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Leveraging Michigan's talent focus of Nov. 9 job-creation conference

By Shawn Wright



In the last decade, Michigan has reportedly lost nearly 1 million jobs.

Yet many agree the state has some of the most skilled workers in the country.

The big challenge, some workforce specialists say, is figuring out how to leverage Michigan's talent for transformation through job creation and work development.

"In our experience, it's looking at how companies create partnerships," said James Vander Hulst, president and CEO of Grand Rapids-based **West Michigan TEAM**.

"Traditionally, small- to mid-size companies have looked and focused internal to their organizations.

"But, I think more and more in society we need to look outside of the four walls of the factory, or four walls of the company, and create strategic partnerships."

Since 2007, West Michigan TEAM has brought nonprofits, local businesses and area government together in a public/private partnership to provide information, education and training.

Vander Hulst will be part of the Job Creation and Workforce Development Conference on Nov. 9, sponsored by *Crain's Detroit Business* and the **Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society at Wayne State University**.

The keynote speaker of the conference will be Daniel Pink, author of *Free Agent Nation*, *A Whole New Mind*, and *Drive*, with the last two books earning a spot on the *New York Times* bestsellers list.

In his books and articles, Pink examines the changing world of work.

Pink also is a contributing editor to *Wired* magazine. And he provides analysis of business trends, giving lectures all over the world on economic transformation and the new workplace.

Michigan needs to look at transferability to the new industries that the state might be able to recruit, Vander Hulst said.

"The challenge that we have is to not really look at specific jobs or job descriptions of those that have fallen out of the system

or dislocated from work," Vander Hulst said, "But look at the aptitudes and growing correlations between skills that are readily available to positions that are open more in advanced technologies."

"I think we have a good solid base," he said. "It's just how we leverage that base."

Other topics of the Nov. 9 conference will include:

- Labor-management relations.
- Selling Michigan as a place to do business.
- "Just in time" calibration between workforce development and available jobs.
- And non-traditional job creation.

In addition to Vander Hulst and Pink, other conference speakers are Sandy Baruah, president, **Detroit Regional Chamber**; Robert Ficano, **Wayne County** executive; Sam Singh, senior strategy consultant, **New Economy Initiative**; and Tom Bowles, assistant training director, **IBEW-NECA Electrical Industry Training Center**.

The Job Creation and Workforce Development Conference will take place from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Wayne State University's McGregor Memorial Conference Center.

For registration information, visit www.crainsdetroit.com.