

TALENTED HUDSON VALLEY

TRAINING & RETAINING THE REGION'S TOP TALENT



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A Message from our President

At HVEDC, we're always trying to get to the bottom of where the issues lie when it comes to finding or grooming the talent that Hudson Valley businesses need. It can be difficult to pinpoint specifically where the problems are hiding. For example, when it comes to workforce development: Are companies expecting too much, searching for new hires to hit the ground running without an investment in training? Or, should educational institutions rethink their coursework or certification programs to better prepare students for a run at a far more tech-savvy job market.

Great questions; no simple answers. Through communication and dedication, real answers are beginning to emerge as the lines of communication between workers and workforce development boards and educational institutions continue to open up in the Hudson Valley. This edition of Talented looks at three strong solutions already working right in our backyard — a return to the age old apprenticeship model with the Council of Industry and community colleges; a paid internship nurturing the whole employee at Advance Testing; and, training a specialized workforce for the new Resorts World Catskills. All exciting ways that our business community is helping set itself up for a bright and well-staffed future.

Thanks for reading!



Laurence P. Gottlieb
President and CEO
Hudson Valley Economic
Development Corp.

Advancing Careers and Lives



Advance Testing founder and president James Smith surrounded by tomorrow's workforce.

Giving high school students the chance to test out the real work world is a commitment of Advance Testing in Campbell Hall, which offers an eight-week paid summer mentoring program. It engages participants in corporate culture and structure, helping them to develop into employable individuals. In fact, Advance Testing even facilitates resume sessions for its interns with the Mount Saint Mary College Career Office, another huge step in improving their opportunities for entering the workforce.

"The high school and college students selected to work within the company gain real-world work experience and valuable hands-on training in the field of construction materials testing and inspection," said James Smith, president of Advance Testing and HVEDC board member. "We hope being in our professional environment serves as another way of providing motivation and encouragement to continue with their studies and realize how valuable they can be in the workforce."

This year's class welcomed the eight-week immersion in a program that includes continual refinement of real world "soft skills" for the workplace and job seeking. They were also exposed to technical training specific to Advance Testing's scope of business and services. This included classroom instruction, practical lab sessions, and testing in accordance with international standards.

"After three weeks, students are considered 'full-time' and are given a company ID, business cards and even work attire," said Smith. "We immerse them in the workplace with mentors and supervisors, and include them in company meetings and programs, making sure they're also interacting with our senior management."

While they may be introduced to, as an example, an overview of "ASTM Methods 698/1557 – Standard Test Methods for Laboratory Compaction Characteristics of Solid Using Standard or Modified Methods," students are also given opportunities to meet with local economic development leaders to learn about business attraction and retention on a county-wide level.

"It's not just about the intricacies of our business, it's about giving them a global introduction to the business world and how Orange County fits in," Smith said.

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Skills Gap vs. Apprenticeships: A New/Old Approach to Workforce Development



Last year, the Council of Industry and Marist College's Bureau of Economic Research and School of Management, along with Ethan Allen Workforce Solutions, compiled and released the results of the 2015 Annual Wage and Benefits Survey of Hudson Valley Manufacturing Companies. Of the 32 participating companies, 21 reported anticipated new hires in 2016, with particularly high demand for qualified candidates in the manufacturing group.

Unfortunately, 78% of those companies also reported having recruiting problems – up 20% over the previous year – in finding qualified candidates for positions related to quality control, machine shop operators, CNC programmers, skilled assembly workers, and many other positions that require mechanically inclined individuals.

"A lot of our members are under capacity because they can't get people to work in key positions," said Harold King, Executive Vice President of The Council of Industry and HVEDC strategic partner. "They would love to have a second shift; they would love to add a line. But, they're not doing it, and they're not doing it because they can't get those people."

In the past, manufacturing companies in the region had far less issue finding qualified workers. There was a uniquely well-qualified pool of former IBM employees, and an adjacent group of similarly trained employees who were resigning their stations at large corporations to join smaller ones. When supply was high, demand dropped and the programs helping to meet that demand fell to the wayside. However, in the last 8 to 10 years, with that talent pool having long since dried up, the skills gap between qualified candidates and employment needs in the Hudson Valley has continued to widen.

The time when youths were groomed out of high school to be, for example, machinists largely went away. Fast forward to now, and small companies don't always have the resources to take on the heavy lift that comes with training new employees.

"If you only have three machinists, are you really able to take one of your best machinists and have them train somebody new," said King. "You can't take them off their line, where their value can be as much as quarter of a million dollars to the company, to have them say spend the next 8,000 hours over the next 4 years to train a new kid whose value is \$30,000."

Hudson Valley manufacturers have recognized the issue at hand and are working through The Council of Industry on several initiatives to address the skills gap challenge, including the development of a regional sector-based workforce development strategy. This includes appropriate sharing of the heavy lift between commercial and educational partners.

The New York State Manufacturers Alliance – of which the Council of Industry is a founding member – has been successful in obtaining funds in the state budget for the creation of a New York State Manufacturers Alliance Apprenticeship Program (NYSMAAP). Administered in the Hudson Valley by the Council of Industry, NYSMAAP will be an employer-led public-private pilot program for registered apprentices in manufacturing occupations.

"We will be working very closely with the local community colleges on this," said King, who also pointed out that communication between industry and education is strong in the Hudson Valley region.

The NYSMAAP will offer three- to four-year apprentice training programs in these registered trades: Machinist (CNC), Maintenance Mechanic (automatic equipment), Quality Assurance Auditor, Toolmaker and Welder. A course of study in Mechatronics, which will focus on technology that combines electronics and mechanical engineering, is currently in development as well. Each program will focus on on-the-job training and related instruction. On-the-job training places apprentices in hands-on situations with journey-level craftspeople capable and willing to share their time. Related instruction presents apprentices with complementary knowledge of a more academic, theoretical nature. Together, the two elements will help develop well-rounded employees capable of both critical and creative problem-solving, as well as the ability to carry out their assigned mechanical tasks.

As an example, the requisite training for someone studying to become a machinist includes Foundations of Machining, Principles of CNC Machining, the CNC Setup and Operation for Mills, Lathes, Millturns and Grinders, as well as Writing Basic Programs. That is complemented by a minimum of 144 hours of related instruction in policy-based topics such as Industrial and Labor Relations, Sexual Harassment Prevention Training and Trade Theory and Science.

The way workforce development gets done in the Hudson Valley is changing. And, the more workforce stakeholders communicate, the better the ideas will be. Bringing back the apprenticeship model of yesterday with new energy and new participants is one way that's happening today, and a promising model for programs to come.

For more information on this program, please visit www.councilofindustry.org/apprentice-program.

Doubling Down to Create Local Jobs



When Resorts World Catskills opens in March 2018, the highly anticipated destination will employ a brand new staff of expert table game dealers. Three dedicated Casino Dealer Schools opened in Sullivan, Orange and Ulster Counties this summer to provide the uniquely specialized job training it will take to get the projected corps of 600 professional dealers up to speed in time for the grand opening.

"Creating good paying jobs was the initial objective of the Upstate NY Gaming Economic Development Act, and after years of waiting, we are close to realizing this important goal," said Charles Degliomini, Executive Vice President of Empire Resorts, Inc., parent company of Resorts World Catskills.

Talk about specialized workforce training: Dealer schools will require 120 hours of training over a minimum of six weeks on core games including blackjack, poker, baccarat and roulette. For more complex games, additional training is required.

"Dealers must know all the rules and odds of each game; learned as if it were second nature," said John Collins, Table Games Shift Manager. "We also start teaching guest services skills from Day 1."

Participants who successfully complete training must apply, interview and audition, for table game dealer positions. Candidates with an offer of employment who acquire a New York State gaming license will be formally employed by February.

"It's an exciting and rewarding career," said Executive Director of Table Games Jack Kennedy. "With the right company and the right mind set, it has great potential for advancement."

"Resorts World Catskills is fulfilling its promise to the people of Sullivan County to provide jobs and boost the local economy," said Luis Alvarez, chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature.

Orange County Executive Steve Neuhaus added, "The County is pleased to work with Resorts World Catskills to help Orange County residents benefit from good paying jobs available at the casino resort."

Resorts World Catskills will include an 18-story casino, hotel and entertainment complex with approximately 100,000 square feet of casino floor featuring more than 100 table games.

"For years the casino has been a dream. That dream is now being realized as we begin to train local residents for real jobs that will begin in the coming months," said Degliomini.

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Advancing Careers and Lives

Students also met with Advance Testing's business staff to draft a professional resume which will include incorporating their Advance Testing experience for future job seeking opportunities.

On August 23, Advance Testing's 2017 Mentoring Class was honored at a graduation ceremony celebrating their successes. Each of the graduates received a \$1,000 scholarship towards their future educational pursuits.

"This was my first job, and now I understand what it means to work in a corporate environment," said Monticello High School senior Giovanni Smith.

"This has taught me to always put my best foot forward," said Hanna Oesterich, also from Monticello High School.

The interns visited with Orange and Sullivan County Partnerships, participating in roundtable discussions with county leaders, and were invited to tour Satin Fine Foods in Orange and Resorts World Catskills in Sullivan. Ryan Wing, an incoming senior at Newburgh Free Academy, particularly enjoyed the local angle.

"This program helped me realize all of the job opportunities right in my own backyard," he said. "This was a lot more than a job; it was an experience."

The hope of everyone at Advance Testing is that as these students become future community and business leaders, they will pay this opportunity forward to future generations.

"It really is an honor for us to work with these students and equip them with the tools needed for future success," said Smith. "We would be thrilled to share this model with others so more disadvantaged students have the chance to see what's possible for them in the work world."

LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

What is your company doing to find who you need, when you need them, here in the Hudson Valley?

WE WANT TO KNOW.



Contact us with your stories of recruiting, training and retaining top talent. Email us at smccormick@hvedc.com.