

For a community to thrive, it must open its arms to people of all walks of life. This takes commitment and vision. Young professionals from diverse backgrounds need a path to start or expand their career. Employers must build a work force that represents and understands the markets they serve. If these things don't happen, there is a loss of talent as job seekers move elsewhere to pursue their dreams. That erodes the fabric of the community, robbing it of the very people who can move it forward.

As Memphis faced this dilemma, ContigoCreative stepped up. The boutique marketing firm used its keen understanding of the Latino community and other minority groups to develop a solution – the Multicultural Career Expo, a unique service to connect employers and job seekers.

We spoke with numerous stakeholders to identify the problem: a lack of opportunities for leading employers and diverse job seekers to make meaningful connections. It wasn't enough to provide a typical "job fair" where candidates handed out resumes that would likely end up in the trash cans of overwhelmed human resources directors. We realized it is often harder for minorities to find opportunities, as there was at the time no intentional outreach to the Latino, Asian, Muslim and LGBTQ populations, among others.

ContigoCreative envisioned a more targeted approach. Employers would meet candidates with the specific skills to fill current openings. Job seekers would be directed toward companies they match with and receive support and education on making the right impression.

Next, ContigoCreative built a comprehensive platform for people of all cultures to achieve their career goals and contribute to a vibrant, thriving future for our community. We started with an all-out public outreach effort, directly inviting under-served minority communities to the expo and working with leading colleges and universities to identify and recruit their brightest diverse talent. We looked beyond the mainstream media to niche publications, specific radio stations and targeted influencers to promote the event where our intended audience would see it. We met with human resources officials from influential companies and explained how the expo could help them find their next superstar via face-to-face interaction. We helped sponsors and exhibitors understand how they could enhance their bottom line and improve their community by keeping multicultural talent at home.

The results were immediate and profound. The expo became a one-stop shop to help with the hiring process, serving as a bridge to connect employers and employees. In five years, the event reached over 6,000 job and internship candidates and 50-plus businesses. For job seekers, it was a launching pad to the American Dream. For employers, it became the go-to event to hire candidates who could help serve emerging markets.

Finally, the expo had a defining and lasting positive impact on our city. ContigoCreative's goal was to decrease unemployment for all cultures in Shelby County, and in doing so protect the characteristics that make Memphis unique. Memphis is defined by its hardworking, vibrant, diverse population, and the expo has been a crucial ally in writing that story.