



# DISCOVER MANUFACTURING WEEK

## EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

NOVEMBER 6-10, 2023



West  
MICHIGAN  
**WORKS!**



# ABOUT DISCOVER MANUFACTURING

Discover Manufacturing is a collaborative of manufacturers, educators, workforce development, and economic development organizations working together to meet West Michigan’s manufacturing talent needs. Discover Manufacturing’s key roles in West Michigan are:

- Share trends and best practices affecting talent in manufacturing.
- Lead, support, and promote talent initiatives throughout West Michigan.
- Understand manufacturers’ current education and training needs to inform curriculum and adequate enrollment.
- Promote networking among manufacturers, educators, workforce development and economic development organizations.

# ABOUT DISCOVER MANUFACTURING WEEK

Discover Manufacturing Week is a West Michigan event that is meant to address common misperceptions about manufacturing and runs concurrent to national efforts led by the National Manufacturers Council for “MFG Day.” In West Michigan, Discover Manufacturing Week is officially November 7-11 but includes all events scheduled during the month of October. Discover Manufacturing is focused on creating a Region 4 collaborative event with a coordinated effort to provide open houses, public tours, and other events.

Discover Manufacturing has built a team of core “Champions” from each county consisting of at least one economic development partner, one educational partner, one manufacturer, and one Michigan Works! business solutions representative. Each team will be responsible for supporting the Discover Manufacturing Week efforts in their respective county. Manufacturer champions are able to help guide you to complete your registration on the Discover Manufacturing Website and assist you with planning to create the best experience.

| Manufacturer Champions by county |   |          |   |
|----------------------------------|---|----------|---|
| Allegan                          | JR Gerloski – <i>Parker Hannifin</i>                | Montcalm | Julie Stafford – <i>Stafford Media</i>  |
|                                  | Amanda Cooper – <i>Lakeshore Advantage</i>          | Muskegon | Tim Zwit – <i>Michigan Spring and Stamping</i>                                |
| Barry<br>Ionia<br>Kent           | Andrew Walsh – <i>Flex Fab</i>                      | Ottawa   | Kenneth Robinson – <i>Scherdel Sales &amp; Technology</i>                     |
|                                  | Spence Riggs – <i>The Right Place</i>               |          | Kathy Jo Vanderlaan – <i>The Right Place</i>                                  |
|                                  | Kristen Childress – <i>Plasan Carbon Composites</i> |          | Nancy Manglos – <i>The Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg</i> |
| Mason                            | Jay Dunwell – <i>Wolverine Coil Spring</i>          |          |   |
|                                  | Steve Heethuis – <i>Autocam</i>                     |          |   |
|                                  | Crystal Young – <i>West Shore Community College</i> |          |   |

## Questions?

Contact Jessica VanSolkema, Discover Manufacturing Project Coordinator  
(616) 494-8844 | [DMcoordinator@westmiworks.org](mailto:DMcoordinator@westmiworks.org)

# SETTING UP A DISCOVER MANUFACTURING WEEK EVENT

## DETERMINE THE TYPE OF EVENT YOU WILL HOST:

### Facility tour

A manufacturer opens its doors and invites members of its community to observe operations first-hand. If your company conducts tours for prospective clients, you can model your Discover Manufacturing Week plant tour on your existing walk through and presentation. A plant tour can also be staged as a more elaborate event, with structured activities such as equipment demonstrations, hands-on exhibits, speeches, and question-and-answer sessions.

### Multi-company community event or expo

Small groups of manufacturers in the same industrial park pool their resources to offer successive plant tours at each of their facilities. This is a great way for the local manufacturers to work together to expose visitors to a range of manufacturing work environments and to create local interest in the manufacturing segment of their respective communities.

### Job fairs (on or off site)

Job fairs have been organized in dozens of cities by companies in the temporary placement industry. Often these will take place at a manufacturing employer, but they can also take place at the offices of the placement firm with several representative employers participating.

### Educational fairs

Educational institutions, such as community and technical colleges, are excellent venues for Discover Manufacturing Week events. Working with local manufacturers to plan career-fair-style happenings can be a great way for high schools and technical colleges to inform their students about careers in manufacturing. Manufacturers can also use these opportunities to share information about their companies with a wider audience of students and parents.

### Celebrations of the manufacturing community

Celebrations of the manufacturing community are springing up all over the country as a way to kick off MFG Day activities. They can be organized by chambers of commerce, local or regional manufacturing associations and economic development groups. They have even been organized by banks, accounting firms and other businesses that do a significant portion of their business with manufacturers. These can be breakfast, lunch, or dinner events.

## DETERMINE THE DATE AND DESIRED LENGTH OF EVENT.

Will it be one hour, half a day, a full day?

# DECIDE WHO TO INVITE:

## Local school students

Students are the workforce of the future. This is your opportunity to provide information about the kinds of careers that your company offers and the type of training and educational coursework you seek when hiring employees. There is no better time to offer comments about opportunities available to dedicated workers with a professional attitude. Discover Manufacturing and your local educator champion are happy to connect you with local educators and students!

## Elected officials

Invite your local, state, federal officials to come to your facility and see for themselves. Remember most elected officials have never set foot inside a manufacturing facility. You can educate them!

## Families of employees

If family events aren't a common occurrence at your company, this is a perfect day to invite them to come and see where their family member works and learn what they do. Maybe you could do a special event just for family members at the end of the workday.

## Potential customers

Give these potential customers a reason to want to do business with you. Invite them in to show off your great facility and organization.

## Current customers

Make Discover Manufacturing Week your annual customer appreciation day.

## Business service providers

When was the last time you were visited by your banker, insurance agent or accountant?

## Media

Is there a local reporter who seems to have a serious interest in manufacturing? Invite them to visit your facility during Discover Manufacturing Week. They are always looking for interesting stories to tell.

## Public

# FACILITY TOUR

## Before the Tour:

- Put together an internal planning group, if necessary.
- Choose tour guides that are comfortable with students and speak loudly and clearly.
- Decide how the tour guides will travel through the facility for the best possible experience for the students. You can also prepare a map of the tour route.
- Clean up before your visitors arrive. Remember that part of the reason to invite visitors to Discover Manufacturing Week events is to prove that manufacturing facilities are great places to work. Let's dispel the myths that manufacturing is dark, dirty and dangerous.
- Put together an agenda. Include time to introduce your company and tailor your event to the audience that you are inviting.
- Consider hiring or designating a photographer.
- Ensure employees are dressed neat and clean on tour day. If they have a role to play in explaining things to your visitors, have the employee wear a name badge so that they can be addressed by name when there are questions.
- Determine required safety equipment.
- Prepare a brief information packet for students, educators, lawmakers, other guests.
- Designate a note taker.
- Determine what machinery will be in operation.
- Put up a welcome sign. This is important both literally and figuratively. Put a sign on the door, shake hands with visitors, thank them for coming, and demonstrate your enthusiasm for the opportunity you have to share your company's information with them.
- Create a display. Since you can't allow visitors to get up close and personal with your machinery, you could create a display that illustrates what a product looks like in various stages of completion. Consider having an example product (finished or examples at various stages in production) that students can hold or take home as a souvenir. (This doesn't mean it has to be one of your production parts or finished products!)
- Gather company literature and background materials.
- Display any trade association materials.
- Ask the teacher(s) if there are specific concepts, curriculum, or STEM topics that your team should point out to students during the tour.
- Provide dress code, identification and behavior codes to the teachers and tour guides.
- Provide driving directions to the plant, if necessary.
- Ensure you know student's required departure times by corresponding with teachers.
- Have business cards, applications, marketing material and/or swag ready to be handed out.



INSPIRE THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
MANUFACTURERS.



# FACILITY TOUR

## During the Tour:

### Share your company’s story.

Give them a reason to listen. Rather than starting your story with dry historical information, hook visitors right at the start with an interesting anecdote. Engage them with your story. 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 and open positions.

Here is your opportunity to share about the kinds of careers that your company offers. Inform them about the type of training and educational coursework you seek when hiring employees. Offer details about opportunities available to dedicated workers with a professional attitude. If there are specific kinds of training or skills that are necessary in a hire but are difficult to find, share that as well. Here are some more questions to get you thinking about what may be of interest to your visitors.

- What are 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? Do you offer tuition reimbursement?
  - If so, do you pay in advance or after grades are submitted?
  - Do you have a grade threshold for payment or expectation?
  - Who signs the employee up for class?
  - What is the process for an employee to get approval to utilize the tuition reimbursement program?
  - What happens if the employee doesn’t meet the company’s criteria for reimbursement?
  - Does your company require a specific length of service prior to an employee’s ability to pursue tuition reimbursement?
- Does your company require an employee to stay for a certain amount of time after a certification, apprenticeship, degree or class has been completed?
- 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?
- Do you have an environmental or recycling program?
- What are interesting and/or compelling company facts?
- Who are some of the customers or suppliers that you work with (if you can share!)?

Utilize age equivalent or similarly aged workers to help connect students to the employability opportunity.

Consider 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 them get creative with your organizations business needs
- Don’t overcomplicate!
- Leverage teams and competitive drive.
- Observe interactions and let students know expectations.

Considerations:

- 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.
- Create problem solving challenges that groups have to figure out.

Show your guest students and attendees 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 ask questions about them.

### Have 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. Local examples:

- Email preset 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 a picture of an employee highlighting an occupation to find during their tour (DeWys Manufacturing).
- “How’s it made game show:” relating to different occupations involved (DeWys Manufacturing).
- “Estimating activity:” “cost per hole” etc. with prizes (Walker Tool & Die?).

Provide a hands-on activity that students can try (possibly in a training room). Local examples:

- Laser puzzle build that students keep (Walker Tool & Die).
- Design/CAD Project with changing colors and wheels on Corvette (Walker Tool & Die).
- Scan student hand activity (Walker Tool & Die).
- Run a machine / pipe cleaners exercise (Wolverine Coil Spring).
- Team Building activity “building with spaghetti and marshmallows” (DeWys Manufacturing).
- Utilize the MCAM trailer from GRCC (DeWys Manufacturing).



## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

### Keep group size small.

Limit group sizes to no more than 15. 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 a lot about your organization. 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 6-year-old or your mother. What language would you use? Avoid industry terms, acronyms, 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 by showing the direct crossover between the world they live in and the work you do. If the product you manufacture is not something they personally use, identify an analogous product or 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 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 every bit of minutiae. What are the best places in the plant to give an overview of the production process and highlight the work of your people and machinery? Pick a few stops that represent key stages in the production process that 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?

### 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. 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!"

### 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. When you look and sound proud, visitors will take away a positive image of you organization.

### 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.

### 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.



# FACILITY TOUR

## After the Event:

- Connect with Jessica VanSolkema the Project Coordinator at [DMcoordinator@westmiworks.org](mailto:DMcoordinator@westmiworks.org).
  - Send photos of students engaging with your staff.
  - Note which classes came prepared and asked appropriate questions.
- Send thank-note to guests.
- Thank your own staff.
- Report your experience on the MFG Day website.
- Provide press coverage.
- Use social media to recap the event.
- Continue to communicate with contacts after the event.
- Decide what went well and what could have gone better regarding the tour for continuous improvements.
- Complete the Discover Manufacturing survey.

## BEST PRACTICES MEETING

Microsoft Teams meeting

October 2, 2023 at 8AM

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 229 788 654 373

Passcode: HaT7qp

[View Best Practices Guidelines](#)

## SOURCES

[Tips for Hosting Your Own MFG Day Event](#)

[MFG Day Open House Tips](#)

[How to Score Big This Manufacturing Day](#)

[Save the Date! Oct 2 is National Manufacturing Day](#)

[Made In Florida Tour Tips for Manufacturers](#)

[Industry Tours for Students Guide](#)

[MFG Day 2022 Host Toolkit](#)



Questions?

Contact Jessica VanSolkema, Discover Manufacturing Project Coordinator  
(616) 551-7106 (cell)

[DMcoordinator@westmiworks.org](mailto:DMcoordinator@westmiworks.org)

[www.discover-manufacturing.com/](http://www.discover-manufacturing.com/)