

**DRAFT**

**“Top Ten”**

**Job Quality Resource Lists**

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**For Workforce Practitioners & Employers**

*Resources compiled by Steven Dawson, Senior Advisor to the National Fund*

The National Fund’s mission is to drive practices, policies, and investments that enable workers to succeed in good jobs, provide employers with a skilled workforce, and build more prosperous communities. Understanding the important aspects of job quality will help our network participate in important conversations with business and help practitioners do what they do better.

The workforce field offers a myriad of written resources that describe strategies meant to improve job quality for low-income workers. And that can be a problem: Where to start? Which resources are the most useful? Which documents are intended for workforce practitioners, and which are more accessible for employers?

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions has curated two sets of “Top Ten” resources—the first intended for practitioners, the second explicitly for employers. Both are meant as *introductions* to important aspects of job-quality. In nearly every case, we have provided *brief* articles as an initial entryway—particularly those for employers—and for practitioners we have then added a few longer resources.

Of course, these Top Ten lists are subjective—they are the National Fund’s first cut at what we have found to be the most useful resources. We therefore welcome your suggestions for other documents that you have found to be of even more value in introducing job-quality concepts to either practitioners or employers.

**WORKFORCE PRACTITIONERS**

**1] The Good Job Strategy – Zeynep Ton**

Ton researched how certain large retail companies create a competitive business advantage—not only by investing in their frontline workers, but also by focusing on “operational excellence” to leverage that investment.

Introductory article: [“The Good Jobs Solution”](https://www.dropbox.com/s/nzclsvyfjoq09h6/%231%20Good-Jobs-Solution%20-%20Zeynep%20Ton.pdf?dl=0)

Full book at Amazon: {[www.amazon.com/Good-Jobs-Strategy-Companies-Employees-ebook/dp/B00DZQE31I/ref=sr\_1\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1525112739&sr=1-1&keywords=good+jobs+strategy](http://www.amazon.com/Good-Jobs-Strategy-Companies-Employees-ebook/dp/B00DZQE31I/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1525112739&sr=1-1&keywords=good+jobs+strategy)}

Read these writings by Zeynep Ton for an excellent framing of why job-quality strategies can provide a “win-win” for both employers and workers—in terms that would also appeal to an employer. Note Ton’s emphasis on “operational excellence,” not just job design.

**2] The Idea Driven Organization – Alan Robinson and Dean Schroeder**

The premise of Robinson and Schroeder is that “80 percent of innovation should derive from frontline workers, not managers.” They frame this approach as a strategy to maximize business profitability, but the result clearly is also better jobs for frontline workers.

Introductory article: [“How to Unlock Employee Ideas to Power Your Organization”](https://www.dropbox.com/s/oead0zt6oo3i6ci/%232%20How%20to%20Unlock%20Employee%20Ideas.pdf?dl=0)

Full book at Amazon: {[www.amazon.com/Idea-Driven-Organization-Unlocking-Power-Bottom-Up-ebook/dp/B00GT486TS/ref=sr\_1\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1525112972&sr=1-1&keywords=idea+driven+organization](http://www.amazon.com/Idea-Driven-Organization-Unlocking-Power-Bottom-Up-ebook/dp/B00GT486TS/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1525112972&sr=1-1&keywords=idea+driven+organization)}

Read these writings to spur your thinking about all the ways in which a frontline job can be improved—acknowledging that it takes far more structure than just a “suggestion box” to encourage and reward innovative participation from employees.

**3] Investing in Entry-Level Talent – FSG**

FSG is a “mission-driven” consulting organization that, among other strategies, works with businesses to strengthen their talent pipeline. They reviewed a broad range of “workforce retention” strategies, and then prioritized those by the strength of evidence documenting effectiveness. This frame is now widely used within the field.

FSG’s introductory paper can be downloaded at: {[www.fsg.org/publications/investing-entry-level-talent](http://www.fsg.org/publications/investing-entry-level-talent)}

Read this for an accessible framework of the primary interventions available to encourage retention of frontline workers.

**4] The Pinkerton Papers — Steven L. Dawson**

Dawson has written a set of six “opinion briefs” on improving the quality of jobs for low-income workers. Topics range from employer engagement to re-designing workforce intermediaries. We recommend starting with Paper #1 and Paper #6.

The six briefs are at: {[www.thepinkertonfoundation.org/paper\_type/job-quality-series](http://www.thepinkertonfoundation.org/paper_type/job-quality-series)}

Also, the *National Fund* has built upon the job-quality framework proposed in Paper #6 for a “dynamic definition” of the many ways in which frontline jobs can be improved: <https://nationalfund.org/job-quality-resource-center/>.

These papers are written particularly for workforce practitioners and their funders. They include a wide range of topics from a low-income workforce perspective, from employer engagement to social enterprise, and from employer-embedded training programs to a call for a “next generation” of workforce development organization.

**5] Raise the Floor and Build Ladders – The Aspen Institute / PHI**

The Aspen Institute and PHI argue that the workforce field should focus not only on “supply-side” strategies of training, placement and career development, but also “demand-side” strategies of helping employers improve the quality of frontline jobs.

Access the paper at: {[www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/raise-the-floor-and-build-ladders-workforce-strategies-supporting-mobility-and-stability/](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/raise-the-floor-and-build-ladders-workforce-strategies-supporting-mobility-and-stability/)}

A companion paper, *Restore the Promise of Work,* can be found at: <http://www.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Restore-the-Promise-of-Work-The-Aspen-Institute-2016.pdf>

*Raise the Floor and Build Ladders* is an early “opinion brief” that helped shape the thinking of workforce funders toward job-quality strategies for frontline workers.

**6] Behavioral Economics for Workforce Professionals – National Fund**

Joe Baumann, of JNB Brand Growth Consulting, authored this *National Fund* report, which outlines key insights of behavioral economics and applies them to situations of workforce development and business leaders working together.

Access the report at: {<https://nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/behavioral-economics-workforce/>}

Read this paper for a range of suggestions for how to understand the thinking of employers—appealing not only to “bottom-line ROI” arguments, but also to employer’s concerns for their employees and their community.

**7] Why Education Alone Won’t End Income Inequality — Maureen Conway**

This *Time Magazine* editorial, written by Maureen Conway of the Aspen Institute, makes a strong argument for why the workforce field must look beyond training strategies alone, to interventions that include “the nature of work, and the kind of opportunity a job offers.”

This brief *Time* editorial can be found at:

http://time.com/3849113/education-income-inequality/?utm\_source=WSI+Newsletter+Spring+2015&utm\_campaign=Spring+Newsletter&utm\_medium=archive

Conway’s argument is also useful to help explain to funders why the workforce field must not abandon education strategies, but nonetheless augment those strategies with “demand side” job-quality expertise.

**8] Moving Beyond Job Creation — Pacific Community Ventures**

PCV, based in Oakland, California, is a nonprofit community development finance institution (CDFI) that invests in small businesses in low-income communities. There are over 1000 CDFIs in the U.S., and several are now pursuing job-quality strategies—combining business investment with workforce development. PCV’s report offers a CDFI perspective on these initiatives.

Here is the [executive summary](https://www.dropbox.com/s/vxgcg9hsqjl5rt6/%233%20Quality-Jobs_Moving-Beyond-Job-Creation%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf?dl=0) to the “Moving Beyond Job Creation: Defining and Measuring the Creation of Quality Jobs” article.

The full report is at: <https://www.pacificcommunityventures.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2016/04/Quality-Jobs_Moving-Beyond-Job-Creation.pdf>

Read these reports to gain an understanding of how lead CDFIs are shaping their job-quality strategies not only to appeal to employers, but also to funders and social investors.

**9] The Stable Scheduling Study – Joan C. Williams, Susan J. Lambert, et al.**

Many workforce practitioners are assisting retail businesses—and have quickly come to understand that scheduling practices are a prime factor in destabilizing both work- and homelife for frontline retail staff. This study is a disciplined analysis of scheduling practices at national retail store, The Gap, and how certain interventions, such as tech-enabled shift swapping, impacted both workers and Gap stores.

A brief introductory article can be found at the Slate website: <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/03/new-study-examines-schedule-instability-in-retail-jobs.html>

The full study, which includes an executive summary, is at:

<http://worklifelaw.org/publications/Stable-Scheduling-Study-Report.pdf>

Though the analysis, using randomized controls, demonstrated only “modest benefits” for frontline staff, the results were very positive for the employer, increasing sales by an average of 7 percent across 19 GAP stores.

**10} Six Dangerous Myths About Pay — Jeffrey Pfeffer**

In promoting job-quality strategies, Zeynep Ton urges employers to treat frontline workers as “assets to be leveraged, not costs to be minimized.” This article by Jeffrey Pfeffer, though 20 years old, is an excellent description of how labor costs are so often misconstrued—even by employers.

Find this Harvard Business Review article at:

<https://hbr.org/1998/05/six-dangerous-myths-about-pay>

Read this very accessible article to attain a more sophisticated understanding of the difference between “labor rates” and “labor costs.”

**EMPLOYERS**

**1] Employer Narratives — National Fund**

The *National Fund* has authored two narratives describing innovative manufacturing companies that invest in their frontline workers as a competitive advantage.

The narrative on *Universal Woods* of Louisville, Kentucky is at: <https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NFWS_UniversalWoods_4Pg_Snglpgs_RGB_M3.pdf>

The narrative on *Optimax Systems* of Ontario, New York is at: <https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NFWS_Optimax_M.pdf>

These are designed to be “employers talking directly with employers.” Each is brief and full of employer and frontline-worker quotes. They are both useful to “leave behind” after a meeting with an employer.

**2] The Good Job Strategy – Zeynep Ton**

Described above, Ton researched how companies can create a competitive business advantage by focusing on creating good jobs.

Introductory article: [“The Good Jobs Solution”](https://www.dropbox.com/s/nzclsvyfjoq09h6/%231%20Good-Jobs-Solution%20-%20Zeynep%20Ton.pdf?dl=0)

This is an easily accessible article for the business community—though it is primarily relevant to larger, retail operations. In addition, Ton has formed the nonprofit *Good Jobs Institute,* which offers a free “Good Jobs Scorecard” designed to be filled out directly by an employer:

View the scorecard at: <http://goodjobsinstitute.org/good-jobs-scorecard/>

**3] The Idea Driven Organization – Alan Robinson and Dean Schroeder**

Described above, the premise of Robinson and Schroeder is that “80 percent of innovation should derive from frontline workers, not managers.”

Introductory article: [“How to Unlock Employee Ideas to Power Your Organization”](https://www.dropbox.com/s/oead0zt6oo3i6ci/%232%20How%20to%20Unlock%20Employee%20Ideas.pdf?dl=0)

This is also a very accessible article, with a simple, real-life dramatization of an “idea-driven” business, that should be attractive to an employer or manager. The example used is one of a hotel—a scale more like the small- and medium-size businesses with which most workforce practitioners work.

**4] Employer Toolkit — Women’s Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation**

The Women’s Fund has created a very accessible, open-source toolkit for employers in creating better jobs for low-income workers.

The Employer Toolkit can be downloaded at: <https://toolkit.cincinnatiwomensfund.org/>

The accompanying white paper, “Unintended Consequences,” is at: <https://www.gcfdn.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/WF_PULSE_BRIEFING_Unintended_Consequences_Changing_Workplace_Policies_to_Support_Low_Wage_Employees.pdf>

Though this report is thoughtfully written and directly addresses employers, it is still somewhat long, and may be perceived as quite challenging. We recommend offering this toolkit to an employer only after he or she has already expressed interest in practical ways to “listen to employees” and build better jobs—not as an initial introduction.

**5] Employees Matter — SJF Institute**

The SJF Institute provides consulting services to entrepreneurs focused on building environmentally sustainable businesses. They published in 2011 “Employees Matter: Maximizing Company Value Through Workforce Engagement,” which offers ten employee engagement strategies.

The executive summary is at:

<http://sjfinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Employees_Matter_Executive_Summary_PDF.pdf>

The full report can be downloaded here:

<http://sjfinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Employees_Matter_Complete_Report_PDF_9-11_Final_Copyright.pdf>

This resource is addressed directly to businesspeople, and includes profiles of 24 companies, describing the results of these engagement strategies on their business outcomes.

**6] What Owners Need to Know about Open-Book Management – Peter Carbonara**

To encourage greater participation in decision-making by frontline workers, the workforce field is “re-discovering” some well-tested business practices, including “open book management.” This brief Forbes Magazine article explains the business case for OBM, and the key practices required.

The Forbes article can be found at:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/petercarbonara/2017/04/18/what-small-business-owners-need-to-know-about-open-book-management/#1bee4d1c432a>

Should an employer express deeper interest, *The Great Game of Business,* written by Jack Stack and Bo Burlingham (the early proponents of OBM), is very accessible, found at: <https://www.greatgame.com/products>

Use the Forbes article in later discussions with an employer, if he or she expresses an interest in engaging employees as true “partners” in the success of the business.

**7] Cultivating a High Involvement Workplace: New Belgium Brewing – Hitachi Foundation and The Great Game of Business**

New Belgium Brewing is a highly successful, 100% employee-owned company based in Fort Collins, Colorado. The company attributes its success to “high involvement” of its over 500 employees:

Their article is available at:

<http://iwer.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/New-Belgium-High-Involvement-Workplace-1-1.pdf>

This brief article describes the New Belgium’s five-part “formula” for how to become an “employer of choice,” by creating a high-involvement workplace culture. It is quite short, just two ages, and would be a helpful “leave behind.” However, note that New Belgium’s employee ownership structure might be a distraction for an employer not interested in sharing ownership.

**8] Case Studies: Good Companies, Good Jobs — MIT Sloan School**

Case studies are often a useful communication tool to engage an employer, particularly if those studies describe business practices within that employer’s same sector. The Hitachi Foundation developed a wide range of “pioneer” case studies that have now joined a broader selection of reports at the MIT Sloan School.

The full list of case studies, categorized by industry, can be found at:

<http://gcgj.mit.edu/resources/industry>

The Sloan studies are particularly strong in the industries of healthcare, manufacturing, retail and food and beverage.

**9] How Bad is the Labor Shortage? — Wall Street Journal, April 30, 2018**

Given the exceptionally low unemployment rate, it will not be news to most employers that the U.S. is experiencing an historically tight labor market. However, it never hurts to underscore this reality by referencing the national business press. This WSJ article describes the lengths that some regions are going to attract and retain workers;

The brief article can be found at:

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-bad-is-the-labor-shortage-cities-will-pay-you-to-move-there-1525102030>

This article is also very helpful when engaging regional policymakers and political leaders in discussing workforce development issues.

**10] A Great Place to Work for All — *Fortune Magazine***

*Fortune* undertakes an annual survey of the 100 best places to work in the America. Recently, their researchers realized that a good place to work for senior management may not be a good place for frontline workers. *Fortune* therefore reframed its annual survey to capture and disaggregate input from across all levels of the businesses they surveyed.

This brief article describes their revised approach: <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/images/word-docs/Sneak-Peak-from-A-Great-Place-to-Work-For-All.pdf>

This business article is helpful in placing job-quality arguments within a more “inclusive” framework—building companies that work for all employees, not just senior managers and professionals.