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"Recruitment – An Essential Component of Your Marketing Strategy" by Melinda Caldwell

Typically, when a company considers its marketing plans and strategies, the key focus is on what to do and say to reach potential customers with a message that is more compelling than that of its competitors. In its most traditional sense, marketing is simply the means for generating new sales and continued interest in a company's products and services. But should it stop there?

As the industry continues to grow and change and face new challenges, structural component manufacturers must consider alternative applications for marketing strategies. In particular, one challenge that can be addressed with a marketing approach is this industry's continued shortage of qualified labor, especially in two distinct areas: technical employees and plant personnel. Today, component manufacturers are fully aware that a simple classified ad in the local Sunday paper isn't enough to fill the demand for high quality employees. Based on this reality, let's take a look at some fresh, proactive ideas that your company can implement. After all, the ultimate success of your company hinges on the quality of the employees you can attract and retain.

GROW YOUR OWN LABOR—TODAY'S YOUTH ARE THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY

It might seem like a cliché, but that doesn't make it any less true. What better way to provide for future labor needs than to market careers in our industry to young people? Phyllis Eisen, Vice President of The Manufacturing Institute of the National Association of Manufacturers, stated, "We're in serious trouble if we don't have a skilled labor supply in the next decade and onward. There isn't any question we're up against the wall."

Students will probably not consider entering an industry they don't know anything about, and the component manufacturing industry is facing some pretty steep competition from other industries in the quest for new employees. Every manufacturing industry in the country is struggling in this area. So how do we set apart our industry's business to potential employees? Companies in the component manufacturing industry must take responsibility to support and take part in **MARKETING** the exciting employment opportunities our industry has to offer.

- In order to help component manufacturers market our industry to students, WTCA has created a new recruiting brochure, *Is Building Component Design for You?* (Product Code: WhyEnter-D). This is geared toward high schools, technical colleges and universities to make contact with teachers, guidance counselors, professors and career development counselors. This colorful brochure includes some basic information about the reasons a student might enjoy a career as a truss technician and provides a place for the component manufacturer to customize the document with the individual company's name and contact information. Using this brochure in conjunction with an invitation to tour your company's plant is a great combination for attracting a group of potential employees to your facility.

- Get involved with educational programs at your area junior high and high schools. For example, the Manufacturing Institute at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), in conjunction with the Department of Commerce, developed a program called Get Tech to encourage 11- to 14-year-olds to take math and science classes to prepare for careers in technology. Contact math and science teachers at your local schools to see what types of programs might need your support. See this issue's installment of "[Human Faces](#)" for a look at an example of this type of involvement in practice.

At WTCA's Legislative Conference in May, a group of component manufacturers met with the Department of Labor to discuss a variety of national programs that may work for your company. One key area discussed was bringing youth into businesses. A number of national programs have proven successful in providing training and encouraging the nation's youth to pursue careers in a variety of industries.

- **School-to-Work** strives to make the workplace an active learning environment in which students get a hands-on experience in a given profession. Through participation in this program, employers are able to reduce costs in recruiting, training and supervising by working with youths who are an available pool of potential employees and will continue to grow and prepare themselves for the workforce. For more information, visit www.stw.ed.gov.
- **SkillsUSA-VICA** is a national organization serving almost 250,000 high school and college students and professional members who are enrolled in training programs in technical, skilled and service occupations. The purpose of this organization is to prepare America's future supply of high performance workers by providing quality education experiences in leadership, teamwork, citizenship and character development; building and reinforcing self-confidence, work attitudes and communication skills; emphasizing total quality at work, high ethical standards, superior work skills, life-long education and pride in the dignity of work; and promoting the understanding of the free enterprise system and involvement in community service activities. More than 1,000 corporations, trade associations and labor unions actively support SkillsUSA-VICA on a national level through financial aid, in-kind contributions and the involvement of their people in SkillsUSA-VICA activities. Many more participate at the state and local levels. For more information, visit <http://207.198.96.121>.
- **Job Corps**, the nation's largest and most comprehensive residential education and job training program, was designed for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24. Since 1964, the program has provided more than 1.7 million disadvantaged young people with the integrated academic, vocational and social skills training they need to gain independence and get quality, long-term jobs or further their education. For more information about this program that provides employers with people who are technically competent and knowledgeable about the workplace, visit www.jobcorpsworks.org.

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS—MARKET TO THOSE WHO ARE LOOKING TO LEARN

Long before the days of Paul Revere and Benjamin Franklin, some form of apprenticeship was used to transfer skills from one generation to another. While the tradition of "domestic apprenticeship"—where the apprentice lives with the master and works in exchange for food, clothing and shelter—is no longer a common practice in the United States, the idea behind apprenticeship and the competency gained from learning by doing is still an important one to consider. Employers enjoy the following benefits from apprenticeships:

- Decreased employee turnover.
- Enhanced problem-solving capabilities and versatility of workforce.
- Increased productivity by cultivating a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce.
- Enhanced employee relations by developing a collaborative commitment to achievement.
- Ability to attract high quality applicants who are motivated to succeed.
- Opportunity for national and state recognition.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (ATELS) has facilitated the development of Registered Apprenticeship Programs throughout the country. These programs are industry-driven and incorporate both practical on-the-job-training and theoretical instruction in a classroom setting. To participate in the program, apprenticeship sponsors agree to provide paid on-the-job-training as well as formal technical instruction, which may or may not be paid.

For more information on these programs, click [here](#), or contact your state's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) or State Apprenticeship Council (SAC). Also contact WTCA with your thoughts on the merits of pursuing an industry-wide apprenticeship program.

REACH UNTAPPED POPULATIONS—MARKET TO THOSE LOOKING FOR WORK

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Labor entitled, Workforce Tool Kit: The Resource for Employers, cited the following groups as untapped sources from which employers don't think to look for potential employees. (Youth were also included in this listing.) The training and reemployment services that fall under the umbrella of America's Workforce Network (AWN) (www.usworkforce.org) are developed to prepare workers who previously lacked the skills needed to succeed in today's workplace, especially high-tech skills.

The introduction to this document highlights the importance of employer involvement in this process:

"The programs and services that are described in this tool kit have all been developed in your community with the valuable input of many of your fellow employers. As a part of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, employers have a key role in guiding and monitoring the workforce system in every state and local area. Employers comprise a majority of the Workforce Investment Boards that are set up in your community to oversee the local system of programs that serve you, your employees and your community.

"As an employer, you are able to participate in the continuous improvement of the workforce investment system and help to shape the future for the health and growth of your community through your state and local Workforce Investment Board. Use America's Service Locator at www.servicelocator.org to find the One-Stop Career Center nearest you and speak with a local representative to find out how you can get involved. Call the AWN Toll-Free Help Line (877/US-2JOBS) or

link to the National Association of Workforce Boards at www.nawb.org."

At WTCA's meeting with the Department of Labor (DOL) in May, the most critical point made was the importance of getting involved with your state and community-level Workforce Investment Boards. The best way to tap the resources of government programs is to participate so that you know what is available, and help direct funding for programs that have merit in your area.

With this in mind, consider individuals from these groups as potential employees:

- **Laid-off Workers.** Often called dislocated workers, this pool of experienced workers may have the skills your company needs. Go to www.usworkforce.org/ for more information on services available to you to find laid-off workers and the services they receive.
- **Older Workers.** The **Senior Community Service Employment Program** serves to train and employ persons with low incomes who are 55 years old or over in jobs and then assist them in finding job opportunities in the private sector. Use www.servicelocator.org for valuable information on such programs for older workers and how employers can hire them.
- **Welfare Recipients.** In a 1998 survey of **Welfare-to-Work Partnership** members, 76 percent of the respondents said the former welfare recipients they hired were productive employees and almost half reported the same or better retention rates as for employees hired through standard channels. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employers who have hired welfare recipients report the following benefits:
 - Access to a larger, more diverse labor pool.
 - Good, productive workers.
 - Reduced employee turnover.
 - Subsidies and tax credits.
 - Improved human resource policies and morale for all entry-level staff.

In a report about welfare from the U.S. Department of Labor, former Secretary of Labor Alexis M. Herman, charged all employers with a role to play in the effort to help people get off welfare: "Employers—thousands of employers in every part of our country—must offer real work at decent wages to the hundreds of thousands of welfare recipients who are looking for a job. Providing the first job is crucial. But providing the skills for a second or third job is no less important. Workers need not one job, but a career."

Research from the NAM Center for Workforce Development backs up this need for training with the resulting benefit to the employer. The Center found that, "Increasing the level of workers' education by one year boosts productivity by 8.5 percent in manufacturing." Likewise, the National Bureau of Economic Research found that, "Formal employer-provided training increases productivity anywhere from ten to 16 percent."

Go to www.doleta.gov for more information on how you can access welfare recipients.

- **Veterans.** American veterans are another large group of qualified, highly skilled workers who could be a source of new employees for your company. Visit the web site for **UMET (Use your Military Experience and Training)** at umet-vets.dol.gov for key skills and attributes of transitioning military personnel, comparability of military and civilian training, recognition of

military training and experience, military records and transcripts, and model employer-sponsored programs. These veterans have solid training through their military experience and are receiving the skills they need to transition into civilian careers.

- **Persons with Disabilities.** Employers often mistakenly believe that it costs too much to hire workers with disabilities. In fact, most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal. There are a number of government programs in place to give you access to qualified workers. Visit www.dol.gov/odep/welcome.html or www.usworkforce.org for more information.
- **Ex-Offenders.** Over the last 30+ years, the **Federal Bonding Program (FBP)** has enabled thousands of ex-offenders to successfully transition back into the world of work. It is a business insurance policy that protects the employer in case of any loss of money or property for which the employee is responsible. About 40,000 applicants have obtained jobs due to bonding and 99 percent are reported to be productive employees. Contact your local One-Stop Career Center about the Federal Bonding Program by calling the AWN Toll-Free Help Line (877/US-2JOBS).

Again, get involved with your state and community-level Workforce Investment Boards. An example that was brought up in WTCA's meeting with the Department of Labor was that, in some areas, the shortage of workers is exacerbated by the lack of transportation for these workers. The DOL suggested that the best way to address this would be to get involved in the community board. The result would hopefully be transportation opportunities for workers who are unable to afford transportation to work.

USE THE INTERNET TO YOUR ADVANTAGE—MARKET TO ONLINE CANDIDATES

Last, but not least, don't forget that in today's marketplace the Internet is the place to go for just about everything—including job openings. Make sure your open positions are posted on your company's web site as well as on other web site job posting services. While this list is by no means exhaustive, and some of these sites charge more than others to post openings, here are a few of the places you could consider posting available positions within your company. (Note: Some of these sites also offer résumé-searching services.)

- Post your job opening in the classifieds section of this site for only \$40 per month. You can also look at résumés from potential employees on the WTCA web site at www.woodtruss.com.
- www.ajb.dni.us
- www.careermag.com
- www.headhunter.net
- www.hotjobs.com
- www.monster.com

IMMIGRATION

We would be remiss if we failed to mention immigrants, a key component of our labor force. A group from WTCA met with the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC), to learn about their organization, which is a coalition of businesses, trade associations and other organizations from across the industry spectrum, concerned with the shortage of both skilled and lesser skilled

("essential worker") labor. This organization believes Congress must enact laws that take action to address the problems associated with the unprecedented job growth, low unemployment and the corresponding inability to find domestic workers to meet the needs of American employers. For more information on the work of EWIC and the current status of legislative action to take on this topic, check out www.ewic.org.

CONCLUSION

As in any marketing program, whether you are trying to attract people to your product to generate sales or to your company to attract potential employees, it is important that you remember to keep a few key points in mind:

- **Know your audience and appeal to their sensibilities.** If you are trying to tap a certain segment of the market to fill a particular position, make sure your efforts are in line with that market segment.
- **Provide value.** Just as with marketing your product to potential customers, the benefits of taking a position with your company need to be clear to the potential employee. Gone are the days of employees being grateful simply for the opportunity to work and receive a paycheck. They want to know what is in it for them, and how this position will help them meet their professional and personal goals.
- **Keep it real.** People are looking for meaningful opportunities to work with friendly people at a company that genuinely cares about their interests. Don't make promises you can't or don't intend to keep. That will only result in higher turnover.

And most importantly, be creative! There must be at least one thing that sets your company apart from others just as there is at least one thing about your product that distinguishes it from the competition. Play up those qualities in an interesting or clever way and you will see results.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration: www.doleta.gov
2. U.S. Office Personnel Management: www.opm.gov
3. Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov
4. America's Career Info Net: www.acinet.org
5. O*NET Online: online.onetcenter.org
6. National Association of Workforce Boards: www.nawb.org

Obtain your own copy (pdf format) of [Workforce Tool Kit: The Resource for Employers](#).

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