

SMALL, YET MIGHTY

Leveling the Playing Field for Small Businesses to Find Top Tech Talent

BY DESA BURTON

GROWING DELAWARE'S ECONOMY isn't just up to the large financial, insurance and real estate players that are keystones to the state's wealth. Small businesses account for 98 percent of business in Delaware and employ 55 percent of Delaware's workforce, according to the Delaware Division of Small Business. Just as large companies in Delaware are feeling the pinch when it comes to finding top tech talent, so are small business owners who not only want to attract the best of the best but also want to be able to retain them in the competitive tech market.

Upskilling talent

Employers want certain skills, but unfortunately legacy employees don't always possess them given the fast-paced and ever evolving world we live in. When this happens, the skills gap threatens the sustainability of businesses. This is especially seen within the STEM (science, technology, education and math) industries, because of the speed in which technology and science are advancing. The recruiting function needs to seek innovative ways to bridge the skills gap, through reskilled or upskilled employees.

Leveling the playing field

One way large companies, and now small businesses, in Delaware can upskill or reskill talent is through coding bootcamps like Zip Code Wilmington. Zip Code Wilmington is designated as a certified trainer by the Delaware Division of Small Business. The Division will give companies under 100 employees that hire Zip Code Wilmington graduates a 50 percent discount on the tuition reimbursement fee typically associated with these new hires. By reducing the cost, which is used to offset Zip Code Wilmington's training expenses, it will make it easier for small businesses to access the tech talent they need to compete in the modern economy.

Small businesses in Delaware are eligible now through June 30, 2020 to take advantage of this program. Any Delaware business with less than 100 employees that hires a Zip Code Wilmington graduate will see their tuition reimbursement fee reduced by \$6,000 until the cap of \$100,000 is met.



Kickstarting the startup

According to Crunchbase, Delaware boasts approximately 175 startups that have funding rounds totaling more than \$417 million. Startups evolve at accelerated rates, which often leads to the need for quickly upskilled tech talent to take the company to the next level. The new partnership between Zip Code Wilmington and the Delaware Division of Small Business can give small businesses, including startups, a new pool of highly trained tech talent in the fields of coding and data engineering and analytics within a mere 12 weeks.

Reskilling and upskilling programs, like Zip Code Wilmington, are invaluable for local businesses, and students too. Many Zip Code Wilmington graduates move from low-skill, low-wage jobs to higher paying careers in a matter of weeks. ■



Desa Burton is the Executive Director at Zip Code Wilmington