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October 1999

From: Verna J. Willis, Ph.D. :  
Regarding: RECOMMENDING DR. ROBERT J. LAHM



Dr. Robert J. Lahm is well-known to me. I have been his faculty adviser throughout his Master's and Ph.D. degree programs, and have chaired his dissertation committee. He is a very able, mature, and hard-working professional whom I recommend without reservation for any position for which he feels qualified.

His Ph.D. is in Human Resource Development, a new professional field that requires extraordinary versatility and strategic thinking capability. His doctoral program has been especially designed not only to prepare him for faculty positions in higher education, but also to provide a practitioner capability that allows him to step into private or public leadership and encourage continuous learning. Like most of our graduates, Bob is already experienced as teacher, researcher, writer, and consultant. Seasoned also in the skills of marketing services to others, he brings yet another useful qualification to any institutional or corporate employer. I have no doubt he will make major contributions to HRD practice, enable others to make contributions, and advance the field wherever opportunities are offered.

Bob Lahm is an outstanding person on many counts. He is creative and enthusiastic, but also analytical and thorough. With an extensive business background, has worked to improve continuing education at university level, and recently acted as action learning coach to a major Atlanta-based corporation. The latter effort was reported by the company to have resulted in a million dollars in savings to the enterprise over the year that followed the intervention.

While much of our work together has been of an academic nature, I have also seen him in action on several other occasions as an independent consultant. He worked with our faculty intensively over a period of several months to help us develop a strategic plan for our HRD Center, creating all the highly communicative presentation materials we needed to get our message out to clients. We have not yet been appropriately funded to make the Center all we hope for it to be, but Bob certainly helped us think through all of the "what-ifs" and lay the groundwork for future progress.

Dr. Lahm is one of a handful of people I have taught (among hundreds) who is routinely able to view work situations in common sense but unusual ways, often bringing insights to problem solving that no one else has had. He is an excellent communicator, a creative artist with a keen eye for visual representations of important ideas, and he carries both a thoughtful and an entrepreneurial spirit into everything he does. He tackles every task with commitment and energy, and because he is conscientious, often goes far beyond what is asked. Bob is his own self-starter and taskmaster; he needs very little guidance once he is clear about a work objective. He is also good at the probing it takes to reach that clarity.

Bob can work at any level in an organization, but he is best in situations where he can exercise leadership and have considerable autonomy in decision-making. He is good at visioning programs and possibilities, and does the necessary work to get this done. His completing of the master's and now the doctoral degree at Georgia State is a case in point, for he has done so with distinction within a very short time period and under a number of extraordinary personal life constraints -- like the around-the-clock demands of caring for a daughter born prematurely.

I consider Bob Lahm not only a person of high professional caliber, but also a thoughtful colleague and friend. He is loyal and dependable, but also can deliver clear-sighted critique when that is appropriate. He is respected by his fellow graduates as someone who has not settled for "conventional wisdom." He expects the best from others, as well as from himself. He will be an asset to any employer who appreciates honesty and fairness, and who appreciates the value he brings to an organization. Please give him serious consideration.

If you would like to speak with me personally, I will be pleased to answer other questions you may have regarding Bob and how he thinks and works. My office phone number (voice mail) is 404-651-1652. Office fax is 404-651-1378. E-mail address is [vwillis@gsu.edu].

Sincerely,

  
Verna J. Willis, Associate Professor  
Human Resource Development Degree Programs