On Wednesday (March 3), we had 2 interviews. One with **Gordon Food Distribution** (Yanxi Facilitates & Lanyi Scribes) and another with **Saladino’s** (Lanyi Facilitates & Xiaofan Scribes). On Friday (March 5), we had 2 interviews. One with **Ben E. Keith** (Zixia Facilitates & Yanxi Scribes) and another with **Martin Bros** (Xiaofan Facilitates & Zixia Scribes). In terms of data privacy and data acquisition, each company’s attitude differs. For example, **Ben E. Keith** has more concerns on data privacy while **Martin Bros** is pretty chill with its data. Despite different reactions each company has during the interview. They share many common problems and attitudes toward hiring for warehouse and driving positions.

**Recruiting Challenges:**

* Problem for a long time
  + **Saladino’s** and **Martin Bros** are explicit that recruiting challenges has been a growing problem for the last five years
  + **GFD** and **Ben E. Keith** feel this problem has been going on for much longer time
  + Warehouse has lots of applications, not high quality but high flow
  + Trucking is the opposite
    - Customer service, professionality and physical fitness are all required for truck drivers
    - School education and accreditation needed to obtain *CDL license*
    - **Ben E. Keith** suggests terrible retention rate with drivers
    - Some companies such as **Martin Bros** made it explicit that the difficulty level in hiring between warehouse and tracking varies and their primary concern is with truck driver hiring
    - **Martin Bros** reveals it has different recruiting advertisement for warehouse workers and truck drivers
      * Basic advertisements and recruitment for warehouse workers
      * TV commercials in addition to basic advertisements for truck drivers
    - **Ben E. Keith** also suggests use of automation within their warehouse divisions, which transform labor force to technicians, therefore fewer would be needed than before
  + Workforce has changed as well as the environment

**Dealing with Driver Shortage**

* + Pay is always an issue
    - The company pays by hour and after-work hour is also being paid but drivers still left their jobs for companies that offer one-in-all payment
  + Moving drivers from one place to another to cover the routes because the company is short of drivers
  + **Saladino’s** said in the interview that it would be interested to know what the top pay company’s turnover rate is because raising pay might bring higher return on investment (ROI) (i.e., These companies are willing to pay higher if higher payment could potentially solve the difficulty in hiring and low retention rate)
  + Prefer to offer higher pay than lose drivers that they trained but left their jobs for other companies (i.e., If higher payment could potentially solve the difficulty in hiring and low retention rate)
  + **Saladino’s** mentions it is confident on workplace environment side

**Pandemic**

* + For all these companies, they are suffering turnover issue more than one year ago, which is far before the **pandemic** started
  + Some companies such as **Saladino’s** think the recruiting challenges are not seriously affected by the pandemic and will continue post-pandemic
  + Other companies such as **GFD** admit the pandemic influence such as paycheck offered by the government, safety concerns. Covid restrictions (if one tested positive, whole shutdown) and stability issue. **Ben E. Keith** also mentioned a staff lay-off during the pandemic and rehiring when business picked up, the company is also expecting a trending 3-5% sale loss due to the pandemic.

**Content with Workers:**

* **Content with the workers** enough to extend the offer but wish to have more experienced workers (not high expectations for these drivers at least for the first couple of weeks)

**Career Path**

* All of the companies express the possibility of rising to higher positions
* Some companies list possibility for promotion in their hiring ads while others don’t
  + **Saladino’s** does nothave **career path** listed in job description
  + **Martin Bros** list promotion opportunities in the hiring advertisements
* **Gordon Food Distribution** mentions it has leadership and development programs as well as mentorship programs
* **Saladino’s** mention management teams (trainers, supervisors, managers) turnover is very small
  + Good news for management team
  + No good news for incoming workers who want to be part of the management team
  + It could be a problem among all the companies we interviewed
* Job is stable, pays well and there is no seasonal layoff, most of the time is more hour and more work

**Rewards and Recognitions**

* Each company has their own rewards and recognition program
  + **Saladino’s** offers annual increase in payment and **Benefit Programs** include gift cards ($25), years of service awards, quarterly and yearly drawings
  + **Ben E. Keith** provide education programs that reimburse tuition for their employees based on the coursework and degree level they pursued. They also have QSA program that the employee with the highest score gets to go to Disney World and so on
  + **GFD** has safety incentives, reimbursement for tools and equipment and the program differs across department
  + **Martin Bros** has quarterly safety incentives as well as 25-year pack

**Automation**

* All the companies are considering automation, though all admit that automation is in its infancy and won’t be vastly carried out in the near future
  + **GFD** says that one center in Canada is working on automation, but it also says it is more of a future goal
  + **Saladino’s** says it sees every opportunity to do automation and it has tested autonomous drones, but automation can’t replace labor force at the current stage
  + **Ben E. Keith** uses automation for slow moving items, and it suggests massive investment needed to in order to advance the techniques
  + **Martin Bros** also looks positively on automation, though it will not invest in the next 24 months, there is definitely possibility to explore in the next five years

**Data Collection**

* Each company is at a different stage
* We will hopefully get the datasets by the end of this week
  + **GFS** has concerned scopes and the data, and we are currently working with Jamie and Annika to draft clarification emails and set up quick meetings
  + **Ben E. Keith** also has concerns on the amount of data and the possible differences in the definition of variables
  + **Saladino’s** says that vast majority of the data comes in as spreadsheets. Would do a word document to answer the questions.
    - Data from the company may not get granular but regionality needs to be kept in mind
  + **Martin Bros** says it can get most of the data ready for our project
* What we will do is probably draft clarification emails to be sent to each of the client companies and get whatever data they can provide for analysis.

Discussion Topics:

* Update on Interview Takeaways
  + **Recruitment difficulty** has been going on for a long time (much longer than the pandemic)
    - Truck driver recruitment is a more imminent issue than that of warehouse workers
    - One company Saladino’s mentions candidates that are hired don’t show up or leave after a day or two (Tip from Professor Junker: would be interesting to find out the reason and see if they are the less experienced candidates)
    - Tip from Professor Junker: would be interesting to find out which candidates are more likely to stay and target this type during hiring process
  + Companies are willing to raise pay to deal with **driver shortage**
    - Saladino’s mentions their payment structure is hourly but many of their drivers left for fixed pay offers (Tip from Professor Junker: would be interesting to see whether driver started with one company and left for another with different payment structure)
* **Pandemic** influences the industry in certain aspects and is not the main causing problem to hiring difficulty
* Companies are **generally satisfied** with their hired employees but wish they could be more experienced
* **Promotion opportunities** exist in these companies (Tip from Professor Junker: would be interesting to see career paths before they take the job)
* Each company has their own **rewards and recognition program**
* All the companies are considering **automation**, though all admit that automation is in its infancy and won’t be vastly carried out in the near future
* Data Request
  + Public data sources are available in csv or excel files, no API needed
  + Concern from Professor Junker: even on monthly level of aggregation, it may be difficult to link data to covariates that may explain what is going on
* Next Steps
  + Group meeting to go over logistics
  + Start on sampling data and exploring the public data sources (Tip from Professor Junker: timeframe of data used depends on client data as well as BLS data)
  + Set up data review meeting with Professor Junker once data is received