

DISCOVER
MANUFACTURING™

Discover Manufacturing Week EMPLOYER TOOLKIT



West
MICHIGAN
WORKS!®

PREPARING FOR DISCOVER MANUFACTURING WEEK

Preparation is the key to a successful event.

Students represent the future workforce, show them why your company is the best place to work! This is your chance to highlight your company, share details about the career paths available there and the specific skills you look for when recruiting.

PLANNING A FACILITY TOUR

- Create an internal planning group.
- Prepare in advance to safely allow students into working area.
- Mark parking areas and entrances clearly with signage.
- Clean up before guests arrive clear clutter, organize everything, sweep floors, and ensure a clear, welcoming path through the shop.
- Reserve a 2-3 hour (approx.) time slot for tours.
- Divide students into small groups of no more than 10.
- Designate a host to welcome the students.
- Consider providing light refreshments or snacks.
- Choose tour guides that speak loudly and clearly and are comfortable with students.
- Make sure all students can see and hear the host.
- Decide how the tour guides will travel through the facility for the best possible experience for the students.
- One tour guide should have overall knowledge of the company and be senior level. They should also be able to connect with students and communicate with excitement and enthusiasm. A second and third person who can physically perform the work and explain what they are doing and talk about “a day in the life.” A younger apprentice has connected exceptionally well in the past.
- Provide information on career paths in your company and what a typical day looks like.
- Highlight company culture, environmental policies, awards, apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing opportunities, and how to apply for positions.
- Facilitate discussion along with a designated time for Q & A. Consider small rewards for students that ask a great question or answer correctly.

Share your company's story.

Start strong. Give students a reason to listen. Rather than starting your story with dry historical information, "ABC Company opened in 1922 and has operated out of three different locations," hook visitors right at the start with an interesting anecdote. Talk directly to them. For example, "If you've ever been young and in love, you'll be interested in how this company got started. Joe and Angela Johnson opened the doors back in 1922. He was 23, she was 19. They'd been married for two weeks, and this was their American Dream ..."

If you're not sure what your "hook" is, ask yourself: How did your company get started? Who started it? What challenges have you overcome? What successes stand out? Is there something about your company that might surprise people? What is the company culture? What compelling or creative reason should the arriving students care to listen about your company?

Talk about types of jobs, open positions and education opportunities.

What kind of jobs do you have? Do you have any openings? Let them know the education and/or training requirements.

- Mention internships, scholarships, summer job opportunities, co-op opportunities, etc.
- What are the entry level roles that your company is looking to hire for? (Apprenticeships, temporary staffing, summer help, etc.)
- How do you invest in a new employee? What kind of tuition reimbursement programs are offered?
- What onsite training and development is offered to employees of the company? Can employees go to seminars, webcasts, symposiums, conferences or other presentations?
- What is your safety record?
- Discuss wage information and what career advancements are available.
- Discuss classes and coursework that is beneficial to each position.
- Who are some of the customers or suppliers that you work with - if you can share!
- Have applications available for distribution!

Involve staff.

- If possible, involve a diverse group of young employees to help connect students to the employment opportunities with your company.
- Consider highlighting other functions in your organization that play roles in your company's success: sales, supply chain, finance, HR, marketing.
- Get your engineers, technicians and designers involved in creating student interactions:
 - Let students get creative with your organizations business needs.
 - Don't overcomplicate!
 - Leverage teams and competitive drive.
 - Let students know expectations.

Plan informative and interactive activities.

If your plan is to host students, make sure you have some fun activities related to your company for them to participate in. Focus on the “cool” things that you do. If able, offer giveaways.

- Is there an automated process that students could try to replicate manually? Use other mediums to highlight processes or technology that helps the student connect ideas.
- Show students how your machinery works, how different items are put together, what new technologies are being used and your workers’ overall productivity.
- Have some sample items and/or parts to show and let students ask questions about them.

Here are some activities that local companies have planned in the past:

- Email questions to teachers to give to students as an assignment so they are prompted to ask during tours to receive credit (JR Automation).
- “Find Waldo” on the shop floor: Give students picture of employee highlighting an occupation to find during their tour (DeWys Manufacturing).
- “How’s it made?” game show related to different occupations involved (DeWys Manufacturing).
- Estimating activity with prizes (Walker Tool & Die).
- Laser puzzle build that students keep (Walker Tool & Die).
- Design/CAD project to change colors and wheels on Corvette (Walker Tool & Die).
- Scan student hand activity (Walker Tool & Die).
- Run a machine if possible (Wolverine Coil Spring).
- Team Building activity “building with spaghetti and marshmallows” (DeWys Manufacturing).



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Keep group size small. Limit group sizes to 10 or less. If your work environment is loud, keep the groups even smaller. Break into smaller groups and offer multiple activities if needed.

Back up your stories with facts. Know your numbers. Anecdotes backed up by figures create a strong impression. If your company employs 200 talented people and the average employee has worked at the facility for 14 years that tells people something. While visitors may not remember the numbers, they will remember what those numbers mean: Professionals who work at your company, stay with your company.

Avoid jargon. Don't assume visitors know anything about manufacturing. Pretend that you're explaining facility operations to a six-year-old. What language would you use? Avoid industry terms and business lingo that others don't understand.

Make it relevant to students. Take something they find interesting and show how, with the right skills and training, they could do it themselves. Build that bridge! You guarantee their attention because you've shown the direct connection between the world they live in and the work you do. If the product you manufacture is not something they personally use, identify a comparable product or explain how it's used, what it is a component of, etc.

Show and tell. When you read a magazine or newspaper, photographs capture your eye. Think of your plant as a photograph for your story. Point out interesting equipment and/or interesting people. Perhaps there's a safety feature no one would notice but it makes a huge difference. Perhaps there's a third-generation employee on the floor. Show visitors why your facility is special.

You can't – and shouldn't – show everything. The quickest way to lose the interest of your visitors is to try to show everything. Where are the best places to highlight the production process and the work of your people and machinery? Pick a few stops that represent key stages in the production process and allow you to demonstrate the progress a product makes through the shop. Where will visitors get the best view? Can they hear you? Which of your team members are the most enthusiastic about their work and comfortable explaining what they do and why it is important to the process and the company?

Speak loudly as you explain portions of the tour. Encourage the students to gather in close (especially in louder environments) so that the students can remain engaged with the tour. Don't walk while talking.

Know what you want to say and how you want to say it. No matter how long you've been with the company, it helps to plan ahead. Make notes about what you want to say – from key points to fun anecdotes. How you tell the story also matters. Stand up and speak up.

Make eye contact and smile! A smile changes your voice and the listener's perceptions.

Be flexible! If your students are highly engaged in an activity, adjust your plan to support that engagement.

Wrap up on a positive note. It's important to give your visitors a chance to ask questions. However, people often hesitate to ask the first question. If no one raises a hand, take the lead: "I know one of the questions we're often asked is, "How long does it take to produce ...?" Ask the question and answer it. And, rather than ending on the Q&A session, tell another story. Reminding them of the original story is a great option. For example, "With the changes in manufacturing, we're looking for talented people who are skilled in mathematics and chemistry, so please send them our way! The vision the Johnsons had in 1922 remains our vision. We still consider this company our key to the American dream!"

Have fun! Lastly, don't be afraid. Your first event will be a learning experience for you to find out what works and what doesn't. After your first year, the event will become easier.

AFTER THE EVENT

- Send thank you note to guests.
- Thank your own staff.
- Send photos to pertinent attendees and DM Coordinator.
- Report your experience on the MFG Day website.
- Use internal and external news, and social media, to recap the event.
- Continue to communicate with contacts post event.
- Decide what went well and what could have gone better regarding the tour for continuous improvements.
- Complete the employer survey and attend debrief meeting following Discover Manufacturing Week events to provide feedback for future programs.