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The View from 30 Feet

by **Brittany Willes**

Plastics Business

Business gurus often talk about the view from 30,000 feet – the big picture that provides a look at overall operations. Perhaps, however, the focus should be on the view from 30 feet – a close-up of specific processes and procedures that make an impact now.

Molding Millennials: PMC and the Next Generation of Plastics Manufacturers

As the economy has recovered in recent years, manufacturing industries have seen a surplus of jobs accompanied by a shortage of skilled talent. In response, manufacturers such as PMC SMART Solutions, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Shelbyville, Indiana, have been reaching out to local colleges and high schools, encouraging students to consider careers in plastics manufacturing.

“We currently have two programs geared toward enticing younger talent,” affirmed Lisa Jennings, president of PMC. “One program is run by Shelly Carter, the HR manager at our facility in Shelbyville, Indiana. She has been doing a lot of work with the local high schools and technical schools, informing younger students of the benefits of careers in plastics manufacturing. These students have the opportunity to participate in programs we helped develop in the Shelbyville community.”

The second program, which Jennings is involved with, focuses on attracting slightly older workers, specifically millennials considering whether to enroll in college or technical college, or if they want to enter directly into the workforce. “This program has been a big focus for 2015,” Jennings stated. “With the resurgence of manufacturing within the US, we were struggling to find talent for engineering positions. We decided to bring in early career team members by creating a program to attract millennials and involve them in a variety of areas of our engineering and manufacturing processes.” Over the course of roughly a year, participants are exposed to and involved in all different areas of PMC’s engineering and operations. They gain experience in tooling, manufacturing, engineering and more before determining which track they are best suited for: quality engineering, program management, manufacturing, engineering or production.

As part of its recruiting efforts, PMC has partnered with local regional colleges with strong engineering and co-op programs, such as Indiana University at Purdue and Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute. “These schools are the real focus spots for us due to the location of our facility and our past success in hiring from them,” Jennings explained. “Our plan is to develop close relationships with the school’s faculty and administration so we can understand who the students are that are coming through particular classes and showing potential for our organization needs.”

PMC also has focused its attention inward. According to Jennings, “What we’re really focusing on with millennials, and internally at PMC, is conveying our real purpose and why we exist. Our slogan is ‘Manufacturing Technology that Saves Lives.’ We want to connect this next generation to our greater purpose because we’ve found that is what a lot of millennials crave. It’s not just the individual or incremental accomplishment, but how those accomplishments are tied to a greater purpose.”

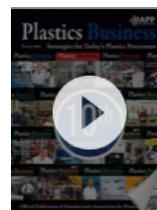
Part of that greater purpose involves impressing upon younger hires how and where they can grow within the company, as well as providing important work opportunities. “We focus on how they will be given meaningful work that is theirs,” Jennings asserted. “They’re not just going to be an assistant or spend all their time making copies. They are given projects with high expectations and support to meet those expectations. We’ve found that the variety of work is very enticing to them.”

While PMC’s recruitment program hasn’t been in effect for very long, it already has seen many positive results. In one year, the company has made three direct hires and taken on two co-op employees. Another student was hired through a local community technical program that PMC helped develop.

For a mid-size company, having six new hires in the course of 12 months is significant. PMC’s decision to focus on attracting younger, early career talent certainly has proven itself beneficial. “A lot of mid-size companies have a tendency to want to hire someone who has been in the workforce for a while,” explained Jennings. “They want someone with specific experience, someone who can walk in the door and get right to work. We’ve all been pleasantly surprised with these millennials and are excited about their future with PMC. Yes, we do have to spend time training and helping them understand the nuances of each job, but they are smart, motivated, capable people, and they have made contributions right away. Early results are very promising.”

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