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Exposing Young Adults to Careers in Manufacturing

By Fred Dedrick 11/24/2015

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Fred Dedrick is the executive director for the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (<http://www.nfwsolutions.org/>), which promotes the development of employer-led industry partnerships that guide educational and training investments in skills and credentials.



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Communities across the country are facing an economic crisis caused by a fundamental disconnect: local residents looking for work lack the skills to perform well at the jobs available in their region. Across America, businesses have millions of unfilled positions and yet millions of unemployed and out-of-school young adults lack the skills necessary to be hired.

In a recent report, the Manufacturing Institute estimates that, “Over the next decade, nearly three and a half million manufacturing jobs likely need to be filled and the skills gap is expected to result in two million of those jobs going unfilled.”

While numerous cities and the manufacturing industry as a whole are struggling to fill the growing number of open positions, Hartford, Conn., is building thoughtful partnerships such as the Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford (<http://workforce-solutions.org/>) to connect businesses, educators and key community organizations to make better investments in their region’s workforce. Businesses are starting to guide investments and are driving retraining efforts for some of their most crucial skill needs.

Carey and Floyd Manufacturing, certified, precision-manufacturing sister companies located in Cromwell, Conn., are a model of how businesses can benefit themselves and their communities through better information sharing and clearer lines of communication.

For the past three years Carey and Floyd Manufacturing have partnered with the Hartford Job Corps Academy (<http://hartford.jobcorps.gov/home.aspx>) and most recently with Our Piece of the Pie (<http://www.opp.org/>) (OPP) to provide low-income young adults with support and education to earn a degree, maintain a job and succeed in life.

To expose a wider range of youth to manufacturing careers, both companies also work closely with the Connecticut Community Colleges and their internship programs. With a mission to offer young people a first chance, Carey and Floyd expose students to the manufacturing industry, preparing them for sustainable manufacturing careers.

Company representatives provide tours of their facilities and act as guest speakers in training programs, but they also invest in students by offering work-based learning opportunities and hiring multiple students after their graduation from Job Corps Academy or OPP.

Currently, Carey and Floyd have eight employees hired from their partners' training programs and have three former interns now working full time. From this group, two workers have already advanced within the company. For example, one woman has been promoted to a shift supervisor and is working part time in the engineering department. Further, Carey and Floyd actively support the development of a strong manufacturing workforce by working with other businesses through the Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Partnership. They were also recently recognized as a national leader in youth development after being designated as a 2015 National Fund for Workforce Solutions Young Adult Employer Champion.

While many manufacturers across the country grapple to fill open positions, Carey and Floyd have created a talent supply chain that yields good results. They actively work with other manufacturers, training providers and community organizations to invest in the region's young adults and to prepare them for stable, high-paying jobs in manufacturing.

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