



Feeding the Machine

To stay competitive in the dynamic aerospace industry, Cox Machine Inc. provides extensive on-the-job training to all workers and assists in building technical college curriculum

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It makes sense for a company to place employee development at the center of its business model.

Take Wichita, Kansas-based Cox Machine Inc., for instance. The precision aerospace parts manufacturer, which has a strong focus on cellular manufacturing and technological improvement, has made significant investment in employee development as well as its commitment to community development. While many companies look outside the organization for innovation, Cox Machine looks internally as well to invest in its current and future workforce.

To stay competitive in the dynamic aerospace industry, the company provides extensive on-the-job training to all workers. In 2014, Cox Machine hired eight new workers and invested more than \$40,000 in their development to prepare them for its sophisticated manufacturing practices.

“Employee investment is at the center of our business model at Cox Machine,” said Brenna Davis, chief operating officer. “We invest in our employees because when they are better trained we are able to quickly respond to our clients needs. Our skilled workforce makes us more flexible and more effective.”

While Cox Machine values internal employee development, it also has cultivated a focus on developing skills in its regional workforce. To make sure students are learning the most important manufacturing skills, the company is involved in the curriculum development at nearby Wichita Area

Technical College, helping inform programs related to the \$14.9 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant for the Nation Aviation Consortium and six new technical certificates being created to recognize standardized credentials in aviation manufacturing. By matching course curriculum with industry standards, this information sharing reduces the need to retrain new employees, which helps both businesses and workers.

Because the best education often comes from hands-on learning, Cox Machine is also working with the Wichita Workforce Center and the Kansas Department of Commerce to create a registered apprenticeship program in quality assurance. This development program will be the first of its kind at the company, and the first focused on manufacturing quality assurance in Kansas. The new program will allow students to complement their in-class education with on-the-job learning and real-world experience.

By developing their workers and giving them the information necessary to respond to new conditions, Cox Machine is mixing the right development strategy, with stronger operations and more highly skilled workers to grow and succeed.

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