Workforce Learning Summit Innovation/Best Practice

Rockingham Community College

Working to Meet the Workforce Needs of North Carolina’s North Star
Rockingham Community College worked with the Sturm, Ruger and Company to meet the workforce needs of their new gun manufacturing plant being located in Rockingham County. This training was created by strategically placing our personnel, developing relationships with company leaders, utilizing resources, listening to company needs, and by getting our hands dirty. The uniqueness of this project was the fact that we were allowed to be completely involved in their manufacturing process. We learned several lessons during the creation and implementation phase of this project that will help us be better prepared to meet the needs of current and future businesses and industries in Rockingham County.

DETAILS

When Sturm, Ruger and Company announced they would be locating a new manufacturing plant in Rockingham County, it quickly became apparent that we would have to produce more machining graduates to meet the demand for that occupation in our county and surrounding area. We began the work of getting to know the leaders at Ruger to find out what needs existed for their organization. We also began the process of getting a curriculum machining certificate developed and approved. With several projects already in place with other business and industry in our county, we had to strategically place our personnel to continue to serve those needs while also addressing the needs of a new company who planned to hire 475+ employees. We also had to find a new instructor for our machining program since our enrollment and demand for the program had immediately doubled.

We started the development of our customized project by spending time with the key leaders at the new plant. They were instrumental in providing insight into their expectations and needs. With this list of ideas, we began to develop our plan for training. We then spent time inside of the plant observing the activities that were occurring on the assembly line. After the observation time, we were invited back to the plant to actually become a part of the assembly process. It was during this time on the line ourselves that we were able to fine-tune our plan to meet the specific needs of Ruger.

We have conducted our first training and are in the process of evaluating the success of that training. We hope to learn from the first trainees what we did right and what we failed to cover after they have spent time on the line at Ruger. This program will be utilized to train the new employees at Ruger over the next three years.

Implementation began in July 2013.
Partner Type(s):
- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development Board/One-Stop

Impact/Outcomes
This best practice made our first training session run smoothly. We were able to prepare the new employees for the environment that they would encounter at their worksite. We trained six employees during the first session with plans to train over four hundred during the next three years. One of the most important positive impacts is that we have become a part of the Ruger team. They treat us as though we work for them and provide us with information that normally would only be shared with employees.

Funding Source(s)
Customized Training - $355,971.00

REFLECTIONS

Innovation or Best Practice
This was a best practice based on the fact that we were able to have a total immersion into the manufacturing process at Ruger. By getting our hands dirty, we identified some areas of training that we had missed during the verbal discussion and observations we had at Ruger. It was the little details of the training that we would have missed had it not been for them allowing us to become part of their manufacturing team.

Lessons Learned
Our lessons learned included: to start research and get involved with the company early, to be flexible, to work with curriculum instructors, to realize you never have enough space and you will have to make adjustments, and to be prepared.

Scalability
Our best practice can be scaled by listening to company needs. We spent time meeting with company leaders to generate ideas, watched the manufacturing process to generate ideas, and made parts on the actual assembly line to generate ideas for the training.

RESOURCES

Workforce Learning Summit Presenters
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For Further Information
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