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## Good News in Tough Times

by Ken Embley, CPPA

*Many satisfied with job despite tough times*, a headline from USA Today (Friday, March 13, 2009, page 3B). This is good news for people who make a living in Utah during tough times. The article speaks to how Americans feel about their work environments. Specifically, a yearlong poll asked Americans if they 1) were satisfied with their jobs, 2) use their strengths at work, 3) were treated by a supervisor as a partner, and 4) worked in an "open, trusting environment." The percentage of respondents in each state who said "yes" to all four questions ended in ranking Utah as the most upbeat state in America (Utah nabbed top honors with 59% of its respondents saying those four elements were prevalent in their work lives). In addition, 73% of Utah respondents said their supervisors created a trusting environment—nice!



Good news in tough times also caught the eye of Governor Huntsman. During his state of the state address, he mentions with great pride that Utah is the "Best Managed State" according to the Pew Center and announced in *Governing Magazine*. Overall, Utah received an "A-" grade and was the only state to get an "A" in money management, an "A" in infrastructure and information, and a "B+" in managing people—not bad!

In addition, there are testimonies, surveys, articles and other indicators that tell Utahns we have some good news in tough times to celebrate. In all sectors of our economy, we can find good leaders and managers in this state.

I believe the reason behind good news in tough times is that we are a people who invest in developing our human capital. In state government hundreds and, over the years, even thousands of state employees complete Certified Public Manager leadership development courses. The University of Utah graduates nearly a hundred Masters of Public Administration (MPA) students each year, and most of these students attend class at night while working in quality government positions during the day. Then, there is Salt Lake County's new "University," again a commitment to the development of human capital. In this state, we develop our human capital and it seems to be paying off in a big way—good news in tough times.

The message is clear—if we want good news in tough times, we must continue to invest in the development of human capital. This means bright and capable people need to continue the tradition and invest in their own development. This means those who develop human capital must ensure the highest quality of programming. This means governments must work to strengthen programs, policies and practices that support the development of human capital. This means facing these types of difficult challenges during tough times—challenges we must overcome to ensure good news in the tough times we are sure to encounter in the future.

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