

Finding Skilled Talent: One Size Doesn't Fit All

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The shortage of skilled workers in the machining trade is undeniable. Every shop owner that I have spoken with confirms that if an applicant with skills applied, they would hire them *even if no current vacancy existed*. In most shops, it is the lack of skilled workers that is the most serious constraint, not lack of investment or technology.

Baby Boomers are hitting the retirement age of 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day. When they leave, in many cases they will be taking a large share of institutional knowledge of the craft. So knowledge retention is an additional problem for our shops to solve along with finding and training our needed workforce.

Finding Skilled Talent

Galion LLC is a PMPA member in Galion, Ohio. They recognized that the skilled workforce problem had two components: 1) finding qualified candidates, and 2) retaining knowledge of retiring employees. They then addressed each of these areas to maximize the positive impact for their operations. Galion does a team interview with candidates to determine if they have the needed mechanical aptitude. Shop classes, working on cars and making things are clues that they use to confirm that a candidate will be a potential fit. The interview team is vice president of operations, quality manager, engineering manager and the shift supervisors.



The other piece of a successful hire is training and getting skills into the new hires. Galion has brought back a recently retired machinist to teach the skills of the trade. This program has been so successful, that they are planning on offering teaching slots to others as they approach retirement.

Cox Manufacturing, located in San Antonio, Texas, is a PMPA member that has taken the lead on workforce development. Their approach involved community outreach as well as in-house programs, including internships for local high school and college students. Cox based their program on the paradox that while most (80 percent) Americans believe that manufacturing is important or very important to our standard of living and economic prosperity, *less than one third of Americans would encourage their children to pursue a career in manufacturing*. (Deloitte/Manufacturing Institute Survey 2009)

Cox has worked to build public awareness that manufacturing jobs are clean and safe, offer better wages and have high-tech aspects that assure career development. Cox holds open houses for the community, students and parents through links with regional partners. They serve on an industry advisory committee and provide student internships to create a pipeline of talent for their shop.

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Training the Next Generation

A number of companies have found that private-public partnerships are an effective way to create not just one or two trained individuals, but rather a system for workforce development that benefits their shops and sustains the community.

G.W. Lisk, a PMPA member company in Clifton Springs, N.Y., created a partnership with Finger Lakes Community College targeting middle-skills careers, those positions that required more than a high school education plus on-the-job training, but less than a four-year degree. The G.W. Lisk/FLCC Machining Sciences Curriculum Partnership provides a six-month, 500-hour program covering safety, measurements, manual and CNC machining, robotics and automation, math, print reading and GD&T and statistical process control. Partnering with the local community college or educational institution allows all involved to operate at their highest and best capability, helping assure that the new employees have what they need to deal with the straight, vertical learning curve that they face.

The public-private partnership model has also been employed by PMPA member company Bracalente Manufacturing Group in Trumbauersville, Penn. They partnered with Lehigh Valley Technical Institute to implement an entry-level precision machinist training program modeled after the Right Skills Now program, developed by Darlene Miller of PMPA Member Company Permac Industries. The goal of the Right Skills Now model is to provide qualified candidates with a classroom and hands-on immersion experience that gives them the essential skills needed to safely add value on the job.

Credentials Manage Risk

Darlene Miller, creator of the Right Skills Now program and PMPA first vice president, initially saw the program as a pilot, to demonstrate that employers and local community colleges could work together to create a

pipeline for talent and show that the pipeline could continue to deliver additional coursework and skills as initial graduates sought to upgrade their skills and careers. Because Right Skills Now based its skills training on the NIMS/NAM workforce credential program, there is another benefit for the program graduates: they have nationally recognized skills with the NIMS/NAM credentials and certifications, reducing the risk of hiring for employers. It also gives the trainee assurance of employability by having a recognized credential.

Resources to Sustain Your Workforce Efforts

One size doesn't fit all in our day-to-day world; there is no reason to think that it is a viable concept for us when trying to address our skilled workforce problem. The wide range of demographic and economic forces that are shaping our workforce today will not be handled with any one particular solution. But PMPA member shops continue to demonstrate (and share) that they can acquire the skills and talent they need through their own efforts, public-private partnerships and even nationally recognized programs such as Right Skills Now, in conjunction with community resources.

PMPA's mission is to provide resources to advance and sustain our members. Helping all of us recognize that workforce development is our most important challenge is not the only thing that PMPA does to advance our members' ability to respond to this challenge.

We have created a career database that helps find programs and funding for training and career development.

Link: <http://pmpa.org/docs/reference/training-database.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

For more info and links regarding a career in precision machining: <http://pmpa.org/careers/overview>

Career Opportunities Fact Sheet: <http://pmpa.org/docs/reference/fact-sheet.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Right Skills Now: <http://rightskillsnow.org/>

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Long-Time Member, Fairchild, Examines PMPA Benefits from Local to International Levels

been able to do," Mr. Thompson summarizes. "Our 67-year association with PMPA has been an enjoyable, productive and rewarding experience."

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