

Manufacturer's Council of the Inland Empire The Future of Manufacturing Discussed at Regional Meeting

As the need for skilled manufacturers rises in the Inland Empire, employers look to future generations. On Friday, September 22nd, regional manufacturers met with top school administrators and stakeholders to discuss building a K-16 pipeline for apprenticeships and jobs in the region. The event was co-sponsored by the Manufacturers' Council of the Inland Empire (MCIE) and Alan Braggins, Deputy Sector Navigator for Advanced Manufacturing in the Inland Empire/Desert Region.

Manufacturers wanted to inform educators about their specific needs in the industry, as well as learn what options exist in hopes of finding and retaining already existent talent.

A panel representing manufacturers, including Judy Lopez, President of Microdyne Plastics in Colton, Luz Roldan, California Steel Industries (CSI) in Fontana, and Nicole Rice, Policy Director, Government Relations, California Manufacturers & Technology Association (CMTA), Sacramento, presented the issues faced by manufacturers as they search for qualified candidates to fill open jobs.

Bill Rayl, President and Executive Director of the Jackson Manufacturing Association (JAMA) in Jackson, Michigan presented several ideas and solutions for educators and manufacturers. He explained how after-school programs, summer camps, and in-school learning opportunities, starting as early as kindergarten, helped JAMA students imagine themselves as future manufacturers, engineers, inventors and entrepreneurs, which encouraged those students to pursue future careers in the industry.

In 2005, JAMA launched the Academy for Manufacturing Careers (AMC), with skilled trades related technical instruction and customized training programs designed by manufacturers. Each summer they host a number of K-12 programs including: "I Can Make It Camp," and "Machining U."

"Manufacturers, in the Inland Empire, have real needs for highly skilled applicants and employees," stated Rod Hoover, Manager of Human Resources at California Steel Industries, and board member of the MCIE. "Career Technical Education (CTE) has been proven to be more effective at getting individuals the skills they need to get a job or be promoted in a manufacturing environment as opposed to generic vocational for credit courses. Vocational training needs to start in high school, or before, to give the "non-college bound" students good, needed, and highly paid career options."

Braggins led an open discussion forum for an exchange of programs already in place or under development for meeting these needs in our region.

There are kids out there who don't know that great paying jobs are waiting for them in the manufacturing industry in our region," stated Molly Burgess, Executive Director of the MCIE. "We are hoping that this conference will help increase awareness in the community that manufacturing isn't a dirty job anymore. With advanced manufacturing and robotics, a lot of kids, who would like to work with their hands, should start exploring this option starting in grade school or junior high."

The Manufacturers' Council of the Inland Empire (MCIE) supports and provides education on manufacturing topics to manufacturers, employees, students, and the community. The Council provides a strong, unified voice when communicating with regional, state and national entities on issues impacting the region. Programming is designed to help manufacturers find solutions for issues including: employment and training, research, regulatory compliance, import and export, and funding.