

# Expeditors

**VISION, LEADERSHIP, AND PASSION FOR DEVELOPING YOUNG TALENT CHANGES INDIVIDUAL LIVES, GROWS FUTURE TALENT, AND IMPACTS AN ORGANIZATION.**

Expeditors, a Fortune 500 company, delivers global logistics management solutions for all aspects of supply chain management to customers such as Walmart, General Electric, Cisco Systems, and Target. In 2010, Expeditors employed 12,869 employees globally in 251 offices and had more than \$5.96 billion in annual revenue. Celebrating a culture of organic growth and a history of promoting from within, Expeditors faced the recent economic downturn by implementing a “no layoffs” policy, choosing to cut costs through a hiring freeze and attrition. Their focus on building long-term stability has grown a domestic workforce of 3,650 in 58 offices in the U.S. It was into this corporate ethic and future-focused strategy that Expeditors launched, in 2008, “Opportunity Knocks,” a programmatic commitment to supporting the career development of disconnected youth. Recognizing that they did not have a formal high school recruitment program and wanting to contribute to the success of disadvantaged youth, Expeditors pledged through this program to foster future talent and change the lives of young people in local communities.

## Business Impact

- » Establish high school recruitment program
- » Foster new and loyal talent
- » Foster community relationships
- » Growth of mentoring skills for employees

## Employee/Student Impact

- » Professional Development
- » Gain full-time job with benefits and career support
- » Stable work history
- » Career mentor
- » Post-secondary opportunity

## Opportunity Knocks

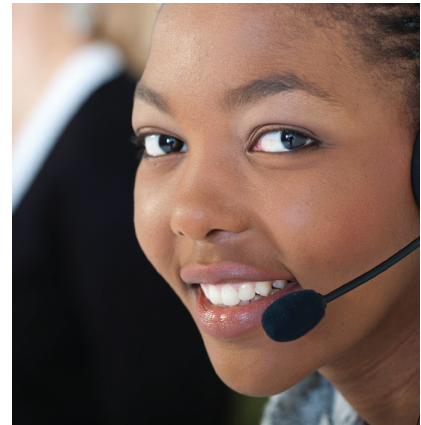
- » Professional skills development
- » Part-time to full-time employment
- » Support for continuing education

**Corporate  
Voices**  
for Working Families

## Creating Enterprise Pathways to Develop Raw Talent

Opportunity Knocks recruits high school students who are not currently considering higher education because of low motivation or lack of financial capacity. These students are at risk of becoming disconnected from society and not gaining the skills they need to succeed in the workplace and in life. Program participants must be at least 16 years old and, according to Expeditors, “energetic, curious, hard working and motivated with good organizational skills, attention to detail and willingness to take constructive criticism.” The students are offered a part-time job with the opportunity to obtain a full-time job with benefits upon meeting or exceeding expectations of the position and graduation from high school. Students are strongly mentored to develop marketable job skills and a stable work record in a professional environment. Expeditors treats these students like all other employees, in terms of professionalism and workplace policies, such as requiring that they adhere to the business dress code. The program is designed to identify aptitude and recruit underprivileged students and aims to instill a strong work ethic and develop marketable workplace skills.

The concept of Opportunity Knocks is based on the personal experience of Senior Vice President Dan Wall, who began entry-level employment with Expeditors at 18 years old and worked his way to his current position. Crediting the mentors and professional development support he received within the organization, Wall created Opportunity Knocks to formalize that experience in a way that allows it to be replicated throughout Expeditors and serve as a skilled talent source for the company. Wall seeks to prove his hypothesis that investing in an employee creates loyalty to the company – particularly when the individual begins with few prospects of success and a lack of personal career and/or educational direction.



powered by



**NewOptions**  
NATIONAL INITIATIVES

**“I was like these kids – from a working class family trying to make ends meet. My father was and still is a truck driver and my mother worked as a waitress. There were no expectations for college as none of my family had ever gone. I am a first generation college graduate. Now I have started a different cycle with my kids who are expected to go to college, and Expeditors is extending that to others through Opportunity Knocks.” — Dan Wall, Senior Vice President, Expeditors**

### **“Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill”**

Opportunity Knocks began in Expeditors’ Corporate Headquarters in Seattle, Washington, where leaders visited youth-serving, community-based organizations like Youth Force, Communities in Schools, and the Boys and Girls Clubs to forge partnerships to identify and recruit participants. Expeditors’ focus was to offer the opportunity to young people in these programs who needed the most professional development. They worked with community partners to identify hard working students who would jump at the opportunity to work in a professional environment if given a chance. Expeditors reasoned that those students at the lower end of interviewing skills were the ones in need of the most support. For most of these students, the only types of jobs available are manual or shift jobs, such as in retail and restaurants. Opportunity Knocks offers an opportunity for a potential career track with a successful company in a growing industry. Some of the community partners also assist in supporting the employees with resources and as needs arise, specifically around college options.

Expeditors believed that if the students showed an attitude of commitment, skills could be taught, exemplifying their motto, “Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill.” Initially, the company offered temporary summer employment with the stipulation that defined performance benchmarks must be met in order to continue part-time employment while completing a

high school diploma during the school year. For those participants who met expectations and graduated, a full-time position with full benefits at a Fortune 500 company was possible. Students also had the opportunity to receive reimbursement from Expeditors for working to achieve a postsecondary degree. During this program, students received continuous training opportunities, amounting to 52 hours per year, and exposure to the many different industries that Expeditors serves.

Early in the program, it was clear that the students would need structure and strong mentoring. The company constructed a formalized series of development opportunities for participants, that clarified the responsibilities of managers and mentors, including discussing options for continuing post-secondary education. The template has since been further codified as a detailed manual that Expeditors is using to roll out Opportunity Knocks to other branch offices.

### **Success and Benefits to Date**

Opportunity Knocks is in the early, formative stage, with 20 students having gone through or currently participating in the program. The program has been successful at helping at-risk youth complete high school, continue their post-secondary education, and build their careers. Each student has pursued his or her own path, with several choosing to enter college. One program participant received a scholarship to

Howard University along with a new laptop from Expeditors. Another participant has accepted full-time employment with the company.

The benefits of the program to Expeditors are tremendous and strongly encouraged by their corporate culture. Current Expeditors employees working with program participants feel deeply invested in these young students and in the company that is working to provide them an opportunity. Along with enhanced current employee morale, Expeditors also gains motivated new employees who appreciate working for a financially stable company with great benefits. Finally, Expeditors is looking to realize cost savings in reduced turnover and hiring costs by rolling out the program throughout its branches. The program has already expanded to the Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle, and Los Angeles offices and it is expected that Miami, Memphis, San Diego, and Savannah will soon adopt it as well.

## **Personal Story**

Muhamed Manhsour’s parents immigrated to the United States from Cambodia and Vietnam. Although his parents stressed the importance of education, Muhamed’s friends “were into violence” and he felt torn between these two paths. He came to Opportunity Knocks through the YouthForce Program at his alternative high school. Muhamed has been part of the program for over three years. He has graduated high school and is now working part-time while taking classes at Seattle Central Community College. He earned a raise, which is helping him pay tuition, and was given night hours to accommodate his class schedule. Muhamed says that Opportunity Knocks has helped him grow professionally and that “[he]” used to be more of a follower, but now I see myself as a leader.”

#### **About Corporate Voices**

Corporate Voices is the leading national business membership organization representing the private sector on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policies that reflect collaboration among the private sector, government and other stakeholders.

[www.corporatevoices.org](http://www.corporatevoices.org)

#### **Find Out More**

This case study was funded, in part, by the Kellogg Foundation’s New Options Initiative, which seeks out, strengthens and partners with innovative community organizations, businesses, education institutions and municipal governments to create a new credentialing system to prepare young people for work or further education.

For more information, please visit [www.wkcf.org](http://www.wkcf.org).