Better Quality Retail Jobs - Why We Need Them; How to Create Them

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Building the Business Case for Good Jobs
Sarah Day Kalloch
Executive Director, Good Jobs Institute

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Sarah Day Kalloch has dedicated her career to connecting public and private sector leaders with front line workers to build better businesses, create good jobs, and define stronger social policy. She serves as the Executive Director of the Good Jobs Institute, which inspires industry leaders to redefine what it means to run a successful business and help their companies thrive by creating good jobs. She builds partnerships with companies and investors looking to implement the Good Jobs Strategy, and creates tools and resources to guide any organization that wants to move from bad jobs to good jobs. She was a 2018-2019 Aspen Institute Job Quality Fellow and has guest lectured on good jobs and sustainable operations in MIT Sloan's Executive Education and MBA programs.

Sarah previously spent over a decade in international development, improving the health, human rights and financial independence of communities across Africa. At Oxfam, Sarah spearheaded global partnerships that encouraged leading food and beverage companies to adopt more sustainable sourcing policies. As an executive at Physicians for Human Rights, she co-founded two health and human rights organizations in Uganda and Kenya and secured billions in HIV/AIDS and global health funding.

Sarah graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College and also holds an MBA from the MIT Sloan School of Management, where she was awarded the Seley Scholarship for her leadership, community contributions, and academic achievement.

COVID has illuminated that frontline workers are essential. The business case for good jobs is more apparent than ever. Investing in frontline workers, and leveraging that investment with smart operational choices and job design, can drive productivity, improve customer service, and show respect for workers’ time, knowledge and judgement.
There is growing evidence that shaping work of the future to achieve a more broadly shared prosperity will require rebuilding worker voice and representation, rebalancing power in employment relations, and making fundamental changes in American labor and employment policies. As noted in the initial report of our MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future:

“Although we are uncertain precisely what rules should govern worker representation in the United States, we are certain that the nearly ‘voiceless’ model the nation has embraced over the last four decades is out of balance.”
Applying New Education Technologies to Meet Workforce Education Needs
Sanjay Sarma
Vice President for Open Learning
Fred Fort Flowers (1941) and Daniel Fort Flowers (1941) Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Sanjay Sarma is the Fred Fort Flowers (1941) and Daniel Fort Flowers (1941) Professor of Mechanical Engineering at MIT. He is the first Dean of Digital Learning at MIT. He co-founded the Auto-ID Center at MIT and developed many of the key technologies behind the EPC suite of RFID standards now used worldwide. He was also the the founder and CTO of OATSystems, which was acquired by Checkpoint Systems (NYSE: CKP) in 2008. He serves on the boards of GS1, EPGlobal and several startup companies including Senaya and ESSESS.

Dr. Sarma received his Bachelors from the Indian Institute of Technology, his Masters from Carnegie Mellon University and his PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. Sarma also worked at Schlumberger Oilfield Services in Aberdeen, UK, and at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories in Berkeley, California. He has authored over 75 academic papers in computational geometry, sensing, RFID, automation and CAD, and is the recipient of numerous awards for teaching and research including the MacVicar Fellowship, the Business Week eBiz Award and Informationweek's Innovators and Influencers Award. He advises several national governments and global companies.

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William Boone Bonvillian
Lecturer, MIT
Senior Director, Special Projects, Office of Digital Learning

William B. Bonvillian is Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the Science Technology and Society and Political Science Departments, and Senior Director, Special Projects, at MIT’s Office of Digital Learning, directing a research project on workforce education. He began teaching science and technology policy MIT in 2007, and has also taught a course on innovation policy since 2017. Prior to this position, from 2006-17, he was Director of the MIT’s Washington, D.C. Office, reporting to MIT’s President. In this position he worked to support MIT’s strong and historic relations with federal R&D agencies, and its role on national science policy. He has assisted with major MIT technology policy initiatives, on energy technology, the “convergence” of life, engineering and physical sciences, advanced manufacturing, online higher education and its "innovation orchard" project on startup scale-up.. Prior to that position, he served for seventeen years as a senior policy advisor in the U.S. Senate. His legislative efforts included science and technology policy and innovation issues. He worked extensively on legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security, on Intelligence Reform, on climate change, on defense and life science R&D, and on national competitiveness and innovation legislation leading to the America Competes Act in 2007.

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What are the lessons from learning science and new technologies that could make online education, including workforce training, more effective?

Our current workforce education system faces many gaps, from underinvestment to a deep disconnect between the still-separate worlds of work and learning. However, new models for workforce education delivery are developing to help fill these gaps. New educational technologies are high on the list of new delivery models that we must consider.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) introduces a new driver. It has particularly harmed the poor and working class, who have lost jobs or are filling riskier face-to-face “essential” jobs, as opposed to safer, at-home, “knowledge” work. It has underscored the need for a better workforce education system to create better quality jobs. The virus also seriously damaged some key sectors of the economy, where many jobs will not return any time soon. There is now a major need to make workforce education a policy priority, to upgrade skills for those being left behind, and to help others shift job sectors to areas where there will be work.