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## Looking hard as pool of workers shrinks

### Local employers band together to boost area

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Even successful Milwaukee employers are citing challenges in recruiting talent, and they're figuring out how to accommodate more diverse populations and collaborating with other employers to attract the employees they need.

At the National Black MBA Association conference in Orlando this fall, corporate standard bearers from the Milwaukee region combined to promote southeastern Wisconsin to opportunity seekers.

The local delegation - including Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance, Robert W. Baird, Manpower, Harley-Davidson, Kohler, M&I and S.C. Johnson - already can claim some hires from the conference.

"But we have to step up our game," said Heidi Moore, diversity consultant for Northwestern Mutual.

As retirements increase and talent pools thin, competition for employees is intensifying, and employers need to do more to develop and indulge groups of employees previously overlooked.

"Potentially great employees, some assembly required," is how Richard Pimentel referred to

such groups in an employment workshop Friday.

## **Low birth rate an issue**

Pimentel, a nationally recognized training consultant and disability management authority, moderated a panel of local employment experts as part of a conference by the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Hilton Milwaukee Center.

"If you are willing in this environment to reach out and bring in people who are not considered as potentially good employees by your competition, and you are able to make them into fully realized excellent employees, you win," Pimentel told about 40 professionals at the workshop. "It's just that simple. You win."

Lower birth rates following the post-war baby boom is leaving much of the world shorthanded, said Melanie Holmes, vice president of corporate affairs for Manpower North America.

"Demographically, we're running out of workers," Holmes said. She cited federal estimates of 10 million U.S. jobs lacking workers by 2010.

## **Shortages in millions**

Anne Nimke, president and chief operating officer of Pinstripe Inc., said she has seen worker shortage estimates ranging up to 23 million.

"The war for talent is on, and the candidates are winning," said Nimke, whose Brookfield-based firm provides corporate employment services. "This is a buyers market. Companies have to be looking at how they are going to be the best choice, the target at the career fair."

Baird, listed among Fortune's "100 Best Companies To Work For" four years running, also is fighting for talent.

"It is becoming a hand-to-hand combat," said Leslie Dixon, chief human resource officer at Baird.

"The work force is different. There's no one size fits all," Dixon said. "They have different needs. You need to communicate more. You need to listen harder."

To make itself more attractive to job candidates, Baird has been working with other local employers to promote the region's attractiveness, Dixon said.

Following the collaboration's visit to Orlando, Johnson Controls has joined the group.

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