

# Workforce Development

Helping You To Meet Your Workforce Challenges

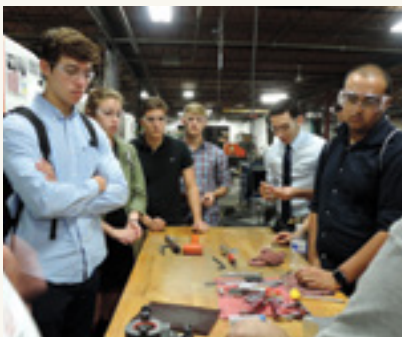
## Training the Next Generation: How We Can Open Our Doors

By Sterling Gill, III – New Workforce Development Manager

There is a movement growing. This movement is about opening doors. Why should we open our doors? You may ask to whom are we opening our doors? The answer is two words: skilled workforce. By opening our shops to the community, we can show people the amazing things manufacturers do. When we show people the products we make, how we make them and why they are important, people will understand the value of manufacturing in their lives. No longer will they take for granted the value that is created by their friends and neighbors working in our shops.

Here are a few things to think about when we open our doors for our community: What is the message they will get from their visit? Is our housekeeping, lighting and equipment satisfactory, attractive and the best in class? Would someone looking around see our shop as a desirable place to work for their son or daughter?

Who is our audience? Are we prepared to provide an accurate representation of who we are? What is that representation? Is it great careers or a great place to work? How about



the importance of the products that they make? No one wants to do work that is unimportant. The products we make are all integral to making the latest technologies perform. Tell the story of your parts, and visitors will understand the importance of the careers you offer.

Here are my top three factors to assure a successful shop tour for students, teachers and parents.

1. Make our shop safe. Eliminate any physical hazards that any visitors may encounter on the tour. Plan a route for your visitors to keep them safe and show them what you want them to see without interrupting the natural flow of your operations. We want to assure that the needed job tasks can still be performed while allowing guests to see exactly how it gets done. Bottom line: the physical environment and the safety of our guests is a priority.
2. In addition to planning the tour route, who will be guiding the tour, what will be the size of the groups and who are the best subject matter experts to engage the visitors? Having a plan will help the tour to move smoothly and be informative. Having the right people to demonstrate, explain and answer questions is key to hosting a successful tour. Engagement, not lecturing, will assure connection. Having the right people to show how the work being done is relevant to real-world situations and will help your visitors get the message about the great careers we have in our shops.
3. Follow through. Before visitors leave, have a "so what did you think?" session. Ask for their feed-

back. Briefly summarize the day's event and highlight the key takeaways that you hope they got and pay attention to these takeaways. Having some tangible items from your shop will reinforce the connection. Informational materials and ways they can continue to connect with your shop is an important means to keeping the conversation going.

The defining moment for many is the last thing they see and hear. This carries weight, and for many, determines the significance of the trip, as it is the moment they decide whether the trip was worth the effort. Make sure your closing remarks share your excitement for the work your people do, the difference that they make and how others can also be a part of this success. In addition, reach out to visitors at a later date for additional feedback, call to answer any questions that they might have and gauge their interest in exploring opportunities with your company. Follow through should not only involve visitors to the shop, but it should also involve employees. It is important to gain their perspective on the successes of the day and the areas in need of improvement. Staff can provide valuable perspectives that we cannot forget to include.

Opening our doors to students, teachers and parents in our community can only help to improve the image of our industry if you follow my advice. We need to develop our workforce. What better place than in our community with our friends and neighbors? When is a better time to start than now? After all, it is our future, and it's coming faster than we think.