

Business | SPOTLIGHT

Employers Overload “aggressively looking at other markets”

Unique consultative approach has regional staffing firm ready to expand

BY JODIE GILMORE | for the VBJ

Employers Overload is a full-service staffing company that local businesses can turn to when they need additional clerical, professional and light industrial employees. But company president, John Vanderkin, said his firm provides far more than just warm bodies.

“We don’t want to just send them employees. We want to truly understand our customer’s culture, their attitude and approach,” said Vanderkin. “We value quality over quantity.”

According to Vanderkin, the firm provides three distinct types of staffing: rapid deployment of labor, assistance with direct hiring, and career and job development services for those with developmental disabilities (supportive employment).

Approaching staffing as a “consultative service” sets Employers Overload apart from its competitors,



Buck Heidrick_for the VBJ

Led by company president John Vanderkin (gray blazer), Employers Overload provides three distinct types of staffing: rapid deployment of labor, assistance with direct hiring, and career and job development services for those with developmental disabilities (supportive employment). The firm has two offices in Southwest Washington, seven in Oregon and three in Ohio. Pictured below: Vanderkin with Vancouver Branch Manager Delano Morgan.

the employer’s needs, he and his staff also spend quality time with the employees being placed, getting to know them so that he can find the “best match” for each of his customers.

Staying in tune with customers’ staffing needs is a “continual process,” said Vanderkin.

“We’ve developed long-standing relationships with customers, some more than 40 years,” he added.

Another long-standing relationship is the 22 years that Employers Overload has provided supportive employment services in Clark County. The firm has 115 clients with developmental disabilities, 73 of which are currently employed.

“We provide long-term support,” said Vanderkin. “Depending on the disability, we provide additional training at no cost for the employer, and may give them specialized training and communication aids.”

Employers Overload works with the employer and supervisors to help them understand techniques and talents for training people with developmental disabilities. The firm regularly checks in to see if employees are getting what they need to be successful, and if the employer is getting what they need too.

“At a recent company event that we hosted for one

company’s employees that are part of the supportive employment program, a mother came up to me with tears in her eyes,” said Vanderkin. “She said, ‘We thank you so much for how you support my son and ensure his job is fulfilling for him and his employer – you have changed our lives.’ That’s all we need to hear.”

The firm has its roots in Minnesota, where it was founded in 1947. In 1960, the company headquarters moved to Tigard. Vanderkin, a Vancouver resident, took the helm five and a half years ago. Before he joined Employers Overload, he himself was a customer of the company, and developed a “high level of respect for their integrity and customer service.” Vanderkin said his business background in distribution and manufacturing (both global companies and startups) helps him “understand the intricacies and difficulties that customers run into.”

Over the years, the firm has grown – it now has two offices in Southwest Washington (Vancouver and Longview), seven in Oregon and three in Ohio. Of the seven Oregon offices, two (Salem and Medford) were added in the last 18 months. Overall, said Vanderkin, year-over-year growth has been around 15 to 20 percent since 2013. Two areas that are especially active are distribution and lighter



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Vanderkin said. His company helps customers develop a staffing strategy to determine when additional staffing is the right solution and when it is not. Many of his customers have seasonal demands for 100 or more employees. For these customers, Employers Overload provides rapid deployment of labor.

Vanderkin’s company also assists customers with direct hiring. He said hiring through a staffing agency allows the hiring company to work with the new employee to determine their work ethic, skills and abilities before bringing them on board permanently. Employees benefit too, said Vanderkin, because they can see if the corporate climate and work responsibilities suit them, without having job instability on their resume. Vanderkin said that besides discussing

agriculture (such as grass seed). The company does a little advertising and sponsors some community events, but Vanderkin said the majority of his company’s growth results from relationships – meeting people face to face, understanding what’s going on and determining if the firm can meet their needs.

“A lot of our business comes from word-of-mouth references,” said Vanderkin. “We ask our customers about the vendors and customers they work with, and could they utilize services like ours?”

Vanderkin also keeps active in the workforce community. For example, he chairs the board for the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, and is on the Partners in Careers board.

“We keep our ear to the ground, and help job seekers find work and employers find the people they need,” Vanderkin said.

In the future, Vanderkin said he is hoping to expand the supportive employment

division into Oregon, encouraging the development of an integrated workplace model similar to Washington state’s. He also plans to add offices along the I-5 corridor from Portland to Medford, as well as other places.

“We are aggressively looking at other markets and geographies,” Vanderkin stated. “This will create diversity in terms of types of economy, customers and needs. So as shifts in the economy occur, different areas receive the change in a different way.”

But, Vanderkin stressed, as the company grows, two things will stay the same – the firm’s commitment to integrity, safety and transparency and the company’s mantra: “helping people succeed – employers, employees, coworkers and internal staff.”

Editor’s note: Employers Overload is a member of the Vancouver Business Journal’s Strategic Partners Program. To learn more about the program, contact Irene Pettengill at 360.448.6013.