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## Trends in Recruiting and Growth in the Bioscience Industry An Interview with Metro President, Tom Hughes

By Linda Barney, Barney and Associates

The bioscience industry has a great potential for providing high-wage jobs and growth in Oregon. We interviewed Metro Council President Tom Hughes to get his perspective on the importance of the bioscience industry and his suggestions for recruiting companies, adding jobs and how government, businesses and universities might work together to expand bioscience opportunities in Oregon. "I think the bioscience industry has a broad sweep and has more importance than people have recognized with 4.2 billion in sales statewide. It is a surprisingly large and robust segment of the economy," states Hughes. The importance of the bioscience industry was shown by a study conducted by EcoNorthwest, which looked at employment and trends during 2009 and 2010. "The bioscience industry in Oregon has not only weathered the recession, but is growing while other industries are losing jobs," states Alec Josephson, senior economist for ECONorthwest. See the [complete report here](#).

### Factors that attracted companies to move to Oregon

Tom Hughes was previously mayor of Hillsboro, Oregon and was closely involved in the process of recruiting Genentech and Solar World to the Hillsboro area. When asked about what helped attract Genentech to come to Oregon, Hughes responds, "There were a number of factors but one of the main ones that appealed to Genentech was the single-point-of-sales income tax. Another major factor was the training and the quality of the workforce. Quality of life is very important; the fact that their team could live in the country and be minutes away from work was a big plus. The Portland area is a leader in preserving farm land so that it is close to urban areas and these quality-of-life issues will be very important in attracting bioscience companies to Oregon."



Genentech did indicate concerns about how workers would be trained to meet their ongoing needs. This was addressed by Hillsboro officials working with Portland Community College (PCC) to set up a program to offer bioscience classes that would meet Genentech's training needs. "PCC has been a great partner for those of us who have done economic development in the region to tailor training programs to meet the needs of companies that are coming to the area," says Hughes.

### What needs to change to improve recruitment?

When competing with other areas to recruit companies, it is critical to have a streamlined process in place. Hughes states, "One of the things I learned as mayor – time is money. It is the amount of time lost from the time you get the idea to the time your idea is in production—this is an important factor. It is critical that we can provide infrastructure in a timely fashion and identify where there are land parcels available to make an easy transition for the interested company. If we can make the relocation and transition smoother and faster then it is less costly to the company. This is good benefit to recruit companies into the area."

### What does bioscience need to do to become more visible?

Bioscience is often overlooked when thinking about major industries in Oregon. Dennis McNannay, Oregon Bioscience Association executive director, asked Hughes what his organization and bioscience companies can do to help increase visibility and aid in recruiting companies to Oregon. Hughes responded, "I recommend you work with groups like [Greater Portland Inc.](#) to help us understand the nature of your industry. We understand the semiconductor industry very well and know supply-chain companies that would be logical to recruit. Bioscience is a little more ethereal and hard to pin down. There are so many small start-ups. We need to work back and forth to understand the needs of those companies, how much land they need and what they need to be successful. Understanding that would help." McNannay indicates that the Oregon Bioscience Association and companies will be working with Greater Oregon Inc., Metro and other groups to help clarify what is needed to attract companies.

### Stress strength in semiconductor industry

Both Hughes and McNannay have experienced the importance of talking about Oregon's strength in the semiconductor industry. Hughes states, "I remember a trade tour with then Governor Ted Kulongoski. Those in attendance were polite but not particularly interested. But when I indicated I was mayor of the city with the largest Intel facility, things changed and they immediately sat up and listened. I believe there is a fairly healthy cluster of bioscience device digitized companies with services and supply chains similar to those of Intel. This seems like a logical area to pursue for bioscience recruitment."

### Importance of recruiting in China

Hughes and McNannay have both toured China touting benefits of Oregon and trying to learn as much as possible about China. McNannay was on a recent trip to China and the Oregon Bioscience Association was the only trade organization there. Hughes indicates that the Chinese are on their twelfth Five-Year Plan and are stressing healthcare issues for their population. "They don't have many processes relating to bioscience. They don't have a multi-year FDA approval process or extensive red-tape around clinical trials. This is a huge opportunity for Oregon and could be an exciting opportunity for bioscience companies in Oregon," says Hughes.

*Linda Barney is the founder and owner of **Barney and Associates**, a technical / marketing writing, training and web design firm in Beaverton, Oregon that provides writing and web content for the high tech, government, biotechnology, medical, sustainability and scientific communities. Linda writes articles for the Software Association of Oregon, the Oregon Bioscience Association, the Clean Technology Alliance, the Supercomputing Conference and has acted as editor of the Microsoft Application Development Resources Guide. Contact Linda at [linda@barneyassoc.com](mailto:linda@barneyassoc.com).*

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