

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You're listening to Work in Progress. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, editor-in-chief of WorkingNation. Work in Progress explores the rapidly changing workplace through conversations with innovators, educators, and decision-makers, people with solutions to today's workforce challenges.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

The country was already in need of more healthcare workers when the pandemic struck and made that demand more urgent. By one estimate, and this is really an astounding number, by 2024, the state of California will need 500,000 new healthcare workers. Again, that is just in California. The nonprofit Futuro Health is working to fill some of the worker gap in the state through training and certificate programs. It's my pleasure to welcome Futuro Health CEO, Van Ton-Quinlivan back to the podcast. Van, welcome. Welcome back.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

It's good to see you again, Ramona.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

We last talked in January (2020). I was up in Sacramento, as Futuro launched. And even then the demand, as I said, was like amazing. And now, because of COVID-19, the demand has increased dramatically. What are you seeing? What are the numbers showing you?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

As you know, Ramona, the pandemic is really wearing out our frontline healthcare workforce. And so Futuro Health is really treasuring that we could be of assistance to fortifying the workforce here in California. And as you have mentioned, this is indicative of the shortages across the country.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

In this year, we're driving towards a goal of credentialing 3,500 healthcare workers in order to repopulate the frontlines. We are delighted that our average age of our students is 30 with 87% ethnic diversity, 36% bilingual. So we continue to be able to bring diverse communities into the workforce to address this big number of 500,000 allied health workers needed in California, but there's 2.3 million needed across the country.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

For those who don't know how you operate, tell us about the partnership. And it started between industry and union.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Yes, Futuro Health was born out of a very unusual partnership. It is Kaiser Permanente, which is a big healthcare system, and SEIU United Healthcare Workers, who has roughly 100,000 healthcare workers as its members. And the two organizations decided that they would make a joint commitment, joint investment of \$130 million to grow the next generation of healthcare workers, really to create opportunity for those that would not otherwise access opportunity. And before we even launched Futuro Health, we did four focus groups across the state, including one that was entirely conducted in a Spanish language, given the proportionality of Spanish speakers in the state. And it was clear that while

many desired to go into healthcare, one, they didn't fully understand the range of occupations that are out there. And secondly, many who make it into healthcare are saddled with debt and stay on the first wrong instead of being able to access higher-level opportunities. So those are things that we considered in the design of Futuro Health. We wake up day to day connecting individuals with opportunity by connecting them with education path and underwriting a lot of tuition.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

So you have partnered with community colleges and other organizations, other nonprofits. I saw also Coursera was on your list of partners. How do these programs work? What do you provide to those applicants?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

We do the work in advance to ensure that there's a labor market need for the training that is provided. And then secondly, we curate the list of partners that we want to work with. For example, we have roughly six accredited, higher education institutions that provide our medical assistant program. And so when candidates come to our website and apply, if they meet the minimum qualifications required for admittance into our program, then we geolocate them and pair them with the institution that is nearest to them. All of our education providers also pay attention to providing training that is adult friendly. And what I mean by this is that adults have very complicated lives. And so the education has to be able to be flexible enough for their types of schedule. Our education providers have redesigned their courses work so that a lot of it can be consumed or done by adults doing off hours, but there's always a live student support, personal touch, paired with their education journey.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

So these are skilled entry-level jobs. And when we talk about healthcare, a lot of people think of nurses and doctors, but there are so many more people in this industry, data analysts, tele-health coordinators, registered dental assistants. How are you showing people this pathway? How are you reaching out to the community to show that there is a good job out there, you may not have known about it?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Every one is welcome to come to the website and apply. We have also the partnership of SEIU-UHW, and because their 100,000 members are in health care and are also extremely diverse, they are able to take those assets and go back out in the community and knock on the doors of neighbors as well as family members, as well as churches, to bring the word out into communities that these are good jobs, and this is one way to access those good jobs. What we've done here at Futuro Health is just reduce the friction for people to access those opportunities.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Van, what does it cost to me if I am looking for this new career pathway?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

There's usually two barriers that stand in the way of adults being able to skill up. The first is affordability. And then the second is flexibility. On the second point, flexibility, that's where it's really important that the education and instruction is delivered in a format that accommodates adult schedule, because

adults have all these commitments of family and jobs. We make sure that the shortlist of education providers pay attention to having adult-friendly education and training.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

And then on the former, which is costs, we have fortunately been able to underwrite tuition for the over 4,000 adult students that have been with us, but it's still important for adults to have some skin in the game. So they pay like a \$100 registration fee. And there may be some small ancillary fees, for example, if they need to take a background check or take an assessment test, but we have covered their tuition up to this point.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Do you work with partners to help place people after they have graduated?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Fortunately, we have done a good job of curating which occupations will be in need. And so, for example, of the 600 medical assistants that we have underwritten for this last year, even in Kaiser alone, there's over 900 medical assistants needed in Northern California. Many employers are beginning to come to us now because they have larger than expected needs for these roles.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

A lot of what you're talking about is this collaboration between industry, education, the employees themselves through the union. And that's at the heart of your new book, WorkforceRX. And it's talking about how collaboration... You can't go at this alone. You have to collaborate. Tell me a little bit about the playbook that you're advocating for here.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Ramona, thanks for asking. We just launched my book, which is WorkforceRX: Agile and Inclusive Strategies for Employers, Educators and Workers in Unsettled Times. There's some big numbers out there right now that is plaguing the country. The first big number is 10 million. There's 10 million open jobs right now. Actually those numbers have inched up even since The Washington Post put this onto their headline. And then the other million to take note of is 8.4 million, and this 8.4 million unemployed. So we've got workers who are looking for jobs and employers who are looking for workers. We need to really just rev on all engines as a country, all the stakeholders, in order to connect people with the right skills for the right jobs.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

And so when people ask me, why did I write this book? The time is now for us to really deploy workforce development strategies. There are proven playbooks and no one needs to start from scratch, whether they are an employer, whether they are an education institution, whether they are an active community member, or a public policy maker. There are proven playbooks that can be put to use so that we can move faster as a country, getting people with the right skills and for the right jobs.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

To your point of working together, one of the misconceptions for many employers is that they have to go at it alone. There's a lot of other parties that can come together and I call it the three-legged stool. So

instead of trying to do workforce development where you do everything, setting up the education, finding the diverse candidate pool, and then doing the hiring process, there are actually stakeholders out there from the education institutions to community-based organization and public workforce agencies, who are on the ready to collaborate and to partner with employers to produce a talent pool that is inclusive, that is reliable, and that is quality. And all of that, there's a formula to growing the talent puddle that you may be facing into a talent pool.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Now I will acknowledge that it's much easier to just post a job opening. But if you're as an employer experiencing what I call the phenomenon of post and pray, which means you're unsure that you're going to yield talent on the other end, then that is the moment when you need to think much more intentionally about putting in place workforce development strategies so that you have a reliable, inclusive, and quality workforce pipeline from which to hire.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Tell me the significance of the three-legged stool. Why is this such an important part of your concept of workforce development?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Let me answer that by telling one of my favorite stories from the book, which is my fish story. When I was head of workforce development in the major corporation, did all the right things, according to the three-legged stool. We articulated what we need ready to hire. We brought in a community partner who then went out broadly into the community to find very diverse talent pool and bring them into the education training. And then we worked with the education provider to create the education program that will close the gap on the skills that we need. So there was one young individual that we loved. The supervisors just loved learning about him through the program. His name was Aleki. After he did the training, he went through our formal preemployment process. And for some reason, he disappeared from the shortlist on the other end. Because we were doing workforce development, we actually noticed that he was missing.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

And so when we made the inquiry into what happened to him, it turns out that when he was 15, he had gone fishing and he caught a fish that was too small and he got a ticket. As a 15-year-old, he did not pay any attention to paying that ticket. And when that ticket went to court, he didn't pay attention to the fact that it went to court and he ended up with a felony on his record. Aleki had no idea that he had a record of felony on his record. And he would have been precluded from every single significant job in the utility energy industry without knowing it. And as an employer from that industry, I would have just given him the "Thank you for applying, but this is not a match," because there's liability for the company to answer why did someone not get the job or not move to the next phase. But because we were in this workforce development program with committed partners in this ecosystem of committed partners, we asked our community-based organization to look into his situation. They were able to work with him to expunge that record, and then the company was able to hire him. The end, it was a great story after that.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

But that's an example of talent that has been unintentionally sidelined through of all of our processes. And if he had gone into education, he could have gotten the training, but that would not have given access to the job. For the employer, they would have not have taken the time to give this individual a second chance. But with the support of the community organizations, whose role it was, whose expertise it was to do this type of case management, the company was able to hire him. And that is the power of the three-legged stool of workforce development. We do not have to go at it alone. In partnership, we can really make opportunity much more accessible to all.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You start chapter one, talking about business leaders and their question: "Why isn't education presenting me with the kind of workers that I need?" Tell me about that.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Ramona, that's a common question I hear from employers. Like, "Why am I not getting the workers that I need from education?" And so chapter one has a great title, which is called: Making the fire hose and the garden hose work together. If you think about it, education produces in larger volumes. So they need to fill a class of, for example, 25 and graduate about 25 at a time in order to make the economics work. But then employers is more like a garden hose where they're dripping out jobs. So one job, two jobs, three jobs at a time. So in order for education to be responsive to the needs of employers, we need to have strategies that match the garden hose and the fire hose. And some of the playbooks outline include, for example, working with competitors in order to aggregate the number of jobs so that they are of the attention of the educators, for example.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Another one is to think about your supply chain. Oftentimes you have a big company with a lot of little suppliers who all hire similar skillsets. So how can you aggregate the job postings from all of those and time it, so that it's a match between when students graduate and when companies need these workers.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

So, there's a number of playbooks that are helpful to employers and it also decodes, how does education work and how do employers want to work? And brings the two types of organization more in sync so that we can bridge the language. Workers can get what they want, and educators can be of great help to students.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Very similar to the idea that you guys are doing, there, which is bringing together the healthcare industry to work with your collaborators to create trained people that we need for those jobs.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Absolutely. I want to also make a point that it's always easier for the larger companies to do workforce development. They have more HR capacity, they have more staff. But these models also work for small companies and medium-sized companies, but they may approach it slightly differently. Again, it's like aggregating, aggregating and coming together in ecosystem. And you see models like that, that was discussed in the book, in the manufacturing industry, in the Central Valley. 70 small companies came together that each one of them are struggling to hire skilled workers in that region, and none of them

had the capacity to do that on their own. So they formed an alliance of manufacturers with the first issue being workforce development. And that collective hose power then made it easier for the 16 community colleges of the same region to come together and also all their K-12 partners to begin syncing up. And so, as a result, that alliance now has over a thousand manufacturers, and that alliance focuses on how to sync up education with the needs of those thousand small, medium manufacturers.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Have thee skills that are needed changed in this allied healthcare industry a lot lately?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Absolutely. Ramona, the pandemic has just really wreaked havoc on the labor market. We already were experiencing a phenomenon where the rate of technology change was accelerating. And what the pandemic did was just completely leapfrog adoption of technology, for example, tele-health. If you remember when the pandemic hit, everybody had to stay at home. And so every health clinic, every hospital had to start cutting over to tele-health. What did that do to the skillsets of the healthcare workers? Before the technology component, being able to interact with your patient through technology was less of a skillset, but with the adoption of tele-health, it went from maybe like in the teens to now the 80 percentile. No one expects it to revert back. The medical assistant that is trained, who has the comfort of doing what is called virtual rooming... Instead of physically bringing you into the room and doing the beginning of a patient session with you, now you're doing it in a virtual environment. So those that are comfortable in the virtual rooming session, which also sometimes requires troubleshooting of technology, that skillset is now introduced that wasn't there before. And so that is an example of a shift.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Another example of a shift is what many worry about which is the aftermath of the pandemic on our mental health and behavioral health. Behavioral health alludes to, for example, alcohol use, drug use, low-grade depression. There's a whole bunch of things that is a consequence of this pandemic. And so the healthcare industry is really ramping up on this workforce because there's just not enough clinicians that are available, trained at the master's level. And so what we have done here at Futuro Health is worked with our education partner to create a brand new program called the Community Health Worker, but not a generic skillsets, but a community health worker with behavioral health emphasis. So it's, again, you're combining the ability to understand and be culturally competent and be able to work with the community. And that's the community health worker. And then having these individual, being able to detect indicators that someone is struggling with behavioral health issues.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Not only new workers can benefit from having this skillset, but also existing workers. If you're like a receptionist or someone who's greeting a patient or working with a patient, being able to see that these symptoms are manifesting is so important. And that has changed the skillset of the healthcare industry.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You mentioned this before, the diversity and also the community healthcare worker. It's very important that the workers represent the community that they work in. And here in California, 40% of the population is Latino, but very underrepresented in the healthcare workforce. How are you encouraging this? How are you working with your partners to get more people in that represent that community?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

The rule of thumb is you will have a diverse talent pool on the back end if the enrollment on the front end is diverse. So you have to actually start with a diverse class in order to get diverse graduates. And that's why it's so important that we built an ecosystem. I call it the ecosystem of the willing in my book, where everyone comes together to do what they do best. So here we have a case where we have SEIU UHW going out into the community broadly and more deeply in order to make sure they're getting into communities where there's bilingual, multilingual speakers, and encouraging them to apply to the credit of SEIU UHW. They have virtual zoom orientation to learn about Futuro Health programs. And some of them are attended by 200 people, others attended by 1200 people. This is very significant in a moment in time when adults are shying away and enrollment is dropping in higher education across the board in this country, including very severe drops in community colleges. So we benefit from the partnership in order to go deeply in the community and to generate interest for these programs.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

And then the other component is instructional design. How do you ramp somebody into education? Sometimes they didn't have a great experience the first go round and don't yet have the confidence. There may be language skills where they need to build confidence. And so what we've done is we've designed different on-ramps. So someone who may be less confident about their English skills as a Spanish speaker, we actually have a partnership with Engine in order to put them to take what we call a jumpstart course called English Readiness For Allied Health Worker. So they begin in that course before moving on to the course that gets them their health care credential.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

The demand is acute in rural areas, low-income areas. What are you doing in the rural community to try to help bring more healthcare workers their way?

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Absolutely, Ramona, the rural areas are in great need of fortifying their healthcare workforce. And because we have structured most of our education programs in adult-friendly ways that have the pairing of the online, but with the live student support touch, we can actually extend these offerings into rural areas. We worked for example, in the rural community in the Central Valley, pairing up with the local workforce boards, where they go out and identify candidates and invite them to come onto Futuro Health to have an education journey. And then they do additional student supports locally and then support these students in acquiring jobs. It's a nice partnership where we already have a very relevant catalog of healthcare programs and communities like Fresno. Their workforce board have really just plugged in play in terms of partnering with us to Orange County, which has also appreciated the relevance of our healthcare training catalog. They've referred candidates, their clients into our programs as part of the partnership.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

And Von, one of the things that you say in the book, when you address leaders, "Take risks." What kind of risks? I mean, that sounds scary when they're trying to fill jobs. And as you said, they could post and pray, but taking risk is an important part of your message.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

I appreciate it that you bring up this concept of risk. I remember a number of times in my career where the risk seemed extraordinarily scary. And one of those big moments was when I had worked for PG&E, which was a big gas and electric utility. I was a special assistant to the chairman. I was on the 29th floor, which was the executive floor. The view from my office was all glass. I would view of the Bay Bridge whenever I needed some... It happened because I was on the executive floor. In that capacity, when I walked around the company, I kept hearing this issue that... But my supervisors were saying, and that they could not find quality and diverse candidates for what were great jobs. These were line worker jobs, gas worker jobs, system operator jobs. These are jobs that started in the 40s to 60k, and often topped six digits easily if people were to enter them.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Having been a first generation immigrant, my family escaped from Vietnam and came here as refugees. I knew that diverse communities would greatly appreciate these jobs if one, they knew about them, and that there could be quality and diversity, they don't need to be at odds with each other. You can grow a quality, diverse, and reliable talent pipeline, but you need to do it slightly differently.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

In a way, it really angered me to hear that there was a perceived trade-off between quality and diversity. What I did was I decided to pitch to my CEO. I said, "Let me show the company how this can be done. The way that we do this workforce development need to leverage the public infrastructure and the community colleges, which is where if you're diverse, you're more likely to access higher education to the community colleges rather than the four-year system. So we need to partner as a company with the community colleges, the public infrastructure here." Which was a different way of doing this.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

And so I call it a story of falling from grace because I went from the 29th floor, which was the executive floor, to the second floor, which was the floor where HR was on. And it was sort of dark and with no amenities, but that's where I went to do my work because I so strongly believed that there was a different way of being able to solve the company's operational problems, but also connect communities with these good opportunities. And that was the launch of the PG&E PowerPathway, which became industry recognized nationally after two years of its launch. And we were a member of the Obama White House Skills for America initiative. That's one of the playbooks that is discussed in the book WorkforceRX.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

So you took a risk in the company, took a risk and there was good benefit for both.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Right. There were moments in time where I thought, "My gosh, this is a big risk, because what happens if it doesn't work? What if it doesn't work? What have I done?"

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

I remember having a conversation one night with a friend and she said, "Well, if it doesn't work out, would you have made a different decision?" And I realized in talking to her that, no, I really believed this was important and it was worth taking the risk. And really just processing that through, helped me

realize how important it was for me, this core concept of opportunity and being able to pay for the opportunity that I had as a first-generation immigrant, to be able to open the doors for others.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Van, you're leading by example and congratulations on your new book.

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Futuro Health CEO:

Thank you so much, Ramona.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I've been speaking with Van Ton-Quinlivan, the CEO of Futuro Health and the author of the new book, *WorkforceRX: Agile and Inclusive Strategies for Employers, Educators and Workers in Unsettled Times*. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, editor-in-chief of WorkingNation. Thank you for listening.