

Galion LLC Looks “Outside the Box” to Find the Next Generation of Machinists

Galion LLC is a manufacturer of precision-machined parts made primarily for the automotive, commercial and defense industries. Located in Galion, Ohio, the 54-year-old company is known for its screw machining, cold-forming and CNC work.

Recently, the manufacturer has also become known for the way it finds and trains the precision machinists of the future, as well as for how it involves its experienced employees in helping with that training.

Like a lot of manufacturers, Galion was having trouble finding qualified employees. Many of the candidates couldn't pass the drug screening tests. Those that were qualified were heading off to college in hopes of finding high-paying jobs.

The company was also facing the fact that many of its most experienced machinists would soon be retiring. “When skilled employees retire, all of that knowledge and experience leaves with them,” says Dena Glass, Galion's human resources manager. “We decided to think outside the box by asking one of our recently retired machinists, Dave Rowland, to come back as a machining teacher.

“He agreed to do it and he wrote his own training program,” she continues. “He knows our business, our products and our machines. He also knows what trainees need to know. Plus, he's a very good teacher.

“So far, it has been a perfect marriage,” she adds. “Dave has already trained four new machinists. He evaluates them and lets us know how they are doing. He'll continue to work with them for six months to a year.”

Glass points out that there are several other machinists at Galion that are approaching retirement age. “We will be asking them to stay on as teachers, too. It has been such a good partnership with our retirees that I can see this being an on-going program.”

Before Galion hires a trainee, the company makes sure the candidate has a good mechanical aptitude. “We look for individuals who are interested in fixing their cars and building things,” Glass explains. “People that have taken some shop classes in school.

“We do a team interview,” she continues. “We bring in our V.P. of operations, quality manager, engineering manager, machining expert and even the shift supervisors. Bringing them all together gives us a lot more strength. It's like a brainstorming session, with a lot of different ideas generated.”



Glass believes that not all high school graduates should enroll in college. “Some of the young people we talk to have already started college because it's what their parents and teachers told them to do,” she says. “We hire them as production workers and pay them \$9.50 an hour, plus an additional 5 percent if they pick up a different shift.

“We tell them if they want to come back and work for us over Christmas break, Spring break or during the summer, there's a job waiting for them. Some of them didn't want to return to college. They wanted to stay here and work for Galion.

“I'm hearing more and more about young people who go to college and then find out there are no jobs available when they graduate,” Glass says. “At Galion, we have jobs to offer right now. There are \$25-an-hour careers in manufacturing just waiting for the right people. They might not find something that pays that much coming out of college.

“We look for people who don't know what they want to do for a living,” she adds. “We show them there's an opportunity for a career at Galion. There's a chance for stability and tenure. And, there's a chance for them to make more money than they're currently making.

“It's a different approach that has worked well for us,” Glass sums up. “We're no longer going to advertise for screw machine operators only to be disappointed because none are applying. We go after young people and show them what a screw machine operator does. We tell them we will train them. We tell them what wage they can start at and what wage they can eventually earn. And that seems to be working.”

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