of like disruptors, or trends you see, you've mentioned a few already, but that you see maybe either on the short or mid term horizon coming up, that would be helpful.

R Ryan Hundt 16:51

Sure. Well, as a state, I don't think Michigan is that different in this regard, but as a state here, you know, we're facing kind of three big issues right now as it relates to talent and workforce. One of which being we just, we're not attracting enough bodies to the state of Michigan to fill the open and in demand positions. We also have an ageing workforce, you can walk into any manufacturing facility across the state of Michigan, and really, especially in the smaller, you know, mom and pop shops, they have individuals who are 65 70 [years] and older who are working right now. And they don't have that backfill of younger generations of workers coming into those facilities to work. And we also have the ongoing skills mismatch

in a number of our industries. So right now, you know, as it relates to workforce development, I think we're at a very critical juncture, especially with some of the federal funding that's continuing to be available that I know, the Governor's Office in the Legislature will continue to negotiate on here in the coming months. But right now is a critical juncture. Because the investments that we make over the next three to six months or the next year, that's going to help set us on the path toward economic recovery and resiliency. And the one thing that employers always ask about whether it's an employer here in the state of Michigan, or it's a company that's outside the state of Michigan, looking to invest in this state, they ask, 'Where are we going to find the talent?' And 'How are we going to train them?' And so if we don't have the tools and the resources and the programs to invest in our workers, to invest in the workforce, to invest in training programs, we're going to continue to do a disservice to those individuals and to the employees here in the state of Michigan and really, that's going to cut into our competitiveness as a state as it relates to economic development. So, in order to win the future, I think we need to make those strategic investments in the workforce, especially in the existing workforce infrastructure across the MichiganWorks! network here in the state, to really secure the future.

E

Ed Clemente 18:44

And I mean, just can you give like a quick 30 seconds, we also interviewed Michigan or, rather, Connected Nation Michigan, and I'm imagining the digital divides been a challenge, as you've seen accelerated during this pandemic, where people couldn't get to offices and things like that. But imagine that's going to be growing more like remote or I don't know how you're going to do it.

R

Ryan Hundt 19:08

Yeah, and I think with any solution you come up with I mentioned the the talent attraction piece, for example, we're not attracting enough bodies back to Michigan, if we had a huge influx of talent come into the state, well, then we also have housing challenges. We also have broadband challenges. So again, taking the opportunity that's in front of us right now to make some of those targeted investments in things like workforce, but also housing, also, broadband will continue to help accelerate the state's ability to compete for business attraction and retention opportunities in the future. So the digital divide is very real. And that is, again, another item or another very important pillar for long term economic resiliency I think that we need to focus on over the next six to 12 months.

E

Ed Clemente 19:50

And the last couple of questions. One is and you've sort of addressed this, but you're probably it's probably a two fold answer for you. But one is, I'm sure you have your clinical answer of what you would tell somebody if you're talking to either a graduating class or mid career person to go into. And then just personally, what you would probably, if you could go back and talk to your high school self, maybe.

R

Ryan Hundt 20:17

Yeah, the one I really the one thing I would say is, is just be open to opportunities. And don't be afraid to say yes, because you never know what type of adventure you're going to go on. So don't be afraid to venture out onto uncharted paths. Or, you know, my favorite part of my job description in any job that I've

ever worked in is 'the other duties as assigned,' because you never know where that's going to take you, who you can interact with, what types of shadowing opportunities or networking you can engage in, just by being open and being receptive to saying yes, and and really taking that uncharted path.

E Ed Clemente 20:51

And I would imagine you would echo the skills and competencies, which are the biggest challenges, I think, for everybody nowadays, but I know that that was very critical always when I was on the board for the SEMCA, how we need a balance of both nowadays.

R Ryan Hundt 21:08

Agreed, agreed. Skills and competencies are very important. Soft skills are particularly important for individuals, you know, you can train anybody up, but can you train them to show up on time? Can you train them to interact with other individuals, especially folks that they may not always get along with in their personal lives, but those are very critical skills and competencies right now. We need we need those now more than ever, especially as we get more workers back into employment opportunities here in Michigan.

E Ed Clemente 21:35

So your last question is a simple one. But I know you live in Lansing and I think you graduated from the Lansing area somewhere, high school or...

R Ryan Hundt 21:42

I graduated from Hazlett High School. My wife and I live in Mason, so not too far away from downtown Lansing.

E Ed Clemente 21:48

So what's your favorite part of Michigan? Or what do you like doing best?

R Ryan Hundt 21:51

Man, um, my favorite part of Michigan is is Traverse City in the summer. There's nowhere on the planet not just in Michigan or in the US, in my opinion, there's nowhere on the planet better than Traverse City in the summer. Enjoying the beaches, enjoying the warm weather, going swimming, going kayaking, getting ice cream at Moomers right there in Traverse City in the bay. So to me, that's, that's my favorite place. That's my go to place in the summer months here in Michigan. And my wife is from the area as well as has the added benefit of kind of going and returning back to her her area where she grew up for, for nostalgic purposes. But it truly is, in my opinion, the best place on the planet.

E Ed Clemente 22:31

Yeah, no, I'm a lot of people agree with you. You can see sometimes by the traffic. The so anyway, I want to thank again. Ryan Hundt, the Chief Executive Officer, MichiganWorks! Association. And thanks again, Ryan, I know you got a busy schedule. We appreciate you taking time to talk to us today.

R

Ryan Hundt 22:49

Thank you Ed, it was a pleasure to be here and we're looking forward to talking with you and the team soon.

A

Announcer 22:55

The Michigan Opportunity is brought to you by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Join us and make your mark where it matters. Visit michiganbusiness.org/radio to put your plans in motion