

Welcome to the third week of our course on shaping the future of work. Now that we've laid the historical foundation by looking at what made the social contract work in our countries in the past, it's time to start to lay out a framework for the future. So this week we're going to pay special attention to the time when we first began to identify what made for high road firms versus low road firms.

Remember the diagram that we had in the first chapter of the book that we are reading for this course, where we identified what differentiates firms that are perhaps good for shareholders and produce good financial results, but not such good results for workers compared to those that produce good results for both? We're going to try to understand what makes these different firms work. And we're going to see if we can identify how we can use these ideas in the future.

Now when we look at these organizations-- and we'll bring in examples like Market Basket, Patagonia, Ideal, Saturn, Costco, Southwest Airlines, and others-- we're not doing that to put these organizations on a pedestal, but really to dig deeply to understand what makes them work, and how can we apply these in the industries and organizations of interest to us. And to do that we're going to really focus on two objectives this week. One is just what I said, what are the ingredients of these high road firms? And then, how might we use this understanding to decide whether or not we want to work for an employer that has some of these characteristics?

We'll do that by applying a tool that you'll find in the Assignment tab of the course. It's called the Good Jobs Survey. And it asks you to go out, find a firm of interest to you or in an industry that you may have a particular interest in working in, and talk to someone. Talk to an employee in that firm. Ask them about the conditions of work that are present in that organization.

You'll find a rating form. You can fill out the form. Then you provide your answers on the platform for the course. And down the road, we will report what everyone learned from that experience.

We want you to remember these ideas though, because we'll use them throughout the rest of the course. Particularly, we're going to put them to work when we come to the grand finale of this course, where we negotiate a new social contract, the next generation's social contract. Governing conditions of employment in our workplace is the future. So we want you to use some of the ideas that you learned from both the Good Jobs Survey, but also from observing and learning about some of the organizations that have good practices that we can then apply in our own organizations.

So that's a good deal of what we will do this week. And I hope that you will have a good time with the materials and that you'll have a good time applying them as we go forward. But I'd like to make two quick comments on

what we learned from last week's discussion.

I was particularly impressed with the sample of organizations that you identified as you went through your career planning exercise. A wide array of very interesting jobs, from engineering, clergy members, disability teachers, HR managers, labor leaders, artists, sports agents-- for the National Football League, no less-- psychometricians, people who use mathematics to try to understand how to measure individual behavior and attitudes, futurists, graphic artists, technical editors. Note that all of these are jobs that really are going to require considerable human touch, creativity, and effort.

None of these are going to be totally replaced by robots, or artificial intelligence, or machine learning. And so I don't want you to be too scared about the future of work. I want you to prepare for it. That's what we're learning from this course. That's what we're learning from this particular exercise.

So put the pathways of education that you identified in the career planning exercise to work. Do your part to be prepared for the future. And then work with us and with other stakeholders to make sure that the conditions are present to make it successful.

I was also very interested to learn what you had to say about the great debate over productivity and wages. You completed a poll. And here's the results of that poll. 85% of you agreed that wages and productivity ought to move together. About 7%, 7.5%, said you're not sure, and another 7% said, well maybe not anymore. In fact, many of you indicated while you believe in this principle, you believe it's also going to be difficult to apply it in the current economy given changes in technology, changes in international competition, and the way in which organizations are structured today.

But I believe there are ways we can apply these concepts. But we have to do it in ways that are consistent with the economy and the workforce today. So I've added some more comments on the discussion board about how we can apply productivity and wage movements at the national level, at the organizational level, even at the individual level.

So take a look. Keep that great discussion going. And let's see what we can do to apply this concept appropriately in the economy today and in the jobs of the future.

And finally, there are going to be some new ideas raised by our MBA TAs as they contribute from their own knowledge and experience base from around the world, and from some of our special experts that we will introduce into the course on topics as we go forward this week. So have a good time. Engage the materials. And let's keep a good conversation going.