

An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

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Nursery Employers and the Hispanic Labor Force: Interdependence,  
Responsibility, and Opportunity

Growing Hispanic communities throughout the United States supply a large number of workers to many industries. These workers, commonly with little skills and education, are hardworking, loyal, eager to learn, and have high family values. In short, they possess many qualities that employers value in their workers. Conversely many of these immigrant workers have other qualities that pose problems for their employers, principle among which are their limited English ability, cultural differences and sensitivities, and a high percentage are undocumented—they do not have legal authorization to live and work in the United States.

Increasing pressures on employers to ensure that all their employees are documented, decreasing numbers of working-age U.S. Americans, and the declining desirability of the types of labor that the Hispanic community willingly accepts will make it increasingly difficult to maintain labor levels required by industries.

This thesis asks what employers must do to build a competitive advantage in a constrained labor market and attract and retain the skilled employees they require. Using the flowering and shade tree nursery industry in Oregon's Clackamas County as an example, a model for reframing the horticultural industry's attraction and value is proposed which potentially may evolve into a beneficial national horticultural certification program.