



Marketplace Flash

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Jobless Recovery – What’s Wrong with That?

A recent *New York Times* article titled “Good Economy. Bad Job Market. Huh?” reports that the economy is slowly recovering from three years of slow to negative growth, but the job market is not. The article cites the automated boarding pass machines at airports to illustrate that automation is reducing and eliminating jobs. So what is wrong with that? Isn’t the name of the game getting more bang for the buck - doing more with less? Isn’t this what production and efficiency are all about?

The problem that corporate America faces is the resistance of the average worker to be retrained. I saw this working in my family contracting business. People trained to be plumbers did not want to learn the air conditioning trade and vice versa. Once people know how to do a job, there is resistance to learn a new job.

Losing manufacturing jobs to countries that have cheaper labor is currently causing uproar in the United States. What would happen if the U.S. workers were simply retrained to do other jobs? Why is protecting jobs a given? Is job protection more important than delivering the most cost effective products and services possible?

The root issue is not job protection; rather it is the mentality of workers who resist learning new skills. There is nothing wrong with learning new skills; it simply takes time, commitment, and work. If we are willing to commit to training and learning as a life long process, learning new skills becomes easy. By continually increasing our knowledge and ability to perform value added services, we increase our marketability and help companies produce more value for the customer. What’s wrong with that?