

Using Social Media To Bridge The Skills Gap

... and Build the Manufacturing Talent Pipeline in the Hudson Valley

If you're a manufacturer, work closely with manufacturers, or even just happened to hear a news report on a topic related to manufacturing, then there's a good chance you have heard about the Manufacturing Skills Gap. Make no mistake, it is a real problem and it is only getting worse. According to research conducted by The Manufacturing Institute, over the next decade nearly 3.5 million manufacturing jobs likely need to be filled. The skills gap is expected to result in 2 million of those jobs being unfilled.

Middle and High School students today aren't being exposed to the world of advanced manufacturing early enough for them to consider pursuing a career in the sector, although they are able to take the necessary courses in math and science to prepare them for that career. Efforts to increase awareness among younger students, such as Manufacturing Day, have been successful, but the gap remains and more needs to be done.

Social Media is the marketing tool with greatest potential to reach this audience and to build the manufacturing talent pipeline, but it is only just beginning to be utilized and its value only now becoming appreciated. Even as social media has become central to young people's lives there's been minimal effort by manufacturers

to tailor their message to the medium and to use it to portray the sector as the exciting, creative, and innovative place to work that it is. Working together with our members the Council of Industry is hoping to change that.

The Council of Industry has been reaching out to tech teachers, guidance counselors, and principals for years, trying to help them

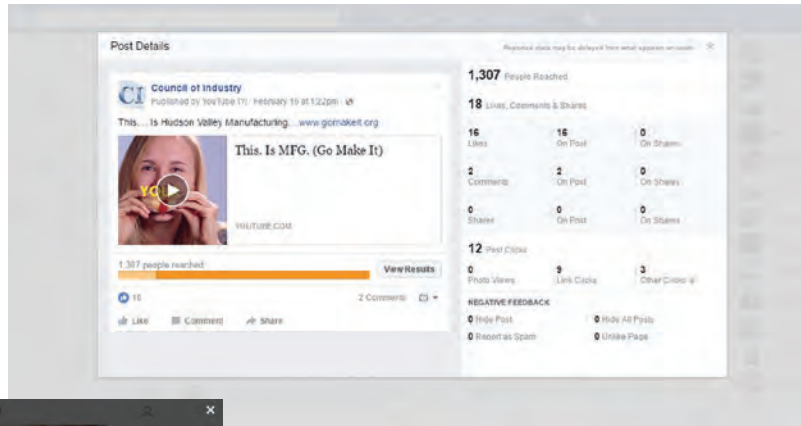
better highlight manufacturing careers. While we've made some progress this way, participating in the occasional career day or job fair is not enough to de-stigmatize manufacturing, the campaign needs to be more direct and consistent. "The best technology in a classroom is, and continues to be, the teacher. However, there are wonderful digital tools, as well as social media, that help augment the learning process



"The best technology in a classroom is, and continues to be, the teacher. However, there are wonderful digital tools, as well as social media, that help augment the learning process and communicate our message in the current landscape."

and communicate our message in the current landscape," explains Jonah Schenker of Ulster BOCES's Hudson Valley Pathway Academy, an early college high school focused on manufacturing and technology. "With that said, we must acknowledge that we are in the age of information, and all students access their information

digitally and will continue to network, connect, and build their futures through these devices and social media. If we ignore this as educators, employers, and parents, we will have missed the opportunity to capture and connect with our current and future generations.” The Pew Research Center found that in 2015, 71% of all teenagers in the US had a Facebook account, 52% were on Instagram, 33% were on Twitter. On top of that, the center also found that 79% of all online adults had a Facebook account. The opportunities to reach our target demographic cheaply and efficiently



investment, unit costs and customer deadlines. Try to imagine, however, if just 20 Hudson Valley manufacturing companies each posted pictures of their products and/ employees once a week using the hashtag #hvmfg. In one year that would be 1040 posts which could reach an audience of tens of thousands of Hudson Valley families. A formerly obscure industry would be clearly manifested in all its varied forms right on their smart phone or tablet and take hold in their users’ minds and imaginations. All those potential manufacturers of tomorrow would now have a firsthand look at the sector and its potential. It’s

are unprecedented, and this outreach will be a key project for the Council going forward.

This all might seem frivolous to an experienced manufacturer, more comfortable with tangible items and results like return on

like 20 manufacturing day tours in the palm of their hand. “We realize this isn’t going to happen overnight.” Says Richard Croce of Viking Industries, “It’s going to take a long time to change the perception young people have about manufacturing, and the

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best way to do that is to try to reach them on their terms. Using social media, we can show them what advanced manufacturing really looks like in the Hudson Valley.”

If you're a manufacturer and want to do something to promote yourself online, here are a few quick and easy suggestions as to what you could post:

- i. A photo, whether on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, photos or other visuals are increasingly important in making sure your posts get noticed.
- ii. A tweet showing a part that you manufacture being used in a recognizable product. Don't be afraid to brag, what are the coolest or most exciting, or most interesting parts of your job.
- iii. Posts about products or people winning awards, is a good form of further recognition. Additionally, others like to feel included in the celebration, and everybody loves a winner.
- iv. Links to an article about your industry. Read anything that you think is worth sharing? That's what social media is for. An article or something that you think other's might find relevant can be a great way to get people's attention with minimal work.



Manufacturing may have a labor problem, but the digital age has given us the tools to solve it. It won't happen tomorrow, but if we take advantage of this opportunity we can secure our industry's relevance in the Hudson Valley for generations to come. If we work together, we can start to fill that pipeline.

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Like any successful Marketing Campaign a good Social Media Campaign requires consistent messaging over a prolonged period of time. The magic of social media is that your message can be carefully targeted, conveyed inexpensively, and still reach a large number of people. Here are some of the tools.

FACEBOOK: The most popular social media site. Thanks to the large amount of information its users provide about their interests, Facebook has a highly sophisticated algorithm that allows advertisers to target people with highly specific interests. This will be the main focus of our campaign.

TWITTER: Another major social media site. This venue encourages users to rapidly share their thoughts on anything, in particular, brief snippets called "tweets," which are limited to 140 characters. It also offers advertising opportunities but the ads are not as targeted as Facebook.

INSTAGRAM: A subsidiary of Facebook, this application is all about photos, with text limited to captions on the pictures that users post. Like its parent company, it also allows users to make targeted ads. This is very popular with younger users and we plan to make a big push on Instagram.

HASHTAG: This term originated on Twitter but is now used by several other sites. It refers to the # symbol, which users are encouraged to attach to a few keywords in their posts. For example, if you were to post a picture from your family vacation to Disney World you might also include the hashtags #Disney #Florida #MagicKingdom.

Once uploaded to your account the symbol lets the site know to turn the words into links, clicking on #Disney then would bring you to a search page containing all posts with #Disney in them. This is meant to make it easy for people to find posts relevant to their interests, and connect them to other users who share their interests. Some of our favorite hashtags include #hvmfg #manufacturing #HudsonValley.

HANDLE: the name of your Twitter account, for instance we are @HVManufacturing

POST: Whatever a user puts on their social media account, be it a vacation picture, a news article or their thoughts on what they're watching on TV is called a post.



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