

# THE NEW WORKER

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## **Hiring and Maintaining Employees for the Rapidly Changing Workplace**

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### **Introduction**

From one perspective, we may think about hiring employees who will turn out to be capable, loyal, and long-tenured. In fact, this is the perspective from which most employers view their interest in hiring and keeping employees.

But it need not be the only way employers think about their workers. In many well-managed companies, the emphasis is on achieving a larger goal: workers who are capable, loyal, and who rise above merely doing the job.

During the years 1994 and 1995, three college psychologists, Howard Gardner of Harvard University, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi of Claremont Graduate University, and William Damon of Stanford University, spent time at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California developing a process that is now called the GoodWork project. Gardner, Director of Harvard's GoodWork project, stated during an interview with the Huffington Post in 2011:

*"We need to focus on the kind of human beings we want to have and the kind of society in which we want to live."*

A description of what the GoodWork project is about is offered online in what is called the "[GoodWork Toolkit](#):"

*"Work occupies much of our lives... Yet, how many of us find our work meaningful? How many of us feel able to do our best work? And how often do we stop to consider the consequences of our work on others, or its impact on society as a whole?"*

The description goes on to say:

*"...opportunities to consider the meaning of work...are rare, but imperative."*

Gardner has been a prolific contributor to the general public's interest in how to be a better individual and how to develop a better society. In 2007, he published a book (Harvard Business School Press) titled *Five Minds for the Future*. Looking at the "Five Minds" serves to clarify what he believes employers might value:

1. The Disciplined Mind: the mastery of major schools of thought, including science, math, and history, and at least one professional craft.
2. The Synthesizing Mind: the ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole and to communicate that integration to others.
3. The Creating Mind: the capacity to uncover and clarify new problems, questions, and phenomena.
4. The Respectful Mind: awareness of and appreciation for differences among human beings and human groups.
5. The Ethical Mind: fulfillment of one's responsibilities as a worker and as a citizen.

## **The Future**

Gardner's observations become a pretty tall order for the average employer. Add to that the "Five Predictions for the Business Environment of Tomorrow" as posited by Steve Tobak, a well-known management consultant, in an article titled "The Workplace of the Future:"

***Democratic management.*** *I may not like it, and I certainly don't think it makes sense, but our increasingly litigious, politically correct, and entitlement-based culture will bring us closer to democratic management where employees have a say in decisions. How will it work? I have no idea, but technology will make it manageable and provide individuals with information to make informed choices. Ayn Rand will turn in her grave.*

***Flat organizations.*** *Again, I may not like it, but I can see it coming like a freight train. The Internet, social networking, and Gen-Y will together result in flatter organizational structures than any management consultant would have thought possible. How will it work? Again, I have no idea, but it's coming and it's certainly going to be challenging.*

***No computing.*** *The human-computer interface will all but disappear. No computers, no faxes, no printers, no keyboards, no 2D monitors, no white boards. Everything will be 3D, virtual reality, voice recognition and synthesis. Walls will be combo active-touch displays, media boards, and advertisements. Searches will use intelligent agents, not algorithms like today's searches. Robotics and sensors will be integrated into everything.*

***No business travel.*** *3D virtual reality meetings will all but eliminate business travel. There'll be no snail mail. The postal service will be privatized and compete directly with FedEx and UPS, but only for*

*shipping; mailing documents will be unnecessary. Beaming technology could change everything, if and when. People will have cyber-implants for telecommunications and video display.*

***New look and feel: invisible cloaking.*** *My dad's workplace was drab; many companies wore uniforms. Soon we'll see the peak of mass differentiation – no two people or office environments will look the same. But then, nanotechnology will change the look and feel of everything. Colors and textures will be unrecognizable by today's standards. Invisibility cloaking will enable things to disappear, while virtual reality will make things out of nothing.*

Needless to say, Gardner's "Five Minds" are not what most employers consider when they hire new employees. And what should the average employer make of Tobak's predictions regarding the future of the business environment? Are Gardner's five minds for the future and Tobak's five predictions for tomorrow's work environment ideas that are of value to employers?

Doing good work in the future is, and will continue to be, a challenge for both employers and employees. Employers will strive to find employees with disciplined, creative, ethical, respectful, and synthesizing minds and place them in environments that are highly democratic, flat, and transparent – environments in which their talents will not wither but, rather, blossom. Many employees will tend to resist these employer objectives.

The work environment will be enormously different than it is now and essentially unrecognizable compared to those offices which were run by "Mad Men" in the 1960s, when many of today's top executives, i.e., Baby Boomers, left college for work. "Mad Men," as the critically acclaimed television show is called, were narcissistic, racist, sexist – you name it. They were hardly people who could successfully hire, nurture, and maintain today's, and future employees, as portrayed by Gardner. Not incidentally, recent findings show that 69% of the S&P's 500 companies are led by CEOs who are over 50 years of age. The vast majority of these are, of course, males.

Employees want, and will continue to seek work environments that are flexible, challenging, validating, and meaningful. After all, doing good work involves meaningful tasks and meaningful outcomes, as well as products and services that enhance the lives of others. New workers no longer belong, or should want to belong, to the mad-men-mills of the past. They are not indentured servants. They desire, by and large, to make real contributions to the global economy. Of course, not all prospective employees have the potential to become capable, loyal, and long-tenured contributors to any one work organization.

Workplaces of today and tomorrow will most likely have little of the authoritarian atmosphere that dominated the organizations in which one's parents labored. The Vince Lombardi style of team achievement may have had merit decades ago, but employees now expect to be led but not told. This change in expectation alone will remain a challenge to even the most gifted business leaders. Good work in the rapidly changing organization begins with sound hiring.

## **Hiring**

How does the workplace go about finding, selecting, and training good workers? Finding the right worker, the one who will stay long enough to successfully navigate the introductory "learning curve" and ultimately become sufficiently proficient to make contributions to the organization, is never easy.

When deciding how to advertise a job opening, choosing the best sources can be a daunting task. The important question, among many, for an employer to consider when choosing where to search is who are you trying to hire? Should a headhunter be employed? Is the position entry level? Would a recent college graduate be a good candidate? Should online advertising be the sole venue? Are there pools of possible candidates in professional membership organizations? Would a college job fair be a good place to look for future candidates? The list of possibilities could be endless, and if the employer selects the wrong resources, it could mean a waste of time and money and result in poor selection.

Remember that as an employer, the first line of defense against choosing the wrong candidate is the prospect's résumé. A prospective employee's résumé is their "marketing tool" to sell themselves to the employer. If the résumé and/or cover letter contain typographical errors, present formatting issues, or are excessively long, the employer may automatically place it in the rejection pile. Good workers will have done their homework, and their preparation for job application would have included how to prepare cover letters and résumés free of typographic errors and formatting problems. Regardless of the medium of the résumé (i.e., hard copy or online), employers will want to see work well done.

Most job applicants in the selection pool in these volatile times want to be hired (and accepted) immediately. Rejection is, after all, difficult for all of us, and not being offered a job after applying for it is high on that avoidance list.

Selection personnel must generally recognize applicants who are "faking good" worker behaviors during the hiring process and take them into consideration. The fear of being rejected (the converse of the Maslow-identified need to gain acceptance) is a powerful force that is difficult for the interviewer to assess fully during the selection process. Still, those dynamics are real, and professional selectors need to be experienced in recognizing and dealing appropriately with them. Encouraging the applicant to speak openly during the job interview about prior rejections can lead to insights that would otherwise disqualify the applicant on grounds that may not be productive in hiring good employees. Were previous selectors missing qualities that in fact are valuable traits for the present opening?

## **Pre-Employment Assessment**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes it illegal to give pre-employment medical testing and base hiring decisions on the outcome of those tests. Unlike medical tests, using standardized abilities and aptitude testing for pre-employment screening is not illegal. In fact, to identify what could be relevant "job-seeking attitudes and behaviors," employers should consider using pre-employment assessment products.

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), for example, is a reliable

instrument that informs military personnel of a recruit's learning potentials so that military placement training is conducive to the recruit's chances of succeeding in that training. Reducing the risk of military placement failure through use of ASVAB results is the primary objective of the Battery. Ignoring the findings of this test is generally costly and harmful to both the recruit and the military.

Similarly, workers in the civilian world can be selected and placed with quality tests and measures, providing that the tools used have a valid relationship to the "essential functions" of the job. Essential functions of the job should be documented with a carefully executed job analysis. While validation of an employment test is required only if its results are used in a way that might adversely affect a protected group, it is sound personnel management to validate any test used. In selecting a test, employers should ask the test publisher for evidence concerning the validity of the test in relation to the type of job tasks for which the test will be used.

The following can be invaluable for matching the documented essential functions (or most relevant job tasks) of a particular position: work samples and simulations; intelligence and aptitude tests; and measures of temperament and personality. Measuring prospective worker characteristics without having a specific set of criteria (e.g., an "essential functions" job description) to measure against those worker characteristics is probably useless.

Worker optimism and resilience are fundamental to most rapidly changing workplaces. Martin Seligman and others who research and promote Positive Psychology have created numerous questionnaires that could prove helpful to selection personnel in finding those good workers described by Gardner above. For more information on Positive Psychology and various measures reflecting positive psychological concepts, visit the University of Pennsylvania website [about the topic](#).

### **Other Crucial Pre-Employment Factors**

Another critical consideration in the hiring process is the requirements of every employer promulgated by the ADA. Employers are required by law to follow specific guidelines from the ADA on pre-employment testing, essential functions, and reasonable accommodations. It is the responsibility of all employers to understand these requirements and to implement them. Employers are responsible for identifying the essential functions (as opposed to non-essential functions) of a specific job in a job description, and by doing so employers can avoid at least some negative outcomes in any litigation that should arise.

### **Creating Job Descriptions Based On Essential Functions**

The ADA requires that job descriptions be based on the essential functions of a job. That is, the non-essential functions of a given job should not be used to deny employment or to reprimand an employee who is not performing, or cannot perform, those non-essential functions. Many employers overlook the significance of this aspect of the law. However, it may become painfully relevant in litigation, and prudent employers will consider the concept when creating job descriptions.

In addition, and significantly more important in terms of jobs requiring physical labor and/or repetitive motions, job descriptions must be based on structured Job Analyses.

Job Analysis is a process that requires rigid adherence to verifiable measures and a taxonomy of defined terms. For example, if the job requires "standing," the analysis must work from the established definition of that term and delineate the duration involved in the function (i.e., standing), the frequency and duration of rest periods, and the surface on which the standing is done. "Lifting" has to be described in terms of weight, frequency, height of the lifts, the motions other than lifting required, etc. In short, job descriptions must be based on careful observations and measurements of precise actions. Describing a job in general terms is not productive and does not serve either the employer or the employee.

Jobs that require individuality, intellectuality, creativity, problem solving, etc., also require (in terms of legality) identifying what the specific duties and outcomes are so that the non-essential functions can be identified as needed. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) talks about non-physical jobs in terms of expected outcomes as "results and deliverables." Are the desired and defined outcomes (per the job description) achieved? Anything not specifically delineated is considered non-essential. Job descriptions need to be reviewed by human resource personnel and the supervisor of the specific job for currency and validity on a regularly scheduled basis.

### **Selecting the Best Candidate**

Conditions for electing the ideal employee should be based minimally on the following:

1. Having an adequate number of choices from carefully considered sources.
2. Reading/sorting the results of preliminary testing (ability, aptitude, temperament).
3. Searching résumés for germane experiences and manifestations of a work product.
4. Gathering and evaluating references.
5. Consulting with staff on their preferences for the qualifications of the new hire.

### **Training**

Training employees is the essential and non-transferrable function of management. Training is both preliminary (i.e., introductory/early-on work-related needs) and ongoing. While good employees will have the capacity to learn useful skills on their own, and should be urged to do so, the management team will need to visualize impending needs and provide training opportunities to match those needs as an ongoing, continuing responsibility.

Training can be internal or external. Employees should be given opportunities to study in area colleges and the like, and external study need not be confined to specific job-related skills. Course work in the humanities, sociology, or psychology, for example, whether delivered internally or by external sources, can hold value for employers, as well as for the employee.

One concept relating to the hiring process that is gaining currency is that college graduates with degrees in the humanities are preferable to those with job-specific degrees. That is, employers are tending to hire graduates with liberal arts degrees over even those with specific technical skills in a field germane to those needed by the hiring company. The employers are still looking for course work in chemistry for a chemist's job in the company, but the ideal candidate will have at least studied liberal

arts. Liberal arts graduates tend to have the prerequisites employers are looking for in terms of abstract thinking abilities and language skills.

Those colleges that recognize this changing dynamic place a higher premium on teaching:

- critical thinking skills,
- strong writing and oral communication skills, and
- quantitative analysis skills.

One American college that has revamped its curriculum to make these skills paramount to all other courses offered is Winston-Salem State University (WSSU). While the implementation of this approach at WSSU was accomplished in one academic year, a significant number of other U.S. colleges are more slowly integrating the same philosophical approach into their degree offerings. There is a radical transformation of the core curriculum in American colleges underway.

In-service training should include both relevant job-skills content as well as non-core content. What may be identified as non-job-skills but still relevant attributes are taught in most MBA programs. These non-core skills include contemporary management concepts/processes such as "Managing Your Boss (Managing Up)" (Harvard Business School), "Growing at the Speed of Change," "Research Methods and Applications," etc. Likewise, the employees themselves should be challenged to design and deliver in-house training courses for their colleagues. Training should always be delivered with state-of-the-art technology, such as emerging tablet-computing devices.

Employees have a responsibility to life-long learning, and employers have a responsibility for life-long teaching. Well-managed companies frequently create and maintain "mentoring" processes. Mentoring may be assigned either on a one-on-one basis or by having one specialist conduct regular sessions with groups. The effectiveness of the mentoring should be evaluated on a regular basis.

### **Maintaining a Productive and Creative Workforce**

The most fundamental principle of human relations is the "egocentricity" rule. People tend to think, especially in a work environment, "What's in it for me?" Self-interest is not always a psychological abnormality; it is a primary human trait. Given the stories many children have heard from their parents about the workplace boss, and in light of the dogmatic methods of many teachers, it is no wonder that new workers approach employment with high levels of egocentricity, mistrust, and questions, such as "Where is this going to take me?" and "What's in it for me?"

Progressive work organizations must face the reality that egocentricity is primary in all workplaces (including its leaders/bosses), and therefore, they need to create work climates and enrichment programs that allow good workers to have their needs met. At minimum, such programs include promotion and succession plans, as well as cross training on job-related subjects that contribute to the potential for promotion while warding off boredom and stagnation. Supervisors must be good communicators, which includes, first and foremost, being a good listener. Good listening validates workers and their efforts.

Resilience and optimism are key elements of success in most rapidly changing work environments. The abilities to bounce back from adversity, to work through challenges, and to overcome perceived obstacles are, without question, behaviors that keep most people creative, happy, and at work. In finding solutions to problems, persistence counts!

The most effective way to ascertain employee needs and interests is to teach and model the basic idea that "work matters." Employees need to come to realize this and develop a perspective that is larger than the immediate department in which one works. The purpose of work is embedded in the belief that an individual effort counts. Further, this belief encompasses the idea that work is a contribution to the common good. And doing "Good Work," as Gardner and his colleagues so elegantly developed, matters.

### **Keeping Abreast of Change – Essential Resources**

There are at least five essential services of current information for employers on how to create and maintain quality workers ("Good Workers"). The premise here is that all employers (and their key managers) in any size company should read and be aware of these sources on a regular basis.

The first of these is the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) (CCL). The primary focus of the CCL is to develop better business managers. (But of course, the lessons learned here are in turn transferrable to employees at all levels.) Essentially all of the materials available through the CCL have fees attached, but the quality of the information is worth the nominal cost. Further, regular visitors to their web site will find free articles. The free article in the September 2012 newsletter, "[A Talent Development Quick Win](#)," provides practical steps to aid managers in developing talent in their employees. The first step is to decide which kind of "talent conversation" the manager should have with the employee in a performance evaluation setting, for example, the top talent conversation, the solid performer conversation, the potential performer conversation, or the underperformer conversation. From there, the steps for the conversation include:

1. Clarifying the goal.
2. Exploring the issues.
3. Identifying the options.
4. Setting Expectations.
5. Motivating.
6. Identifying the plan.

The next two resources are made available by the top Business Schools in the U.S. The first of these is the free, online weekly publication of the Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania), [Knowledge@Wharton](#). This publication consists of articles relevant to business management by faculty/professors of the Wharton School. About a third of the articles in any week may be on American companies dealing with foreign countries, since these countries are specialties of some of the professors; however, the majority of articles are on business management. Each week [Knowledge@Wharton](#) lists the titles of the new articles (research studies) and gives a short paragraph summary of the article's content and a link to the full article. This resource is indispensable for management, and it should be of interest for any

employee who sees his/her employment as a prelude to a better position.

Another essential resource is the [Harvard Business Review](#) (HBR). MBA graduates of any school are familiar with the HBR and many continue their subscriptions after they graduate. Unlike the Wharton online resource, the HBR is fee-subscription only. The HBR is released monthly, and the web site offers free "Executive Summaries," which show the articles for the month and gives a paragraph summary of each. The October 2012 issue of the HBR has an article titled "What Makes a Leader," and it is this sort of article that holds significant value for business managers and administrators.

Of course, SHRM is also an indispensable organization that will provide information and support employers and human resource personnel. SHRM is the largest association in the field of human resources. One can join SHRM through [their website](#). Finally, we recommend that either the University of Pennsylvania [Center for Positive Psychology](#) or the [VIA Institute on Character](#) become tools for employers and human resource selection personnel in your organization.

## Generational Factors

Essentially every employer has employees from different generations, and there are significant differences between the generations of which employers and their managers need to be aware. The four generations are:

- |                                   |                            |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Silents:                       | Born between 1925 and 1945 |
| 2. Baby Boomers:                  | Born between 1946 and 1964 |
| 3. Generation Xers:               | Born between 1965 and 1980 |
| 4. Generation Ys (or Millennials) | Born after 1980            |

Each of these generations is different in terms of their values, and most significantly, the attitudes they bring to work. The challenge for the employer is to recognize these differences and to homogenize them into a workable whole. The academic institutions that develop methods for dealing with the workplace generational gaps suggest that employers develop strategies that accept the differences and create policies and procedures that accommodate a multigenerational workforce.

Brief descriptions of the separate groups:

**Silents** are generally the most loyal and dedicated employees. They are also the most risk averse, which, in the contemporary workplace, is largely considered a negative attribute.

**Baby Boomers** generally distrust authority, are sometimes tagged the "Me Generation," and are thought to be guided by personal gratification. They are more optimistic and amenable to workplace changes than their elders.

**Generation Xers** are frequently classified as slackers and are among the lead group of employees to question the authority of their bosses. Generally, these employees are well educated especially in respect to technical skills. By and large, they are fiercely independent.

**Generation Ys (or Millennials)** are considered the most resilient of the generations discussed above, and resilience is an attribute high on the desired list posited by Positive Psychology. They are the products of Baby Boomers, who have instilled strong work ethics in them. They are, as a group, highly educated.

Since Generation Y adults are the most desirable (and luckily the most available) applicants, employers will have to shape their recruitment tactics to assure that they are finding adequate numbers of new hires with the most desirable attributes: people who are educated, skilled, and resilient. Generation Y people realize that they are keenly wanted as employees, and can be more demanding as applicants. The irony is, of course, that those who are most in demand will be those who demand more, with justification.

What employers need to do is recognize that they are not managing only one age group, but several. Consequently, they will have to develop cross-generational plans. Employers, if they hope to build a strong work force, will have to manage to the differences. One-size-fits-all health care plans, for example, are not acceptable to the most desirable applicants. Those employers who reject these basic concepts cannot expect to be among the most profitable companies or to have high rates of survival.

### **Not Your Father's Workplace**

Like every other aspect of life, the workplace evolves over time. And in fact, its evolution is, of recent, fast paced. The objective of this article has been to name and illuminate some of these evolving concepts and consider how they affect the recruitment and training processes. Of course, there is no requirement to consider a specific concept and immediately install it, but we do believe that all employers should be familiar with contemporary ideas of workplace management and employee development and consider which of the ideas would work well for their employees or hiring personnel. It is likely that most business leaders and organizations will not survive the stressors associated with rapid change unless they recognize and attempt to manage the dynamics and inevitable changes forecasted by Gardner and Tobak. We submit that Garner's GoodWork Toolkit and the resources made available by Seligman and other positive psychologists can assist employers attempting to meet the challenges brought by rapid change and avail themselves of the opportunities found within it.

New business concepts and methods will continue to evolve as well, but ultimately, workplace dynamics will be strongly influenced by those standards and ethics practiced by both organizational leaders and followers, as well as those values and behaviors that result in management labor conflict. How management actually endeavors to model shared values and resolve conflicts may be the key variables that require ongoing attention and improvement. Shared values and inclusive, democratic conflict resolution could be considered enduring and unchangeable.

The first responsibility of all employers is to pay close attention to the products or services that are their primary business. (Peter Drucker, the business management guru, once called this "Pay attention to your knitting.")

Second, employers are interested in the ongoing training/education of their employees. Training is essential to keep each employee producing at maximum level. The required training may be conducted in-house or contracted out to other sources. In addition to the primary interest in training, these programs provide, in most cases, incentives for employees. Most individuals are looking to better their station in life going forward, and the best way to do that is through continuing training and education.

The main article above addresses the training issue in more depth. The purpose here is to introduce employers to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These courses represent a new, information-age credentialing process. They are the first serious competition to traditional degrees since college going became the norm. Many of America's best colleges/universities (and even prominent businesses: Intel, Disney-Pixar, etc.) offer MOOCs. And here's the amazing part: *THEY ARE FREE TO ANYONE.*

While you will want to check out your favorite college for possible MOOCs, here are a few of the more prominent providers:

[edX](#) – partners with MIT and Harvard, and offers courses in chemistry, computer science, electronics, and public health with plans for 20 to 30 more next Spring.

[Udacity](#) – offers 18 courses in computer science, mathematics, physics, and statistics.

[Coursera](#) – partners with 30 schools, including CalTech, Berklee College of Music, and Upenn, and offers courses in 20 subjects.

[Khan Academy](#) – offers courses for K-12 material covering algebra, biology, finance, history, etc.

*The New York Times* outlines "[The Big Three](#)" MOOC providers and describes [the growing trend](#). You can peruse the course listings from the providers above or check online for more MOOC opportunities, as the list of options continues to grow.

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## **Manufacturing in Pennsylvania – Some Impressive Statistics**

As we share workforce-related information with the employers in our database, we frequently shortchange those in manufacturing. Some recent findings reported in the [Governor's Manufacturing Advisory Council Report](#), which describes the state of manufacturing in Pennsylvania, may help us address that shortcoming:

- 574,000 Pennsylvanians are employed in manufacturing (10% of the state's workforce).

- There were 7,639 job openings in manufacturing in PA as of June 2012.
- The average annual compensation for manufacturing jobs in PA is \$64,913.
- 90% of PA's exports are manufactured products.
- Manufacturing productivity outperforms non-manufacturing productivity by 23%.
- 23 Fortune 500 manufacturing companies are headquartered in PA.

Like many Pennsylvanians, we are extremely happy to know these facts about the manufacturing base, and we will look for more good news to share about this workforce sector in the future. Be sure to check out the full report for more facts and statistics about the Commonwealth's burgeoning manufacturing industry.

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## **Finding Skilled Employees – "Race to the Future"**

In September 2012, Microsoft reported they had an estimated 3,400 unfilled engineering or research-and-development jobs available. To address this critical issue, Microsoft is taking two steps:

- Ratcheting up their recruitment of foreign tech workers.
- Proposing to strengthen the K-12 science, technology, engineering, and math system.

In terms of the focus on education in the U.S., Microsoft has proposed a program they call "Race to the Future." The objective of the Race to the Future program is to "remake" the K-12 curriculum in order to boost enrollment in math, science, and computer science, as well as to improve the college completion rates.

Brad Smith, executive vice president and general counsel of Microsoft, proposed that the company pay for the program by having the government raise the H-1B visa fees paid by employers from \$750 to \$10,000, and to charge companies \$20,000 to maintain green cards. Over ten years, the fees would produce \$5 billion. For more, see Smith's remarks to the Brookings Institute on the topic of "[Reinvigorating American Competitiveness and Economic Opportunity](#)."

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## **Overworked Employees – A Critical Reality for Social Security**

According to an investigation by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "overworked" Social Security officials, who have been dealing with a backlog of disability claims, "often award disability benefits without adequately reviewing claims." (Reported in mid-September 2012.)

Investigators based their claim on 300 randomly selected cases submitted to the Social Security Administration from Virginia, Alabama, and Oklahoma. The report states that more than a quarter of agency decisions "failed to properly address insufficient, contradictory, or incomplete evidence." You can access the report and watch the hearing through the [Subcommittee's website](#).

