

>> Hello, and welcome to The Valley Today. I am your host, Janet Michael. It is LFCC day, although I am going to have to get used to not saying that, aren't I, Guy Curtis?

>> That's right. We're transitioning away from LFCC.

>> It's going to be one of those things that it'll be stuck in my brain for a while, but then once it's not in my brain anymore, I'm not even going to remember, and think about it until somebody says something years from now like, "Oh, yeah. That's right. That's what they used to be called." Guy Curtis is on the screen recording with me today. He is Director of Marketing for Lord Fairfax Community College. Of course, you know they're becoming Laurel Ridge Community College. Joining him is Carlene Hurdle. She is their Director of Corporate Training for Workforce Solutions, and we've got a really cool webinar that you guys are working on. We talked for a little bit before we started recording it, Carlene got me all excited. I want to attend this thing, so I can't wait to share it with everybody that's listening today, guys. Give me at least the details and then we're going to turn to Carlene loose, and let her share her excitement with everybody.

>> Well, sure. We're very excited to continue to grow our voice in the region as a workforce development focused college. Our department within Workforce Solutions, and corporate training is really strategizing ways to keep our employers aware of strategies and ideas and solutions to help their businesses not only grow, but retain the workforce that they only have, as well as maintain and obviously grow additional work forces in the future. We're excited to announce that we are offering quarterly webinars as part of a strategy to be that voice, and continue to grow that voice in the region. Our topic coming up later in March, that will focus on The Great Resignation, and as far as what's happening there, and how employers are struggling with keeping that pipeline of employees coming through but also maintaining the workforce they do have. We're excited about those topics. They're coming forward, and they have Carlene on the team to talk about some of the strategies as well as what we're unveiling with this webinar. It's very unique, so we're excited that we're bringing it on board later March on the 15th.

>> Many times when we're talking about things that have national attention, like The Great Resignation, we seem to think that doesn't happen here. That we're in this tiny little small community and, "Oh, that Great Resignation, that's only happening in New York, and DC, and larger metro cities. That doesn't really happen to us here in the Shenandoah Valley," but Carlene, it is absolutely happening to us right here in the Shenandoah Valley, and to the companies that we depend on, on a daily basis.

>> It is happening, and I think the pandemic deeply affected our workforce from not only resignations, but even retirements. We've always known that our baby boomers were retiring at accelerating rates. We used to call that the silver tsunami. But it accelerated all of that momentum to the point now that there is a workforce shortage that affects pretty much every industry. I think that companies are now becoming more and more aware that in order to fill these positions, they've got to

identify skills. They're beginning to redefine roles in terms of skills, and really seeing those, what we've always termed as skill gaps, as skill opportunities. When you address it from that standpoint, it really does provide employers the ability to play a massive role in lifelong learning and a continuous education to stay relevant. A skilled workforce is probably your best competitive advantage in any marketplace, but particularly post-pandemic.

>> So much of our lives is intertwined with what we do for a living, whether it's a job, it's a career, it's never nine to five anymore. The other thing the pandemic has done is it's opened up all these virtual worlds. Those of us that used to say I'm clocking in at 9 and clocking out at 5, don't even have that luxury a lot of the time anymore. It really has changed the whole perspective for how we work, how often we work, and what's important to us.

>> One topic that Carlene mentioned, I thought it was a very interesting point as far as the skills that were learned in, for example, 2018, one in three skills from 2018 will be absolute by 2023 or more virtual, and we're all remote in some cases too, but there's so many other strategies to retain our workforce.

>> We've brought together some local business leaders who we consider the real heroes on the front lines. They are really attacking this situation that they find themselves in, in creative ways. That's really what we're hoping to do with this webinar, is have that community conversation so that you can hear from the folks who are dealing with this day in and day out, and we can certainly talk about it. But we really feel like they are the best voice to spark those conversations, and talk about some of the ways that they are creatively responding, developing programs for recruiting, for hiring, for retaining their talent workforce in their organizations. The most critical risk for employee retention right now is exhaustion. If you think about it, the majority of the companies that we serve in our footprint, our manufacturing and construction companies, and they have had intense pressure placed on them with the pandemic. Being able to come in and address skill gaps, and developing new skills, and being able to even to move individual throughout the organization quicker, has been a real differentiator for them in terms of recruitment. It just is a win all the way around.

>> I think having this webinar in a panel format where other business owners, even if they're not necessarily in manufacturing or construction, are going to hear what these business leaders have done and maybe it will spark an idea for how they can take, what path they took, and tweak it a little and make it apply to their particular business, even if that business is retail or food service or something else, it gives them that creative spark that sometimes we lose, especially during a pandemic because we just feel like we've got to keep doing what we've always done because that's all we know how to do, and that's not going to get you into a new workforce and get you through this Great Resignation.

>> You are so right, and the currency of learning that value really puts power into the hands of the employers. It really gives them the ability to improve what they're

offering their talent pool. Whether that's from a recruitment standpoint or from an internal development standpoint. You and I were talking before the show, I happen to be like just this data hoarder, and I love reading relevant and new reports, and there's so many good valuable reports that are out. Gardner put out a report that clearly showed that employability has replaced loyalty. Our parents worked at the same place for 30-40 years, retired and that was it. That is not the case anymore. Being able to be developed within an organization has a higher value than a salary. This is the first time in history we've ever experienced that. It's a radical shift for traditional organizations to take on. But those who were doing that early are seeing the return on investment of doing so.

>> It makes so much more sense because they also are getting the immediate benefit of that employee learning a new skill, becoming a better leader, being a better coworker, they're getting that immediate gratification for those kinds of things in addition to potentially keeping that employer on staff for a longer period of time.

>> I will just add this. We've always tried to assign a value to losing an employee. What is the value of that? Yet, the loss of a highly talented employee now is steeper than it's ever been.

>> Back in the day, it was not that big of a deal because there was always somebody else waiting in line to take the job that you were letting somebody go from, and that is not, there are no lines anymore of people waiting to take a slot from somebody that has either decided to leave your company or that you have chosen isn't a good fit anymore.

>> Yes. I think too, that companies can leverage this to create a distinction in the marketplace. In other words, they can create a brand almost for themselves. It's funny because in the pandemic I think that perspective job-seekers were paying very close attention to the behavior of companies, and how they treated their employees during, and then what programs and creativity they came up with after when work started to resume again. It does give you the ability to enhance your brand, and to enhance your differentiation among job-seekers, so that you really stand out as accompany that cares, and that you're really invested in developing folks for either jobs at your company or beyond. There's some examples of companies doing some incredible things that prepare their workers for jobs outside their organization hoping that the currency of that or the value of that really builds in a loyalty that may not exist on its own anymore.

>> Let's take a break. When we come back, I want to talk a little bit more about the training and development that you guys offer because you're like the go-to. You mentioned a second ago, Carlene, that you're this data hoarder, I don't have the time. A lot of our business owners, and presidents of companies, and CEOs, they don't necessarily have the time to read all of these reports, to disseminate the information that's in them, to figure out how it applies to them. Let's talk a little bit more about the benefit of what you guys are doing, and what role that can play in

helping a company move forward. We are recording on the screen today with Guy Curtis, he is Director of Marketing for Lord Fairfax Community College, of course, becoming Laurel Ridge. Carlene Hurdle is joining him, she is Director of Corporate Training for LFCC Workforce Solutions. We're going to talk more with them when we come back in just a couple of minutes.

>> Got a financial decision to make or a goal to reach, but you don't know where to start, you've come to the right place. Introducing Quick Money Chats with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Financial Education Program. Visit tinyurl.com/quickmoneychat to schedule a virtual chat with a staff member or trained volunteer. We won't tell you what to do, but we will give you the tools you need to choose wisely. Because Virginia Cooperative Extension is part of Virginia Tech, and Virginia state, your land grant universities, you can be sure that our information is credible and trustworthy, and you'll know that we aren't trying to sell you something. Maybe you want to improve your credit score or reduce your banking overdraft fees, or even figure out if you can afford to buy that car. Sorting through tons of information on the Internet can be overwhelming, and sometimes it can be hard to know who to trust. Schedule a quick money chat, and get the information you need to take action. Go to tinyurl.com/quickmoneychat, and get financial education personalized for you.

>> Welcome back to The Valley Today, I'm your host, Janet Michael. We are prerecording on the screen today with Guy Curtis. He is Director of Marketing for Lord Fairfax Community College, of course, becoming Laurel Ridge Community College. Carlene Hurdle is on the screen with us as well. She is Director of Corporate Training for LFCC Workforce Solutions. We're talking about these new quarterly webinars that you guys are putting together, Guy, the one that's coming up on March 15th is pivot strategies for The Great Resignation. Carlene, when we went to break, we were talking about the resource that you offer to all of our employers and even employees to a certain degree through the college that saves them from having to read the reports and do the research and figure out how it applies in their particular situation to their particular business. You guys are really this unknown resource that people really need to know about and take more advantage of.

>> We really want to stop being the best kept secret. We want people to truly know that we are committed to workforce research, we are plugged into labor market data, we are studying economic trends. We have a rich set of resources at our disposal and Janet that was built-in to the community college system from the inception. I think it's really come full circle from maybe just a continuous learning focus to now a true blue workforce skills development and talent pipeline focus. Our goal with these quarterly webinars is to really pour into our businesses and talk about timely topics to really open it up for conversation, I think it's really meaningful when we can have folks join us on the live webinars and really voice some of those questions or poke holes in some of the data and ask some of those meaningful questions so that we can continue to offer what's relevant and timely to our clients. We offer training, soup to nuts, it doesn't really matter what it is. We've done everything from Arc flash training to ServSafe Manager certifications. We can teach

on soft skills or hard skills. We can teach licensed programs. We can teach pretty much anything you can think of so if businesses have a particular area that they're struggling with, we have instructional designers on staff. We have access to incredible amounts of curriculum and we can usually provide a solution that's very relevant and on-target to what their needs are.

>> The other part I think too, is that a business cannot even know what their problem is. They can say, "Look, we are losing employees or we can't seem to keep anybody here longer than a year or two years and we don't know why." They can come to you and start that conversation and then you can do the analytics of it and say, "Here are things that workers in your industry are looking for. Do you offer them?" They may not even know that this is something they shouldn't be doing and aren't and they can start down that path with you?

>> Yes and I'll give you an example of what that looks like. We were working with a particular client and they said, "We can't find anywhere with this specific skill set."

So when we look at the job description and we looked at what they were asking for, then we compared it to the labor market data, we said, "You're just not calling it the same thing. You're calling it what internally you have organically decided to call it but in the industry, this is what it's called." When they made that change, that's simple tweak, they started receiving applicants for that position. There are some consultative things that we can do when we recently worked with another employer to design and put together a very succinct employee onboarding program because what they found was they had such a highly technical environment that went employees would come in, they're ramp up, time was taking so long and they would get frustrated and leave. So we went in and studied that from a consultative aspect and designed an onboarding program that they deliver. We're not even delivering the training, we simply came in and matched up all of the pieces and then are providing a train the trainer so that they can continue to offer that at their location using their own staff.

>> You touched on this in the first segment, the importance to employees these days of having an opportunity or the ability to learn a new skill to better themselves as a person to become a better leader. All of these things have a higher priority in today's workforce than maybe they did ten years ago, even five years ago. There are a lot more important to those of us or those people out there that are looking for new careers are changing their careers now, I love it because I am not, I've never been the employee that is happy with just getting the extra dollar an hour. The pat on the head that says, good job, here's an extra dollar an hour. I always want to learn something else. I want to go to a conference, feel like I'm doing something not just have it necessarily reflected in my paycheck, Not that I'd ever would turn down the extra dollar an hour Andrew, if you're listening, I'm just saying, sometimes things are a little more important to employees that employers might not recognize or know about.

>> High-potential employees certainly crave new opportunities within their

organizations and I think everyone feels valued when someone is looking to develop them, when they send them to, as you pointed out, send them to that conference or that class. We have one time events, we have cohort classes that they can take, we have credentialing, we have all sorts of various ways to connect that learning and development to the organization.

I'll tell you, Janet, leadership is probably

the number one skills gap and it's getting bigger by the day. We have devised a three tier leadership development program and just this fall launched something called Leadership Base Camp, which is the jumping off point of, hey, yesterday I was an individual contributor and today I'm somebody's boss. What do I do with that?

So we devised this very short burst program called Leadership Base Camp,

and it's been wildly successful. As a matter of fact, we were just talking today, is that a webinar topic because we have some pre-assessment and post-assessment results that we can share that are incredible. For companies that really can't fill that gap any other way, we can do that either at our location, at their location, we did five customized sections of it in a three-month span. We can deliver those things at the company site. Weave in the core values, we've done that, so that we're really solidifying what the company stands for. I get so excited about this stuff, I feel like I could talk forever so I apologize if I'm droning on, but it's what gets me up every morning.

>> You love that she does this because the more she talks about this and gets excited and is passionate about it, the easier it is to fill the seats in these webinars and for these programs.

>> Absolutely, I'm ready to sign up for a class myself. Wow, the way she's described it, and she's right as far as how to engage a workforce, I know our college has done a wonderful job with many of us who learn from the offerings that we offer, but also some professional development that grows us as individuals. I think our attention, our highly satisfied employees are a great example of what we do. We practice what we preach, and certainly Carlene has got me excited. What is the next class or course I should be taking to better myself and I think that's where a lot of folks are nowadays. Those skill sets or what I learned 15, 10, 5 years ago are going away. There's a new way of doing things, a more enhanced way and so even in the marketing world itself, you're always looking for an innovative practice to reach the audience you're trying to go after and so she's exactly right but employers obviously are struggling with that same aspects. Some folks, just to get them in the pipeline and keep them and retain them, you have to develop them and show them that you care. There's a number of strategies out there our team can support an employer with that.

>> Give me the details for this particular webinar. It's happening on March 15th. What time?

>> It's at 10 AM. Expect about 30 to 40 minutes or so of a panel discussion. We have a moderator lined up, a very engaging moderator, and we'll have a lot of fun with the panelists sharing their real-world experiences and stories that will benefit you as an organization so that's March 15th at 10 AM. It's a free webinar and to register it's simply lfccworkforce.com/webinar. You could Google it, find it once you get on our website but look for pivot strategies for The Great Resignation. As an employer, if you're looking for ways, if you have a shortage is if you will, with your workforce and you're trying to grow your workforce skills, gaps, recruitment issues, as well as hiring issues. This is a webinar you must attend just to better your strategies and improve on what you can learn from other employers so regardless of the industry that you're in, this is a great fit and again, it's free to attend.

>> Carlene mentioned earlier, since it's not one of these recorded webinars, you really want people to engage. You want people to ask questions if they have questions now in their brain that they're thinking maybe this can answer and it's not necessarily addressed in the panel, there'll be an opportunity for them to ask questions and get some feedback.

>> Absolutely. We definitely want to engage the audience and they're the folks who are out in the real world experiencing a lot of these issues and you have a colleague or a peer on the other side of the webinar that can give you some of those examples but if you can bring some of those with you to the webinar, we'll have a great discussion and certainly if you can't make it, but it will be recorded and will be able to send out a on-demand replay of it but having a presence there as critical and do look forward to these purely TED Talk type of style of webinars that have been coming out to showcase these skills of issues and whose ways to improve your workforce development strategies. We're very excited at the college to see this and, again, continue to grow our voice as workforce leaders in the region, as the college and specifically more within the corporate training unit.

>> Just give a quick little teaser as well we did work with a large heavy civil construction company to grow their leadership and grow the soft skills of their superintendence. Now that's no small feat and I would just really encourage folks to tune in and listen to that as it's a really engaging story of how they went about doing that. The program is continuing. We just are starting up a level two on it and it's really having some positive effects throughout their organization but specifically within the superintendents who many had a let's say traditional approach to leadership had our learning some very valuable skills along the way.

>> Thank you both for taking some time to give me all of the details for this. As soon as we're done here, I'm going to sign up for it because I'm sure I'll learn something that I can tell somebody else that then they can reach out to you and get more details.

>> Thank you for that we're really excited and like I said, we just want to spotlight our clients, because they're the real heroes in this fight for workforce and talent. We just come alongside and help, but they're really the ones on the front lines of this

and we just think they have incredible stories to tell.

>> We've been chatting today on the screen with Guy Curtis. He is Director of Marketing for Lord Fairfax Community College, becoming Laurel Ridge Community College. Joining him has been Carlene Hurdle. She is Director of Corporate Training for LFCC Workforce Solutions. I'll be back tomorrow. I have a brand new episode of The Valley Today, ready to go for you a few minutes after noon. Meet me here then.