

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE

# Retail Sector

FOCUS GROUPS REPORT



Challenges and Opportunities  
For the Retail Sector in San Diego County  
**Focus Groups Report**

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## BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) worked with Probe Research Inc. to conduct qualitative research among San Diego retail workers, retail and hospitality sector employers, and workforce-development practitioners on issues related to job quality and its impact upon worker recruitment and retention.

Three focus group sessions were conducted at the offices of Flagship Research in Mission Valley, and the fourth was conducted at SDWP's headquarters in Kearney Mesa. The following table describes the composition of each focus group session.

**Table 1: Focus Group Session Composition**

Date	Location	Incentive	Composition
Wednesday, March 27th, 2019 at 7pm	Flagship Research Suite 405 1011 Camino Del Rio South San Diego, CA	\$100 incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail workers</li> <li>• Diverse mix of age, tenure, gender, ethnicity</li> </ul>
Thursday, March 28th, 2019 at 12pm	Flagship Research Suite 405 1011 Camino Del Rio South San Diego, CA	\$200 incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers in the retail sectors</li> </ul>
Thursday, March 28th, 2019 at 2pm	Flagship Research Suite 405 1011 Camino Del Rio South San Diego, CA	\$200 incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers in the hospitality sector</li> </ul>
Tuesday, April 2, 2019, 12pm	San Diego Workforce Partnership 9246 Lightwave Avenue San Diego CA 92123	No incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce development practitioners</li> </ul>

The sessions followed moderator's guides designed by SDWP with input from Probe Research Inc (see Appendix B).

Participants recruited to these focus group sessions constitute a small convenience sample and cannot be viewed as statistically representative of the larger worker/employer population of San Diego County.

The following report reflects the discussion sequence as it transpired during the focus group sessions. In some instances, material not referenced in the moderator's guide may be included as it emerged in the course of discussion while some scheduled sub-topics may have been omitted due to time restrictions or a lack of productive group input.

## RETAIL WORKERS

### Retail Industry Job Selection: Process & Considerations

#### Module Synopsis

The discussion on San Diego's retail sector began with a worker step-back or retrospective, where current workers were asked to revisit the kinds of factors, considerations or influences that were at play when they first considered work in this area.

Retail employers were asked to recall key influences and considerations that were at play when they first considered employment in retail.

One participant led off this discussion by explaining that she undertook a kind of informal assessment of the considered workplace by observing the apparent quality and condition of the workplace from the perspective of a potential worker. Did workers appear to be busy and attentive? Would this be the kind of place I could see myself working?

A worker from a very large retail department store chain added to this sentiment by declaring:

"If I get a vibe from certain workers that they sort of enjoy their life... Considering it's retail I might consider this."

A similar independent assessment process was affirmed by another retail worker:

"If I'm not greeted when I walk in a store and if I'm not acknowledged, I won't go back."

One focus group participant indicated that she was looking to work in a large corporation as opposed to a small or "mom-and-pop" operation. Here it was posited - to the agreement of several others - that larger organizations are generally more equipped to deal with the needs of workers:

"I don't really like working for small places because corporations, not only do they have better worker benefits but they also have rules and regulations. And when I say that, I mean they train you on things like safety standards. They're just more involved... Because negative things have occurred in the past and they know how to cover themselves."

Worker discounts were also raised by a few focus group participants as an attractive feature of retail work while another participant mentioned the social interactions that can be present in retail.

"There were a whole bunch of workers at this huge store, roughly 60 workers... I liked that part for its social opportunities".

## Focus on Retail Job Quality

### Module Synopsis

Group participants were provided with an explanation of a positive and negative decision-making matrix or a “push & pull” exercise designed to elicit specific attractions and barriers to retail employment. Following the creation of these lists, a “dotmocracy” ranking exercise was undertaken in order to determine the most salient industry assets and liabilities. Dotmocracy is a choice-modeling system that generates an inventory of perceived opportunities and challenges and assigns strength-of-voice to these group-generated attributes.

### “Pull” Factors (Things that encourage retention of retail workers)

As the summary table below illustrates, “pull” factors - job quality features that encourage workers to remain within their current retail jobs - were broad and varied. Among the thirteen factors volunteered by workers, two items – workplace culture and workplace accessibility – registered as particularly important.

The remaining eleven “pull” factors received similar strength of support with good wages, task variation, job security and opportunities for advancement each receiving only about half the level of support assigned to the top two factors.

On the issue of work-life balance, one middle-aged female participant clearly asserted:

“You can have some jobs where you work so much you can’t even enjoy life. And then you have other jobs where you don’t work enough so you can’t enjoy life.”

The presence of variety or the ability to perform different tasks was also viewed positively by several participants. One male manager from a prominent drugstore chain explained:

“I could be stocking shelves, always helping customers...Then I could jump on the register.”

**Table 2: Summary of Dotmocracy Results – “Pull Factors”**

	<i>“Retail Workers” (N=10) # of Dots</i>
Workplace culture	8
Accessibility/commute	7
Job security	4
Benefits	4
Worker discounts	4
Consistent schedules	4
Work-life balance	4
Feeling valued	4
Worker owned	3
Variety of tasks	3
Wages	3
Worker ownership/shares	3

### “Push” Factors (Things that encourage possible departure from retail jobs)

“Push” factors - the kinds of considerations that influence workers to potentially leave their retail positions - also varied but less so than the “pull” items discussed above (a total of eight “push” factors received some degree of participant support).

A lengthy or otherwise inconvenient commute to and from their jobs was clearly registered as a factor that may encourage some workers to consider other employment options – an issue which also topped the chart on the retention discussion.

Circumstances or situations when retail workers were not supported by their employers on matters such as disputes with consumers or other workers was also ranked highly as a factor which could encourage job flight.

“Sometimes you’re made out to be the bad guy” was observation mentioned by one senior-level retail worker.

Also along these lines, another focus group participant suggested a lack of worker support had actually driven this individual out of a previous retail position:

“If you were to raise an issue it would either go nowhere or you’d become an outcast.”

The presence of bad coworkers was also singled out as potentially unacceptable condition, and one which could well encourage individuals to leave their retail jobs.

“There are plenty of shady people working in these jobs.”

**Table 3: Summary of Dotmocracy Results – “Push Factors”**

Potential Job Flight Influences	“Retail Workers” (N=8) # of Dots
Commute	10
No employer support	9
Bad coworkers	8
Unpredictable schedules	7
Bad customers	5
No benefits	5
No advancement opportunities	3
Lack of task variety	2
Low social status	0
Mandatory holiday work	0

## Building a Better Retail Experience

### Module Synopsis

In this final module, the conversation turned to focus on the concept of “retail careers” before concluding with reaction to specific retail reforms or innovations designed to improve job quality in the retail sector.

### Prominent Regional Retailers

There was universal recognition across all group members that Costco was a high-quality retail employer. This consensus seemed to have been informed by personal experiences visiting this store and from word-of-mouth experiences with friends or family who have worked for that large retail chain.

One participant noted of Costco:

“They give yearly bonuses after 10 years of employment.”

While not strictly speaking a retail business, Starbucks was also singled out as a quality employer. One younger female retail worker said that she had heard:

“They actually spend more on their workers than they do on coffee beans!”

Target was also volunteered as a good retail employer from an individual who currently works at this retail chain:

“When your employer actually gives you free food (it’s a good thing). They have good benefits and their 401(k) is not too bad either.”

Trader Joe’s was also singled out as a high-quality employer although the group was perhaps less universally praiseworthy. According to one participant:

“It seems like everyone working there loves it.”

Home Depot was mentioned as a good retail option although there was some uncertainty or even dissent on this. One participant felt this retailer has actually declined in terms of its desirability as an employer in recent years:

“Back in the day they were really good. They gave lots of bonuses and things like that.... Now it’s night and day. Today they work longer hours for less pay and less benefits.”

### Retail Careers & Career Paths

It was generally accepted that retail careers do exist and that it is possible to advance along a career ladder in this sector. As had occurred earlier in the sessions, larger employers were singled out as offering more explicit and achievable career paths. Here it was felt that these large organizations had the know-how and resources to move workers through to progressively higher levels of responsibility and career fulfillment.

There was some agreement that, despite the theoretical opportunity for career advancement, that it would really be up to the individual worker to “fight for” career advancement and that this initiative would probably reside with the worker rather than being something which is driven by the organization or employer itself.

In terms of the upper limits of possible salary, some retail workers participating in this research felt that individuals reaching management levels can earn \$80,000 or even “six figures” annually.

Regardless of career aspirations or the length of time individuals may choose to remain in the retail sector, it was generally agreed that experiences gained while working in this sector were highly valuable and transferable to many other positions and vocations.

A focus group participant working in a women's clothing chain expressed this bluntly:

"Retail can prepare you for anything."

Adding to this sentiment another retail worker from a large department chain asserted:

"Just learning customer service and POS systems alone will get you into other companies."

## Reaction to Specific Retail Job Quality Improvement Proposals

### *Stable Scheduling*

For many retail workers participating in this research, a stable or predictable schedule is an elusive and yet desirable feature. This discussion of scheduling, it should be noted, was clarified by participants as meaning both the length of advance notice they would receive before their shifts as well as days of the week and number of hours they could expect to receive. Most of these participants freely offered that they did not presently have stable schedules in this sense. The appeal of knowing in advance the number hours these workers could expect was generally seen as more desirable than knowing the particular days they would be expected to work.

When asked to respond to a kind of trade-off scenario where higher wages would be offered in exchange for tolerating an unpredictable or unstable work schedule, almost all research participants would opt for a stable schedule rather than an hourly wage increase. This desire for stability endured even when an offer of a hypothetical one dollar an hour raise was mentioned as the incentive for bearing an unstable schedule.

A younger female department store worker explained her position on this trade-off:

“For me, if I had a schedule etched in stone, I could get a second job and know exactly when I’m going to work. And then I could make extra money... Not just 50 cents an hour more.”

### *Inequality*

All focus group participants agreed that inequality and discrimination was present in San Diego’s retail sector. Older people, women, those with physical disabilities, and racial or ethnic minorities were all acknowledged as frequent victims of discrimination in retail (and elsewhere).

One participant suggested that larger retail corporations have formal approaches and policies designed to increase diversity and that the very presence of these policies confirms the existence of inequality and discrimination:

“The bigger the company the harder they push it. If it wasn’t an issue, they wouldn’t push it.”

In terms of addressing the issue of inequality and discrimination in the sector, there were no clear solutions advanced although one non-white participant insisted that it is a critical starting point to acknowledge the difference between “diversity” and “equality of opportunity”. Here it seemed to be suggested that the presence of diversity in the retail workplace could be little more than tokenism if it is not accompanied by true equality of opportunity in the area of advancement and the like. This same individual went on to assert that the promotion of greater equality will only occur if inequality is overtly recognized by employers:

“One of the main problems we have is that we don’t want to admit (inequality and discrimination) exists. You can’t address a problem if you don’t believe there is a problem... It’s uncomfortable to talk about and people don’t want to admit there’s a problem.”

## RETAIL/HOSPITALITY EMPLOYERS

### Primacy of Workers

#### Module Synopsis

The discussion on San Diego's retail sector began with an exploration of employers' views on the importance of workers and their organizations including current and emerging challenges and opportunities managing staff in a digital age.

#### Job Appeal

Most employers speaking on behalf of both hospitality and retail businesses were generally happy with their workers and the quality of work performed by these workers.

Mirroring key findings derived from the retail worker sessions, many retail and hospitality employers attending these focus group sessions agreed that their current workers were initially attracted to their jobs because of what was seen to be an appealing workplace culture.

"People are looking to see how the business is run and how they treat their workers."

Interest in the particular product or service being offered was also described as a factor that sometimes attracts workers. This was also consistent with findings from the worker sessions wherein retail workers suggested they were drawn to and maintain loyalty to certain businesses because of the presence of worker discounts.

Convenience, or ease of access, was also seen as a key potential consideration for some workers. As the manager of a variety chain store put it:

"My store is right in the middle of the neighborhood, so I get people who live around there."

Flexibility in scheduling and the ability to work part-time was seen as particularly attractive to employers hiring workers in San Diego's hospitality sector. Evidently, much of the work in this sector is inherently sporadic or unpredictable and those who choose to work in these types of jobs must find this appealing or at least have a level of tolerance for uncertainty in schedules and hours worked.

Although opportunities for advancement and promotion were more commonly embraced as a potential incentive for workers considering jobs in the retail sector, hospitality-related employers tended to note that many who choose to work in that sector take these jobs as a sort of "stepping stone" to careers in other sectors. Similarly, wage levels and the presence of worker benefits seemed to be regarded as a lower level inducement for workers in the hospitality sector than was apparent among retail employers.

#### Wages

Retail and hospitality employers were asked to comment on common practices and challenges regarding worker wage rates and remuneration.

With only a few exceptions, most employers in both sessions agreed that, in an ideal world, they would be amenable to increasing their workers' wage rates. This was generally regarded as desirable because these workers "deserved" higher levels of compensation and because increasing wages would be expected to help to recruit and retain high-quality workers.

For many employers, wage rates were determined by "head office" or according to a corporate wage template. Despite this often centralized and inflexible wage schedule, a couple of managers in these larger operations did play a role in performing periodic worker reviews. The information gathered at these reviews was used as inputs for determining if and how much a given worker would receive in salary or wage increases.

Smaller retail and hospitality businesses often determined worker wage rates on their own – sometimes by scanning the competitive marketplace or, among a small minority of focus group participants, by starting these workers at the official minimum wage rate and then providing wage increases from that level as appropriate.

In some cases, and particularly among hospitality employers, worker wages were determined via subjective appraisals. This approach to pay-setting could sometimes result in two or more workers receiving different wages even though they may both be performing largely similar or identical tasks. In the few instances where this was reported, employers tended to regard this as an awkward and yet necessary reality.

### Benefits

As was the case for wage-setting, many retail, and particularly hospitality sector employers, were not in a position to determine or provide benefits as these were the domain of a higher authority - typically a centralized human resources or labour relations department.

Nonetheless, virtually all employers in both sessions regarded worker benefits packages as highly desirable and a powerful tool for recruiting and retaining top quality staff. Highly valued benefits among these employers included healthcare (“healthcare is in a class by itself”) and, as suggested by one retail employer paid time off.

### Impact of Online/Digital Innovation

The growing influence and application of digital and online applications were generally seen by employers as playing some role in the disruption of both the retail and hospitality sectors. Many had heard of the impact of online shopping upon traditional brick-and-mortar retail operations although several participants in both groups felt a sense of qualified immunity to these forces.

One retail employer felt that the growing digital or online retail sector would probably result in a demand for more workers – although it was acknowledged that these new workers may require a different skill set than those currently employed in brick-and-mortar retail operations.

A hospitality sector worker suggested that social media was already having an impact on his business as these channels provided customers with real-time recommendations and advice regarding various entertainment options. This, it was also noted, could be deployed by the hospitality organization itself by way of directing consumers towards their offering.

## Reaction to Worker Wish-List and to Additional Specific Reforms

### Module Synopsis

In this final module, the conversation turned to focus on specific job quality dimensions and potential reforms. Employers were informed of the larger objectives of improving job quality and were asked to comment on specific reforms advanced by workers in a previous qualitative research session.

### Scheduling

Both retail and hospitality sector employers alike suggested that staff scheduling was a present and ongoing concern. Many participants clearly felt the creation and management of staff schedules was a critical and often frustrating responsibility requiring significant judgement and balance. As one manager from an entertainment-related company put it:

“(Scheduling) can cause stress. You try to make everyone happy and that’s their lives... You don’t want to make them unhappy.”

In terms of actual schedule practices, many employers attempt to schedule worker hours as far in advance as possible but, in many cases – especially in the instance of hospitality employers – they feel that schedules can only be created ‘reactively’ on a job-by-job basis.

Some hospitality sector employers indicated they rarely receive worker complaints about what may appear to be hastily assembled or last-minute schedules as employers in these organizations generally accept this as a reality or occupational hazard related to work in the field. Indeed, many hospitality employers suggest that the type of individuals attracted to work in the hospitality jobs in the first place accept this as a trade-off that also comes with significant lifestyle flexibility and freedom. For these hospitality employers, a move towards stable scheduling was a non-starter given the realities of their business and the nature of service demand.

One retail employer from a national variety chain store described one scheduling challenge as stemming from uneven weekly allocation of hours from a central office:

“One week they’ll give us, say, 290 hours to fill in and the next week it will only be 240 hours.”

Across both employer groups, there appeared to be little utilization of computer-based technology or apps designed to assist in staff scheduling. One hospitality sector employer pointed to Google Docs as one of the technologies used to assist in scheduling while another said they frequently use group texts that provide workers with access to shifts on a first-come first-served basis.

### Task Variation

Most employers in both sessions acknowledged and appreciated the value of providing workers with variety in terms of their day-to-day duties and work functions. No one appeared to be surprised to learn that workers, themselves, stressed the importance of task variety is a key dimension of their satisfaction with their jobs.

One retail employer insisted that making an effort to provide workers with variety offered a business dividend in the sense that workers who receive this type of variation will ultimately be more productive:

“When people are doing the same thing, they get bored. So it takes them longer to do something. Changing it up gets them that fresh energy.”

A Costco manager expressed a similar perspective related to the value of having a versatile workforce:

“The more you move around and get cross-trained, the more valuable obviously you are to us.”

And although task variety was almost universally recognized as something desirable at least for enhancing worker satisfaction, a few employers asserted that this kind of variation was not always possible or that there were efficiencies to having some workers specialize in their roles – even if these

were fundamentally repetitive in nature. One operator of a health food retail organization and North County, San Diego stated:

“I do believe in keeping people in their swimming lanes, so to speak...Making sure they finished that and then maybe they are able to float around a bit.”

One hospitality sector employer offered that a strategy of “team play” can sometimes be used to inspire a higher level of worker engagement and satisfaction when it may not be possible to offer actual task variation.

### Human Resources Function

For many smaller hospitality and retail operators, human resources is a function performed by the owner/operator. Managers working for larger operations typically work “under” a centralized human resources department or office. As one manager at a women’s millennial-oriented clothing retailer put it:

“Ours is run through corporate. So any problem that happens at my store would have to be put up through them.”

Corporate hierarchies, lack of financial resources or time constraints were each identified as key impediments to building a stronger human resources function although almost all participants in both employer groups recognized that a strong human resources function would be a key asset for their operations. And even though developing a stronger human resources function or devoting more energy in this area was broadly seen as a positive goal, many participants noted that much of human resources today still seems to be reactive and is generally only visible when “things are going wrong or when someone is stopping or starting”.

### Equality

Employers were led through a brief concluding discussion module on issues surrounding inequality in San Diego’s retail sector. In the case of retail employers, Dr. Daniel Enemark provided retail employers with a graphic illustration of income inequality in the region and its relationship to worker race. This material was used to stimulate discussion regarding possible causes of and remedies to this inequality.

For the session with hospitality employers, Ms. Sarah Burns led the conversation with the use of a similar graphic illustration showing this disparity or inequality with respect to income and gender.

Generally, employers from both sessions acknowledged that inequality and discrimination with respect to the manner in which visible minorities, women, disabled citizens and others are treated in the retail and hospitality sectors is present society-wide and is not unique to these sectors.

Given this broader context of the perception of societal inequity and discrimination, it is not surprising that some employers felt that the solutions to these problems must be addressed “from the top” (i.e. the president, Congress etc.).

Echoing this kind of high-level discussion recommendation, another retail employer said:

“(The solution) needs to be less about rules and more about education...If you just start the conversation that we are all just the same...that removes the sensitivity.”

When retail workers were asked to explain the apparent inequality between income and race in the county one employer suggested:

“You can base a lot on the neighbourhood you grew up in and the opportunities available there.”

Another employer felt that inequity stemmed from a *perceived* lack of opportunities and a kind of self-restraint or self-selection among applicants:

“When I screen resumes, I don’t know if they’re white, black or Hispanic...And I don’t care... But in my past experience, (visible minorities) don’t apply as much.”

One hospitality employer picked up on a theme discussed earlier regarding worker mobility by repeating:

“For many people, hospitality work is only a stepping-stone which can explain some of these wage differences.”

Another hospitality participant suggested that, because many hospitality jobs include domestic duties such as the work of hotel maids and housekeepers, there is simply a greater interest among women to fulfil these types of jobs.

## WORKFORCE PRACTITIONERS

### Retail Job Quality

#### How is success defined at your organization?

The number one way that success is defined for workforce practitioners is placements.

*You have to meet your productivity.*

*We have a contract with the county; we have to place 75% of job-ready clients within 90 days of becoming work-ready. It's even tied to our pay.*

Some participants said they were rewarded for retention.

*Get them employed and keep them employed.*

Most participants described tension between organizational goals (usually placements) and personal goals (usually quality of care).

*There's a balance between job development and serving clients.*

*To my supervisor, we're being successful when we are meeting our numbers. To me, I feel successful when I help someone find a job that they like.*

*As an employment coordinator, that was the key thing we would get grilled on. I get a question like "how many placements did you get this month?" But that depends on whether the counselor created the right plan, whether the client's disability was exacerbated to the point where they can't pursue employment. For me the real metric is quality interaction. What was the quality of my customer service?*

Many workforce practitioners are personally invested in sustainable progress for their clients.

*A large part of what we do in welfare-to-work is education. Trying to enable people to think forward about different possible paths in life.*

*Participation in programs is really important. Motivate them past the idea that they have to stay employed to keep benefits to a point of self-sufficiency.*

*I have clients tell me "I need to be employed because I feel better."*

*I'm part of a clinic that services folks with severe mental illness. We have county funding, so I have to meet that county goal of 80% placed. But an achievement is having clients come to their appointments or be motivated enough to look for a job. We feel like we've achieved something when a client comes consistently.*

*Success for me is tied to self-sufficiency. For clients to be responsible and contributing members of society.*

*We want people to leave our programs and never have to come back.*

Some organizations track more information than just grant deliverables.

*We have placement goals we track, but we started tracking more numbers—wage information.*

*Are all of our placements just making \$12/hour?*

Is there anyone who rewards you for doing education on job quality?

*[Only one person said yes. They said I'm rewarded for work-based learning activities.]*

*What matters to the DOL is numbers. If it doesn't match O\*Net, it doesn't matter.*

Clients sometimes want to maintain their benefits, which influences their job choices.

*We want people to leave our programs and never have to come back.*

#### What determines what kind of jobs your clients end up in?

Job exploration; interest assessment; client's personality, talent, education; available developed jobs, job location accessibility; labor market information.

*We consult quarterly trends in labor market.*

*Often the job description says "must have reliable transportation."*

*[Every participant experienced transportation as a barrier for their clients.]*

Participants viewed interests/passions as a major driver for job-seekers' efforts, and a determinant of whether clients stayed in their jobs.

*Interest is the major motivator for clients. If someone wants to be a tattoo artist, years ago we would have said "no don't do that?." Now we would say, yeah, you can make money doing that, and you're more likely to stay in that job.*

*I have clients with anxiety. If they're physically able, they like to work at a warehouse. They like doing things that keep them physically busy because it calms their minds.*

The practitioners we convened largely worked with populations that experience serious barriers to employment, and those barriers tended to determine what jobs were feasible.

*It's really hard with justice-involved clients. A lot of employers don't understand that justice-involvement can be a small issue that follows someone forever.*

*I have a lot of job seekers I can't place because of medical limitations, and companies often aren't willing to adjust schedules or make other allowances.*

*I have clients with anxiety, so putting on the customer service face or voice—they don't like to do it.*

*Education is a barrier for some clients.*

Race, class, gender, disability, and other dimensions of prejudice can create barriers.

*In tourism there's a "casting" issue. If you have job seekers who don't fit the mold, that can be a barrier.*

*Having a first name [that doesn't sound white] can limit your opportunities.*

*Labor law covers everything except class.*

*I tell my clients when they're looking for a job, they're interviewing you, but also you're interviewing them. I've been discriminated against, and I can read people. If I feel like this company is not receiving me well, I'm not going to work with them.*

*[When I talk about my clients] I never use the word welfare, because there is so much prejudice.*

*We were doing a mock interview with this girl experiencing schizophrenia, and my last question was "do you have any questions for me?" And she told me "would you hire someone with a disability?" [That made me happy.] We need to teach them to advocate for themselves.*

*You'll see the demographics of who's interviewing you. When I was in HR putting together interview panels, I made sure to assemble a diverse panel.*

Work experience can be a way to educate employers on the value of clients' work, and counteract prejudice against certain workers.

*For us, work experience is really fantastic. With work experience, employers get to experience our participants without having to pay any salary out. The workers really market themselves, and that educates employers.*

### Are there some aspects of job quality that effect your placements? Are there jobs you wouldn't put people in because of job quality?

Company culture—and particular treatment of workers—was a major factor for participants.

*There's a deli I go to, and I could easily talk to the deli manager and get a placement, but I know they overwork their employees and underpay them.*

*I met with an HR manager, and they were harsh and horrible.*

Wages were important, especially because of San Diego's high cost of living.

*One thing is San Diego, is—minimum wage is not going to cut it. If our clients are comparing minimum wages with their existing (welfare) benefits, they might choose welfare.*

### Do clients know what constitutes a quality job?

Most clients do not have a clear sense of what they should be looking for.

*[Everyone shakes their heads no.]*

*Sometimes we're dealing with generational welfare, where this might be the first person in their family to have a job.*

*We have to educate clients—explain to them what a quality job is. You explain to me what you're looking for, and I'll tell you what I think is a quality job.*

*You can't think about job quality if you're in survival mode. You can't ask someone in survival mode what their dream is. They might have a nightmare, but that's it.*

*If you can create a work and learn opportunity, then maybe you can get people out of survival mode.*

Often clients don't think about advancement opportunities. They don't want to take jobs that may be unappealing at first but have better opportunities for advancement.

*No one in their family has ever taught them how to judge a good job.*

*You have to give clients vision, not instant gratification.*

*My client says "I have to ride an hour on the bus to get to this job," but I say this is a good job.*

*Stick with it and you will be able to buy a car.*

*Sometimes job satisfaction is a luxury.*

### How do you know when a job provides opportunities for advancement?

Do research.

*You visit the website, go to the career opportunities link.*

*Call the HR department and ask them.*

*Look at the organizational structure.*

*I go talk to people who work there, talk to people in middle management. I spoke with a bank manager who started as a teller. She said "this is a great place to work. This is a company that will invest in you."*

*In government, job advancement is set. But if you take a job in the private sector, especially a startup, you need to be on point with negotiation.*

### How many people end up with retail jobs?

Participants said they didn't tend to place individuals in retail jobs.

*Not that many.*

*By default we don't recommend retail.*

*[An important caveat: there may be some pressure among workforce practitioners to underreport the number of retail jobs, because they are seen as lower-quality jobs.]*

### What are some of the alternatives to retail?

Customer service, caregiving, warehouse work, tourism.

*Geico has a livable wage for customer service representatives.*

### To what extent do you find yourself educating employers on job quality?

Many participants felt this was urgently needed, but difficult to do.

*That's the hardest part.*

*We have employers, and everyone gives them that pat on the back, like "you've made it now." But they don't realize, maybe they need some training on how to be a better interviewer.*

*Someone is great at engineering, wow, you do amazing software development, but you treat the janitor like they're a wild animal—that doesn't work.*

*Supervisors can change at any time. We need to make strong contacts with HR. We need to provide education on disability.*

### Is retail undifferentiated? Or are there good and bad employers?

Some retail jobs are more reliable than others.

*Some retail isn't going to be there anymore, because of Amazon.*

*With retail, you have to think, "what's the job growth and career advancement you'll have?"*

The quality of a retail job may be dependent on what the client wants to do in the future.

*We have a client who wants to go to pharmacy school, so we suggested they start at CVS and build relationships there. If it's related to their overall goals, then we might recommend retail.*

Some employers are better.

*Costco has a good benefits package and makes better money.*

*You can work as a supervisor at Costco and get good job skills and learn how to lead a team, and take that elsewhere.*

*I look Goodwill because they have that Ticket to Work program. My clients have benefits they're afraid to lose. They're homeless, in sober living, they're recently incarcerated—they're in survival mode. So transitioning them from the safety net of benefits to having their own money. Every Tuesday at 9am Goodwill has a recruiter you can talk to and they'll place you somewhere.*

*I've had similar experience—clients [working at Goodwill] who have conflicts with coworkers, and HR is very responsive, really supportive.*

*I have a nephew with special needs who cleans bathrooms at SeaWorld, they help with his college tuition, and now he's a supervisor on the janitorial staff. He doesn't have a car but he factors in two hours to get there from Chula Vista on the trolley and bus. SeaWorld's a real good place.*

### Is there low-hanging fruit—things that might not cost a lot to employers but would help them recruit more/better candidates?

Improving management

*There are so many people who are managers but have never been trained to manage.*

Facilitating transportation

*Transportation is a big thing. Some sort of transportation support.*

*[Every participant experienced transportation as a barrier for their clients.]*

Create more opportunities for advancement

*Integrate more training programs into the workflow—more internal professional development.*

*Having a cohort model.*

*I wish we could get an apprenticeship program for non-union jobs, like healthcare.*

### Is scheduling a barrier for clients?

Yes.

*Some clients who start at 20 hours and then get cut to 6 hours.  
Some employers have these outrageous schedules—they want you to sell your soul to them.  
[Restaurants, hospitality, theaters have bad schedules.]*

Scheduling intersects with childcare.

*If they're single parents they need to pick up their children, so they have to leave at a certain time for childcare, and that becomes a barrier.*

*Childcare is such a huge expense. We partner with YMCA and Child Development Association to provide childcare for our clients and it's incredibly helpful. The people we work with, their children are their lives. We would have a very small amount of participation in our program without that childcare.*

*Low income clients can get free childcare if their income is below \$36,000 or so, so sometimes it's not worth it to take a job advancement if you're going to lose childcare.*

Scheduling intersects with transportation.

*The MCRD Mess Hall has a contract for hiring workers with disabilities, but they have insane hours when none of the buses can get there.*

*Often the job description says "must have reliable transportation."*

## **APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRES**

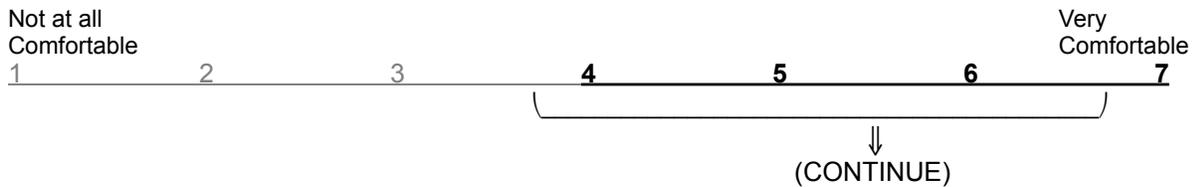
## Focus Group Screener Questionnaire: Retail Workers

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am from Probe Research, a professional public opinion research company. Is (read name held from list) available? We are looking for people to join a special in-person discussion session on the evening of **Wednesday March 27th** about career and employment experiences and aspirations.

These sessions are lively and entertaining and you do not need any special knowledge or skills to contribute to these sessions. All we are looking for are friendly people who are willing to share their ideas and observations in a group with around 8 or 9 people like yourself. If you decide to attend this focus group session, you will be paid \$100 cash in exchange for about an hour and a half of your time.

This focus group session is strictly for research purposes and all of the comments you provide at this session are held in strict confidence. No one at this focus group will be offering to sell you anything or sign you up for anything. It is also important for you to know that if you come to this focus group your name will not be passed on to any other party.

1. Do you think you might be interested in attending a focus group session in the evening of **Wednesday March 27th**?
2. Do you have a few minutes to answer some questions to see if you qualify for participation in this research?  
 Yes .....01 (ASK NEXT Q.)  
 No.....02 (RESCHEDULE RECRUIT CALLBACK)
3. On a scale of 1 to 7 where “1” means “you are not at all comfortable” and “7” means “you are very comfortable”, how comfortable would you be speaking in a group with about 10 other people?



4. Do you, or does anyone else in your immediate family or household work for a media outlet, a market research company, or an advertising company?  
 Yes .....(THANK AND TERMINATE)  
 No.....(ASK NEXT Q.)
5. Are you currently employed in a retail job?  
 Yes .....01 (SKIP TO Q7.)  
 No.....02 (CONTINUE)
6. I am going to read you a few statements and I would like you to tell me which one best describes your retail career intentions:  
 I intend to continue my retail career for the foreseeable future.  
 I Intend to leave retail after completing college/university  
 Will be leaving retail to attend school. (Max 2)  
 I hope to leave retail to pursue other career opportunities in the foreseeable future.

7. What is your employment status in the retail sector? Are you employed:

Full-time.....01 (Mix of full & Part-time)  
 Part-time.....02  
 Casual/ Seasonal .....03  
 Other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_

8. Can you please tell me what kind of products you deal with as a retail worker?

Electronics/Computer/Cellular....01  
 Clothing/footwear .....02  
 Sporting goods .....03  
 Home Appliances .....04  
 Cosmetics/Health & Beauty.....05  
 Jewelry .....06  
 Pharmacy/Drugstore .....07  
 Furniture/Home accessories .....08  
 Luggage/travel accessories.....09  
 Gift shop .....10  
 Toys/video games.....11  
 Candy/Specialty foods.....12  
 Automobile sales .....13  
 Supermarket.....14  
 Automobile parts/repair .....15 (THANK AND TERMINATE)  
 Bar/Restaurant .....16 (THANK AND TERMINATE)  
 Hotel/Catering .....17 (THANK AND TERMINATE)  
 Retail Banking .....18 (THANK AND TERMINATE)  
 Insurance services .....19 (THANK AND TERMINATE)  
 Other (specify).....\_\_\_\_\_

9. How long have you worked in the retail sector?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How long have you worked for your current employer?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What is your position?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How are you compensated?

Salary .....01  
 Commission.....02  
 Salary/commission blend .....03  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

13. Which of the following best describes your ethnic or racial background... (READ, record)

White, not of Hispanic origin .....1  
 Black, not of Hispanic origin.....2  
 Hispanic or Latino .....3  
 Asian or Pacific Islander.....4  
 Native American .....5  
 Another ethnic group? [SPECIFY:] \_\_\_\_\_  
 (DK/REF).....9999

**RECRUIT DETAILS:**

Your characteristics are just what we require for the discussion group. The session will take approximately an hour and a half for which you will receive \$100. Are you still interested in participating?

YES \_\_\_ (CONTINUE)                      NO \_\_\_ (THANK & TERMINATE)

I just need to get a little more information for statistical purposes.

a) Gender: (DO NOT ASK – WATCH QUOTAS): Female: ___    Male ___
b) What year were you born? _____
c) What is your marital status? ___ Married    ___ Divorced    ___ Separated    ___ Common Law    ___ Single
d) What category does your household income fall into (that is the income of all persons in your home)? ___ Under \$20,000    ___ \$20-\$40,000    ___ \$40-\$60,000    ___ \$60-\$80,000    ___ \$80-\$100,000    ___ Over \$100,000

I have some information for you to take down. Do you have a pen handy?

- The discussion session will take place on the evening Wednesday March 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm
- You must be there by 6:45 p.m. and it is very important that you be on time.
- The sessions will be held at Flagship Research offices at Suite 405- 1011 Caminio Del Rio South. This is in the Mission Valley of the #8 Interstate Highway. ASK: "Do you know where this is?" IF NO READ: "I can send you a link with a map showing you where this focus group studio is located. Would you like me to do this?" IF YES COLLECT E-MAIL ADDRESS AND FORWARD LINK
- Free parking is available beneath the building.
- The session will take approximately 90 minutes for which you will receive \$100.
- You may not bring any children or someone else to the session.
- Refreshments will be provided.
- Once again that is **specify location** at 5:45 p.m. on Wednesday, March 27th

If you require further information between now and March 27<sup>th</sup> or are unable to attend the discussion group please call.

We look forward to seeing you there. Good-bye.

## Focus Group Screener Questionnaire: Retail employers

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am from Probe Research, a professional public opinion research company. Is (read name from list) available? We are looking for people to join a special in-person discussion session on the evening of **Thursday, March 28th** about your experiences as an employer in San Diego's retail sector. Specifically, we are hoping to discuss some of the kinds of things employers like you are doing or could be doing to improve the overall quality of jobs and work in the retail industry. This research is sponsored in part by the San Diego Workforce Partnership

If you decide to attend this focus group session, you will be paid \$200 cash in exchange for about an hour and a half of your time.

This focus group session is strictly for research purposes and all of the comments you provide at this session are held in strict confidence. No one at this focus group will be offering to sell you anything or sign you up for anything. It is also important for you to know that if you come to this focus group your name will not be passed on to any other party.

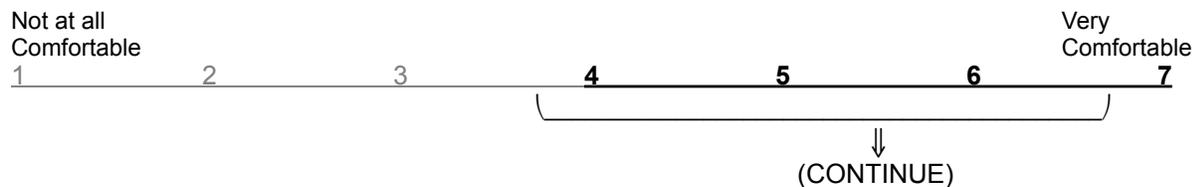
1. Do you think you might be interested in attending a focus group session around the noon hour on **Thursday March 28th**?

Yes .....01 (CONTINUE)  
No.....02 (THANK AND TERMINATE)

2. Do you have a few minutes to answer some questions to see if you qualify for participation in this research?

Yes .....01 (ASK NEXT Q.)  
No.....02 (RESCHEDULE RECRUIT CALLBACK)

3. On a scale of 1 to 7 where "1" means "you are not at all comfortable" and "7" means "you are very comfortable", how comfortable would you be speaking in a group with about 10 other people?



4. You currently work for a company in San Diego's retail sector?

Yes .....01 (CONTINUE)  
No.....02 (TERMINATE)

5. Can you please tell me the name of the company you work for?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your position or formal job title at that company?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. About how many front-line retail workers does your company have (including all locations)? This would include retail sales people, cashiers etc. (Recruit a range from below ranges)

Less than 10  
11 to 20  
21 to 50  
More than 50

8. Which of the following statements best describes your role or responsibilities regarding your company's workers:

I have full authority over decisions regarding the salary and benefits of at least some of my company's workers

I have significant influence over decisions regarding the salaries and benefits of at least some of my company's workers

I have little or no authority over decisions regarding the salaries and benefits of any of my company's workers (ASK NEXT QUESTION)

9. Would you be able to provide me with the name and contact information of the individual at your firm who has authority over decisions regarding your company's workers' salary and benefits?

RECORD NAME AND ATTEMPT RECRUIT: \_\_\_\_\_

**RECRUIT DETAILS:**

Your characteristics are just what we require for the discussion group. The session will take approximately an hour and a half for which you will receive \$200. Are you still interested in participating?

YES \_\_\_ (CONTINUE)                      NO \_\_\_ (THANK & TERMINATE)

I just need to get a little more information for statistical purposes.

a) Gender: (DO NOT ASK – WATCH QUOTAS): Female: ___ Male ___	
b) What year were you born? _____	
c) How long have you worked in the retail sector? # Years _____	
d) How many retail workers do you currently oversee? # Workers _____	
e) What is the highest level of education you have obtained? _____	
Name	Telephone

I have some information for you to take down. Do you have a pen handy?

- The discussion session will take place at 12 o'clock noon on March 28, 2019
- You must be there by 11:45 a.m. and it is very important that you be on time.
- The sessions will be held at Flagship Research offices at Suite 405- 1011 Caminio Del Rio South. This is in the Mission Valley of the #8 Interstate Highway. ASK: "Do you know where this is?" IF NO READ: "I can send you a link with a map showing you where this focus group studio is located. Would you like me to do this?" IF YES COLLECT E-MAIL ADDRESS AND FORWARD LINK
- Free parking is available beneath the building.
- The session will take approximately 90 minutes for which you will receive \$100.
- You may not bring any children or someone else to the session.
- Refreshments will be provided.
- Once again that is **specify location** at 11:45 a.m. on Thursday, March 28th

If you require further information between now and March 28<sup>th</sup> or are unable to attend the discussion group please call.

We look forward to seeing you there. Good-bye.

## Focus Group Screener Questionnaire: Hospitality employers

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am from Probe Research, a professional public opinion research company. Is (read name from list) available? We are looking for people to join a special in-person discussion session on the afternoon of **Thursday March 28th** about your experiences as an employer in San Diego's hospitality sector. Specifically, we are hoping to discuss some of the kinds of things employers like you are doing or could be doing to improve the overall quality of jobs and work in the hospitality industry. This research is sponsored in part by the San Diego Workforce Partnership

If you decide to attend this focus group session, you will be paid \$200 cash in exchange for about an hour and a half of your time.

This focus group session is strictly for research purposes and all of the comments you provide at this session are held in strict confidence. No one at this focus group will be offering to sell you anything or sign you up for anything. It is also important for you to know that if you come to this focus group your name will not be passed on to any other party.

1. Do you think you might be interested in attending a focus group session at 2pm on **Thursday, March 28th**?

Yes .....01 (CONTINUE)  
No.....02 (THANK AND TERMINATE)

2. Do you have a few minutes to answer some questions to see if you qualify for participation in this research?

Yes .....01 (ASK NEXT Q.)  
No.....02 (RESCHEDULE RECRUIT CALLBACK)

3. On a scale of 1 to 7 where "1" means "you are not at all comfortable" and "7" means "you are very comfortable", how comfortable would you be speaking in a group with about 10 other people?

Not at all Comfortable Very Comfortable

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

↓  
(CONTINUE)

4. You currently work for a company in San Diego's hospitality sector? By hospitality sector I mean restaurants, hotels tourist attractions and the like.

Yes .....01 (CONTINUE)  
No.....02 (TERMINATE)

5. Can you please tell me the name of the company you work for?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your position or formal job title at that company?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. About how many front-line workers does your company have (including all locations)? This would include waiters/waitresses, cashiers etc. (Recruit a range from below ranges)

Less than 10  
11 to 20  
21 to 50  
More than 50

8. Which of the following statements best describes your role or responsibilities regarding your company's workers:

I have full authority over decisions regarding the salary and benefits of at least some of my company's workers

I have significant influence over decisions regarding the salaries and benefits of at least some of my company's workers

I have little or no authority over decisions regarding the salaries and benefits of any of my company's workers (ASK NEXT QUESTION)

9. Would you be able to provide me with the name and contact information of the individual at your firm who has authority over decisions regarding your company's workers' salary and benefits?

RECORD NAME AND ATTEMPT RECRUIT: \_\_\_\_\_

**RECRUIT DETAILS:**

Your characteristics are just what we require for the discussion group. The session will take approximately an hour and a half for which you will receive \$200. Are you still interested in participating?

YES \_\_\_ (CONTINUE)                      NO \_\_\_ (THANK & TERMINATE)

I just need to get a little more information for statistical purposes.

a) Gender: (DO NOT ASK – WATCH QUOTAS): Female: ___ Male___	
b) What year were you born? _____	
c) How long have you worked in the hospitality sector? # Years_____	
d) How many workers do you currently oversee? # Workers_____	
e) What is the highest level of education you have obtained? _____	
Name	Telephone

I have some information for you to take down. Do you have a pen handy?

- The discussion session will take place at 2pm on March 28, 2019
- You must be there by 1:45 pm. and it is very important that you be on time.
- The sessions will be held at Flagship Research offices at Suite 405- 1011 Caminio Del Rio South. This is in the Mission Valley of the #8 Interstate Highway. ASK: "Do you know where this is?" IF NO READ: "I can send you a link with a map showing you where this focus group studio is located. Would you like me to do this?" IF YES COLLECT E-MAIL ADDRESS AND FORWARD LINK
- Free parking is available beneath the building.
- The session will take approximately 90 minutes for which you will receive \$200.
- You may not bring any children or someone else to the session.
- Refreshments will be provided.
- Once again that is **specify location** at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday, March 28th

If you require further information between now and March 28<sup>th</sup> or are unable to attend the discussion group please call.

We look forward to seeing you there. Good-bye.

## Focus Group Recruitment: Workforce Practitioners

Workforce practitioners were recruited via email.

### Email #1

**From:** Brooke Valle

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 5, 2019 6:44:24 PM

**Subject:** Business Services Collaborative Next Steps - Job Quality

All,

Thank you for attending our first Business Services Collaborative meeting and for expressing interest in getting more involved in job quality work in our community. We are strongly committed to setting our job seekers and incumbent workers on a path to economic mobility; thank you for your willingness to engage on this topic!

The Southern Border Region (San Diego and Imperial) has launched a number of job quality efforts thanks to both state and philanthropic funding. While these are important steps, we realize that they just scratch the surface and there is so much more we can do. Some of current efforts include:

- Launched a [call for employers](#) interested in doing job quality experiments in the healthcare space. This is a pilot that we want to eventually leverage in other areas – feel free to share if you have employers who may be interested
- Included job quality as one the [five pillars in our regional and local plan](#)
- Will be holding a series of focus group type meetings in Feb/March with employees, employers and folks like yourselves to collect input on job quality and inform a position paper

How can you engage?

- We encourage you to take a look at the draft of the [Regional Plan](#) which includes our five pillars and share any feedback you may have with us. Comments may be directed to Melanie Hitchcock at [MelanieHitchcock@workforce.org](mailto:MelanieHitchcock@workforce.org). The public comment period is open through 5pm on February 14<sup>th</sup>
- Stay tuned for an invite to participate in upcoming focus groups on job quality
- Share any “in-flight” or near-term job quality efforts that your organization is leading – we would love to hear about and amplify all of the good work underway/close to launch
- Forward along any thought-provoking resources you have found on job quality. Here are a few to get the juices flowing:
  - [Aspen Good Jobs](#)
  - [Job Quality Work – Paris School of Economics](#)
  - [Pinkerton Foundation Job Quality Series](#)
  - [Job Quality Initiative – National Fund for Workforce Solutions \(Job Design Framework\)](#)
  - [Behavioral Economics for Workforce Professionals](#)
  - [Moving Beyond Job Creation – Pacific Community Ventures](#)
  - [Prioritizing Job Quality \(Brookings\)](#)
  - [OECD Data on Job Quality](#)
  - [Is Job Quality Becoming More Unequal](#) (London based work but see indices of nonwage job quality: Work Quality, Work Intensity, Good Physical Environment, and Working Time Quality).

Thank you! We are excited to connect with you on this topic.

Brooke

### Brooke Valle

Vice President of Strategy

San Diego Workforce Partnership

**Email #2**

**From:** Sarah Burns

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 6, 2019 2:05:35 PM

**Subject:** Re: Business Services Collaborative Next Steps - Job Quality

All,

As promised, we'll be hosting a focus group on job quality with workforce practitioners next month. We'd love to have you participate and share your thoughts on how we all can help optimize the quality of San Diego's jobs. If you're interested, please use this Doodle Poll to let us know when you're available:

<https://doodle.com/poll/ifi9gt6mib9rxxhs>

Thank you,

**Sarah Burns**

Director of Research & Evaluation

San Diego Workforce Partnership

**Email #3**

**From:** Sarah Burns

**Sent:** Monday, March 25, 2019 at 10:56 AM

**Subject:** Re: Business Services Collaborative Next Steps - Job Quality

All,

Thank you for participating in the Doodle poll to schedule our job quality conversation. The time that works best for most of you to participate in the Job-Quality Focus Group for Workforce Practitioners is **Tuesday, April 2 at noon**. We will host the focus group at our new headquarters: 9246 Lightwave Avenue, Suite 210; San Diego, CA 92123. Lunch will be provided.

If you have any questions, email our senior research analyst, Daniel Enemark ([daniel@workforce.org](mailto:daniel@workforce.org)). He will be sending out a calendar hold to all on this list--please rsvp so we can estimate the lunch order appropriately.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

**Sarah Burns**

Director of Research & Evaluation

San Diego Workforce Partnership

## **APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDES**

## Moderator's Guide for Retail Workers Focus Group

Date	Location	Incentive	Composition
Wednesday, March 27th, 2019, 7pm	Flagship Research Suite 405 1011 Camino Del Rio South San Diego, CA	\$100 incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals working in retail sector</li> <li>• Diverse mix of age, tenure, gender, ethnicity</li> </ul>

### Module I — Getting Focused

#### Module Synopsis

This module establishes the objectives of the discussion session and presents the ground rules that will govern the meeting. A critical component of this module is the assurance of participant anonymity and confidentiality guarantees.

- Moderator introduces himself.
- Explain mirror and video. Colleagues observing.
- Explain purpose of video recorder.
- Explain need for frank input and that all expressed views are equally valid and important — “there are no right or wrong answers”. Discussions should be fun and relaxed.
- Remind participants of the need to contribute and gratitude for attendance (incentive).
- Provide assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.
- Phones off.
- “I would like to start off by having you tell me your first name. I am interested in knowing where you work, how long you’ve worked there, and what you do there.”

Total time for Module — 10 minutes

## Module II — Retail Industry Job Selection: Process & Considerations

### Module Synopsis

The discussion on San Diego's retail sector begins with a worker step back or retrospective, where current workers are asked to revisit the kinds of factors, considerations or influences that were at play when they first considered work in this area.

Let's try to go back in time and recall the kinds of things you were thinking about when you first decided to take your current job.

- What kinds of things were you thinking about when considering taking your job? (PROBE THOROUGHLY – LOOKING FOR TOP-OF-MIND RECALL)
  - [If the answers are all about job quality:] These don't have to be things like salary or benefits. A lot of people take jobs because they have a friend who works there or the location is easy to get to or someone just offered them the job. Are there any circumstances like that that contributed to your decision?
  - [If the answers are all positive elements of the job:] What about negative aspects? Were there any of those you were considering as well?

Total time for Module — 10 minutes

— Break to talk with observers —

## Module III — Focus on Retail Job Quality

### Module Synopsis

The discussion on San Diego's retail sector involves a personality- projection exercise which will expose defining features of the industry persona. This module concludes with observations on the recent evolution of San Diego's retail image and views on the overall objective accuracy of this industry image.

### "Push & Pull" Exercise

When people talk about the way they make decisions they sometimes say they were "pushed away" or "pulled toward" the ultimate action they take. So, for example, I have a friend who was recently looking for a new car. She told me she was "pushed away" from considering buying a Volkswagen because of issues that carmaker had had with respect to disclosing their emissions reporting and other environmental factors which had apparently been presented in a misleading way. ...Then, that same week, I had another friend who told me he was "pulled toward" joining a gym because this particular place had been recommended to him by several friends and the gym didn't have any long-term financial membership commitment. This whole idea of "pushing" and "pulling" led me to realize that this is the way decisions often get made and that this kind of thinking could be in play when people think about where they will or will not work.

So I'd like you to humour me and continue to think about the kinds of things that "push and pull" at you when you think about your current job. Let's make a list - first with the kinds of things that might be "pulling" you to stay in this job. Remember these would be the positive things that you consider about your job. And remember, these don't have to be things that everyone would like—remember a lot of people take jobs for personal reasons. (AT EASEL: GENERATE FULL LIST OF POSITIVE FACTORS. IF NECESSARY AD FROM LIST BELOW)

- Safe work environment
- Good wages
- Good benefits
- Worker discounts and other perks
- Good job security
- Flexible work schedule
- Opportunity for advancement
- Good relationship with manager
- Interaction with other interesting workers
- Easy commute/on public transportation route
- Valued contributions

Now let's flip the coin over and try to make a list of the kinds of things that may be "pushing" you away from your current job. These are things that are on your mind that you may not like about your job. (AT EASEL: GENERATE FULL LIST OF NEGATIVE FACTORS. IF NECESSARY ADD FROM LIST BELOW)

- Poor hours/bad schedule
- poor pay
- low social status
- little or no chances for advancement/mobility
- abusive/disrespectful bosses
- no/poor benefits

### Dotmocracy Ranking of Assets & Liabilities

Now I want you to take moment and decide which of the things on our lists are most important to you personally. I have given each of you 5 green dots and 5 red dots. We will use the green dots for this list here showing (POINT TO "PULL" CHART) the "Pull" or positive things about retail work.

Let's say one of these items is really the only thing that is important to you and it towers overall of the other potential factors in terms of its importance to you. Then you would take all 5 of your green dots and put them beside that factor. If there were 5 items that were roughly equally important to you then you would spread your dots accordingly with one on each of those 5 items. ...Or you might want to put 3 dots

on one item, two on another and one on yet another...and so on. We sometimes call this a strength-of-voice exercise or - even better – “Dotmocracy”. Okay, do you understand what I’m asking you to do here?

- You have five minutes to place your dots on the “Pull” chart.

Now let’s do this again with this chart of things that “push you away” from considering retail work...

- Five minutes for “Push” chart

Debrief with full discussion of “dotmocracy” results

Total time for Module - 40 minutes

## Module IV - Building a Better Retail Experience

### Module Synopsis

In this final module, the conversation turns to focus on the concept of “retail careers” before concluding with reaction to specific retail reforms or innovations designed to improve job quality in the retail sector.

### Prominent Regional Retailers

- Are all retail companies basically the same when it comes to working in these stores or are some retailers better employers than others? What kinds of things make one retailer better than another?

### Retail Careers & Career Paths

- Would you say you have career goals? What are those goals?
  - Are there any specific jobs you hope to have in the future?
  - Do you feel like your current job is helping you build the kind of career you want?
- Are there opportunities for advancement with your current employer? What are they?
  - When you think about promotions and raises, do you know what to expect in that area? Do promotions and raises come on a regular schedule? How high can a good worker expect to be promoted, and how high do wages get?
- Do you think your current job is good for your resume? In other words, will help you get your next job? How might it help, or how might it fail to help?
- Do you know of any employers that offer a good career path? Why do you say that?

### Reaction to Specific Retail Job Quality Improvement Proposals

#### Stable Scheduling

- Do you have a pretty consistent schedule?
  - How easy is it to plan your life around your work schedule?
  - If your boss gave you your schedule a week at a time with 14 days advance notice, how would that affect you? [If no one brings this up:] Would it make you more likely to stay in your current job?
  - [If people are enthusiastic about stable schedules:] If you had to choose between having a stable schedule like that and getting a 25¢ an hour raise, what would you choose? [If anyone chooses schedules:] What about if you had to choose between the stable schedule and a 50¢ an hour raise? [If anyone chooses stable schedule, keep going up in 50¢ increments.]
- Do you have as many hours as you'd like?
  - [If no:] Have you asked for more hours? If so, what reasons were you given for not getting them?
  - [If no:] If you could either work 40 hours a week with benefits, or get a 50¢ raise, which would you choose? [If anyone prefers hours over wages, go up in increments of 50¢.]

#### Inequality

- Do you feel like you've ever been discriminated against for any reason in a retail job?
  - [If these bases for discrimination aren't mentioned:] Does anyone feel like they haven't been treated fairly because they are a woman, or because of race, or age, or because of a disability?
    - [If no to all of these:] OK, that's great to hear that no one feels like they've been treated unfairly.
  - [If yes:] [Empathize—something like “That sounds really frustrating.”] Do you feel like there was something you could do about the situation, or was there nothing that could be done?
  - [If yes:] How did this affect your desire to continue working in the job? Did you feel like there were better options out there?
  - What about your experience looking for a job? Were there jobs you didn't apply for because you thought you might not be given a fair shot? [If yes:] What led you to feel you

wouldn't be treated fairly? Is there anything the employer could have done to encourage you to apply?

- One last question on this subject: does anyone feel like certain people, for reasons unrelated to their job performance, are more likely to get promoted or get raises?

Total time for Module - 25 minutes

Thank, Debrief and Dismiss Participants

## Moderator's Guide for Retail & Hospitality Employers

Date	Location	Incentive	Composition
Thursday, March 28th, 2019 (12pm: retail employers 2pm: Hospitality Employers)	Flagship Research Suite 405 1011 Camino Del Rio South San Diego, CA	\$200 incentive	• Employers in the retail and hospitality sectors

### Module I — Getting Focused

#### Module Synopsis

This module establishes the objectives of the discussion session and presents the ground rules that will govern the meeting. A critical component of this module is the assurance of participant anonymity and confidentiality guarantees. As an “icebreaker”, employers are asked to express general level of satisfaction with their workers

- Moderator introduces himself.
- Explain mirror and video. Colleagues observing.
- Explain purpose of video recorder.
- Explain need for frank input and that all expressed views are equally valid and important <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> “there are no right or wrong answers”. Discussions should be fun and relaxed.
- Remind participants of the need to contribute and gratitude for attendance (incentive).
- Provide assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.
- Phones off.
- “I would like to start off by having you tell me what company you work for, what your role is, and how many workers you are responsible for.

Total time for Module — 10 minutes

### Module II — Primacy of Workers

#### Module Synopsis

The discussion on San Diego’s retail sector begins with an exploration of employers’ views on the importance of workers and their organizations including current and emerging challenges and opportunities managing staff in a digital age.

#### Job Appeal

- Why do you think people decide to work for you?
- Once someone starts to work at your company, do you have a sense of what influences their decision to stay long-term versus leave the job?
- In general, how would you describe the quality of the work your front-line workers do?

#### Wages

- How do you decide the wages for your workers?
  - [If any of the following are not mentioned, ask this:] What about other factors?
    - Does the minimum wage impact your decision? [If yes:] How so?
    - Does “what workers deserve” impact your decision? [If yes:] How so?
    - Is your pay based at all on a desire to attract the best workers? [If yes:] How so?
    - Is your pay based at all on a desire to retain workers? [If yes:] How so?
  - [If not mentioned:] What about raises? How do you decide when and how much to raise a

worker's salary?

### Benefits

- Now let's talk about benefits.
  - How did you choose the particular set of benefits you provide?
  - What benefits do you think are most appreciated [that you provide] or desired [that you don't provide] by your workers?
    - For the benefits that workers desire but don't get, what prevents you from providing those?
  - How do you choose the mix of full-time and part-time workers?
    - [If not mentioned:] Do you feel pressure to keep workers at part time because providing benefits is expensive?
- Do you personally feel that your workers receive the right level of wages and benefits? That is, are they paid the amount they should be paid?
  - Do you think you pay the ideal wages for your business model? What would happen to your business if you paid less? What would happen if you paid more?

### Online Retail

- Has the rise of online retail had any impact on the role of your workers or what you look for in workers?

Total time for Module — 25 minutes

— Break to talk with observers —

## Module III — Reaction to Worker Wish-List and to Additional Specific Reforms

### Module Synopsis

In this final module, the conversation turns to focus on specific job quality dimensions and potential reforms. Employers are informed of the larger objectives of improving job quality and are asked to comment on specific reforms advanced by workers in a previous qualitative research session.

In case this has not become entirely clear, I should inform you that the larger objective of this research is to try to identify the basic current features and potential changes that could improve “job quality” in the retail/hospitality sector. What we are really trying to achieve is practical changes in worker management that will ultimately lead to higher quality retail/hospitality jobs.

We have been talking to workers who work in the very kinds of retail/hospitality operations you manage. They have been most obliging and open with us and have provided me with a kind of “Wish-List of the things that would increase their satisfaction with their jobs.

I’d like to tell you about some of the more interesting suggestions and issues raised by these workers and get your direct feedback on these...(PRESENT 4 CONCEPTS AND DISCUSS APPEAL OF EACH).

#### 1. PREDICTABILITY IS WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN WAGES:

The workers we’ve been talking to have been nearly unanimously in agreement that they would rather have a stable predictable schedule than higher wages. They tell us that they would like to know how many hours they will be working and have some kind of guarantee of this two or more weeks in advance of their shifts. They told us this kind of schedule would improve their overall satisfaction with their jobs and make them more likely to remain in these positions.

Q. What are your initial thoughts on this? (EXPLAIN THOROUGHLY)

Q. Does this make you want to consider changing the way you handle staff schedules? What barriers are there here if any?

Q. Would you have the authority/autonomy to implement this change?

Q. Would you ever consider striking an internal task force and/or hiring external management consultant to assist you in finding ways to implement the kind of changes that would provide greater variety for your staff in their jobs?

#### 2. VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE:

Workers that work in businesses like yours also told us that they would prefer to perform a range of tasks, even during a single shift, than being “stuck” performing one function for extended periods. They tell us that being able to move around and experience different roles within the operation makes them more satisfied and likely to remain at their jobs.

Q. Does this surprise you or is this news at all to you?

Q. Do you or does your company do anything special or deliberate in the area of variety of tasks for your workers? Are there barriers to doing this?

Q. Would you ever consider striking an internal task force and/or hiring external management consultant to assist you in finding ways to implement the kind of changes that would provide greater variety for your staff in their jobs?

#### 3. ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE HR DEPARTMENT

One of the things we couldn’t help but notice as we listened to workers who work in operations like yours was the importance that human resources has in terms of addressing a whole range of

job quality concerns. Workers kept pointing to things that they felt would improve their overall job satisfaction and interest in staying in their positions that seem to be within the purview of the HR department. These were things like:

- Feeling valued and appreciated by the organization
- Listening to worker complaints and suggestions (Standing up for workers)
- Treating workers like a colleague rather than an adversary
- Treating workers fairly, regardless of gender, race, physical attributes or other human characteristics
- Creating and promoting an enjoyable and stimulating workplace culture
- Clearly explaining and promoting opportunities for promotions and advancement

Q. Do these kinds of things seem to be appropriate areas of focus for your HR department? Which ones are or are not?

Q. Is your own HR department doing enough in these areas or could it be doing more? What kinds of things could or should HR be doing in these areas?

#### 4. EQUALITY

I'm going to show you two graphs. These are a bit complex, so let me explain what they show. The first graph is for all San Diego jobs, and the second is just for retail jobs. Each blue bubble is an occupation, like cashiers or supervisors of frontline retail workers. We've located each bubble on two dimensions: on the X axis, we see what percent of the workers in that occupation are white. On the Y axis we see what the average hourly wage is. Notice also that we've included a percentage in the top left of the graph. That shows what percent of the variation in average wages would be explained if we assumed that it was only determined by race.

Q. What do you notice about these graphs?

[If no one says this:] There's a much stronger relationship between race and income in the retail sector than there is in the overall economy.

Q. How do you think this happened?

Q. What do you think we can do about this?

Q. Has your company done anything to address this problem?

Q. Do you think there's more we can do?

Total time for Module - 30 minutes

Thank, Debrief and Dismiss

## Moderator's Guide for Workforce Practitioners

Date	Location	Incentive	Composition
Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at 12pm	San Diego Workforce Partnership 9246 Lightwave Avenue San Diego CA 92123	No incentive	• Workforce practitioners

### Module I — Introductions

My name is Daniel Enemark, and I am the senior research analyst at San Diego Workforce Partnership. We're recording this for note-taking, but this conversation is private and the recording will not be shared.

Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Let us know your name, where you work, what you do there, and how long you've been doing it.

### Module II — How practitioners connect job-seekers to jobs

I'm going to ask some questions about how client services work at your organization.

You may not be doing case management directly, but if you work with people who do, or if you used to do case management, then I'm hoping you can share your perspective on how it's done at your organization.

What factors influence the kind of job you put people in?

[If not mentioned:] What about...

client interests, skills, education, experience, barriers to employment  
how much time you have to help,  
relationships with local businesses  
*quality of the job*

Let's talk about incentives.

How is success defined in your work?

Does anyone reward you for putting people in high-quality jobs?

Are there any negative consequences if you put someone in a low-quality job?

### Module III — Defining job quality

So it sounds like we're all trying to help people get good jobs.

What makes a job good?

[If helpful:] In your experience, what is important to job-seekers about a job?

[If helpful:] How much of what people care about is psycho-social vs economic?

Is job quality an objective thing that everyone should agree on?

How do you weigh different aspects of a job? e.g. quality of life, compensation?

When you are considering putting someone in a job, especially if it's a job you've never had,

how do you know how good the job is?  
 How do you get information about quality of life?  
 How do you get information about compensation?

## Module IV — Retail job quality

How many of your clients end up in retail jobs?  
 What types of clients end up in retail jobs?  
 What do people say when they're interested in retail careers? What's attractive?

What kind of retail jobs would you encourage people to apply to?  
 Can you name any particularly good or bad retail employers?  
 What makes them good or bad?

Is there any low-hanging fruit when it comes to job quality in retail?  
 Things employers could do to improve a job that wouldn't cost too much?

Last week we conducted focus groups involving retail workers and employers. During the focus groups for workers we asked what the factors are that make them want to stay in their current retail jobs, and what the factors are that make them want to leave.

I'm going to hand out the list of factors they came up with.

We asked these participants to identify which of these issues were most important.

We gave everyone five votes to use however they wanted—  
 they could give all five votes to one thing if it was really important,  
 or they could divide up the points among five different things,  
 or any combination.

So let's play a game. Let's all try to guess how these factors were ranked,  
 and then I'll let you know how our 10 participants ranked them.

Another thing we did was to ask workers this question:

If you could choose between a more stable schedule or a \$1/hour raise,  
 which would you pick?

How many of 10 workers would you guess chose the stable schedule over the raise?

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- Nancy Snyder Consulting



With support from the Walmart Foundation, in 2016 the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program launched Reimagine Retail, a project to explore ways to enhance stability and improve mobility for the retail workforce.

To learn more about the Workforce Partnership's research on San Diego's retail sector, please visit [workforce.org/research/retail](https://workforce.org/research/retail).

We provide equal opportunity for our programs, services and employment.  
Auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities are available upon request.