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## Goodwill is no longer just a second hand store

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**Today's Goodwill Industries** of Central Texas is more than simply a collection of stores selling secondhand goods. The non-profit organization is in the unique position of servicing two distinct clients -- workers and employers.

Among other things, Goodwill has several employment services that they offer to small businesses, large corporations and government agencies. Unlike most employment agencies, whose primary focus is on keeping the company happy, the service organization must assist workers as well.

Katie Navine, vice president of employment and training for Goodwill, says the people who come to Goodwill for help in finding work are individuals with "barriers to employment." They might be older workers, dislocated workers, individuals on public assistance or people with disabilities.

One of the goals of the organization is to incorporate these workers into the work force. This is done by finding temporary work through Goodwill Temporary Service or full time work through Goodwill Employment and Training.

Neither of these entities charge fees to either the company or the worker. Even if the worker goes from temporary to permanent work status, neither the company or the individual pays a fee.

Cheri Dorn, vice president of the temporary service says most of the temporary positions are with state agencies and the City of Austin. She says 92 percent of the positions are clerical.

The temp division is managed by the Texas Industries for the Blind and Handicapped, a state set-aside program for people with disabilities.

The employment and training section focuses on small businesses, in which there are a greater number of jobs.

"Goodwill seeks out small companies [as a] great place for workers to get started," Navine says.

She says these companies have generally been receptive to Goodwill clients. About 60 percent of the jobs are in the service industry, with positions ranging from entry level to professional. Navine emphasizes she looks for "jobs that have a career track."

Charlie Brown, an Austin attorney, says most of the people he has hired through Goodwill have filled temporary clerical jobs, although he has hired part time permanent staff.

"People with barriers to employment tend to be better employees," Brown says. "They appreciate the job more and appreciate the opportunity to work."

Larger companies usually have their own human resources department and don't have to use Goodwill's services, but some, like Selectron-Texas, nevertheless do.

Heidi Veselka, staffing specialist at Selectron, sees the company's willingness to collaborate with the service organization as part of Selectron's "social responsibility."

"We're making a difference and they're making a difference too," Veselka says. "We live what our beliefs are."

Joe Farmer, director of the networking business segment of Selectron, agrees. He says the association with Goodwill is a good way of integrating hard to place workers into the workplace.

"Selectron's initiatives support employment of the disabled and the disadvantaged in a commercial setting," Farmer says.

The workers are assisted in their adjustment to Selectron by an on site representative from the non-profit organization.

"Goodwill gives on site support," Farmer says. "They help the individual succeed and are not sitting in some downtown office."

### **Outsource for small biz**

Where larger corporations see their association with Goodwill as part of their social responsibility, smaller companies see the organization as a life saver.

Robert Blanton makes rustic western clocks out of barn wood and barb wires. He has twelve to fifteen retailers that he services throughout the state. His business had increased to the point where he could not handle it without additional staff, a move he didn't want to make.

Industrial Resources, a newly expanded division of Goodwill that focuses on outsourcing, offered him a solution. After giving the division a test batch of his clocks and being satisfied with the results, Blanton transferred the responsibility of everything but the final design of the three different styles to Industrial Resources.

Blanton says he plans future contracts with Goodwill.

"In a few weeks, I'll have enough inventory to let them do the three different styles," he says. "That will free me up to do cutting of pieces."

Unlike the other divisions that don't charge fees for the services, Industrial Resources generates income for Goodwill.

Steve Hunt, product development specialist for Industrial Resources, says the major difference between the division and other outsourcing companies is that the others specialize in one area.

Hunt says his division is a "generalist" and can handle everything "under one roof."

The division can take "an industrial product from start to finish," he says. With the exception of Southwestern Bell and Applied Materials, that have long-standing, on-going relationships with Industrial Resources, most of their other business is done on a contract basis.

Through Industrial Resources, Goodwill has developed a strategy for generating income for the non-profit, created an opportunity for small businesses, formed collaborations with large corporations and developed programs targeted at high-risk youth.

It's not just a secondhand store anymore.

Evelyn Martin-Anderson is an Austin-based freelance writer.