

# CRAIN'S

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SMALL BUSINESS

## City agency helps recruit workers

Revamped DSBS surprises companies by finding, training workers for jobs

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN

**N**EW YORK boasts many glamorous jobs. But as Frank Mineo readily admits, fish-cutter at Smitty's Fillet House in the Bronx isn't one of them.

The Fulton Fish Market post involves standing for up to 10 hours in the dead of night, slicing cod, flounder and their scaly ilk into a couple of thousand pounds of fillets to be sold at wholesale.

"It's grueling, tedious work. I can't think of many positives about the job," says Mr. Mineo, Smitty's owner.

Despite offering a \$50,000 salary and health insurance, he has trouble finding employees. So he jumped when he heard about a new source for talent—the Department of Small Business Services. The ex-

panded agency supplied him with a pool of prescreened aspiring fish-cutters and \$30,000 to help train 10 of them. Mr. Mineo has hired three people and will interview candidates for seven more slots on Dec. 1.

### Numbers way up

NEARLY FOUR YEARS after the DSBS absorbed the city's Department of Employment, an increasing number of New York's 200,000 small businesses are turning to it for help in finding and training staffers.

In the third quarter, the agency placed 4,300 employees—versus 127 for all of 2003—mostly through its six Workforce1 career centers around the city.

Similarly, job training programs have received injections of money and energy since the two departments merged. So far in 2007, the

city has awarded \$1.54 million in training grants, which employers usually must match by at least 30%.

The city has budgeted \$4.2 million for the grants for fiscal 2008, which began in July.

The strategy of on-the-job training represents a break from the previous program of training people and

then hoping that appropriate jobs would materialize.

The Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, a health care facility in Chinatown for the uninsured, is using a \$99,362 grant to train workers in areas like client services and medical records management. Meanwhile, Elmhurst Dairy in Queens is using a \$300,000 award to train 162 workers in a variety of fields.

Getting owners to believe that a

city agency can actually assist them has been a difficult task for the expanded DSBS.

### Government stigma

"FOR HELP, they don't think of going to the government," says DSBS Commissioner Robert Walsh. "The challenge for us is to get small businesses to believe in us."

Among the converted is Lisa Hendrickson, co-owner of Hendrickson Custom Cabinetry Inc. Aided by a \$10,000 matching grant, the Bronx-based maker of high-end furniture trained its 19 workers and added five more. The company, which has annual revenues of \$1.6 million, had to contribute \$19,045 for training.

"Our company is on a rapid growth track, but it's so hard to find employees," says Ms. Hendrickson, who started the business four years ago with her husband, Felix. "And because there is no place in the U.S. to get a four-year cabinetmaking degree, customized training has to be built in to our business."



### HOW IT WORKS

**SMALL BUSINESSES** interested in hiring should go to [www.nyc.gov/smallbiz](http://www.nyc.gov/smallbiz) to find the nearest Business Solutions Center, then call to make an appointment. A representative will gather information about needs to get the process started. In some cases, the DSBS provides candidates in as little as a week.

Training fund applications of less than \$50,000 are accepted throughout the year; those for larger amounts are processed quarterly.