



Challenge

APSCO Inc. has been a manufacturer of pneumatic cylinders, controls and valves for the mobile, truck equipment and automotive markets since 1964. Located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the company experiences the same workforce challenges that many other manufacturers are facing today – most notably declining access to skilled workers.

Action

APSCO was driven to act. The company had previously heard about the **Dream It. Do It.** program, which inspires the next generation leaders to pursue careers in manufacturing, but decided to take action in partnership with the state Department of Commerce. It didn't take long for APSCO to quickly become a leader in the **Dream It. Do It. Oklahoma** program. Taking matters into their own hands, they began to develop a talent pipeline for their own workforce by targeting students and providing opportunities to engage and train right in their own backyard.



Through Dream It. Do It. Oklahoma, APSCO has put forth a number of efforts to help high school students find their place in manufacturing. Efforts have ranged from hosting tours of their facilities, to organizing Career Pathways Fairs, to providing in-house training for students.

To increase student awareness of manufacturing careers in their community, APSCO and Dream It. Do It. Oklahoma organize industry and education panels where local manufacturing employers are invited to sit on a panel and discuss with local educators the opportunities that exist in Oklahoma manufacturing. During this panel, employers and educators identify manufacturing workforce needs and how they can better channel students into manufacturing pathways. The company is also developing an advisory council formed of high school students to provide ideas and feedback on social media and marketing strategies to better reach younger generations.

The company wanted to have a solution when they sparked interest in a student through Dream It. Do It. APSCO works closely with their local manufacturing training providers, Tulsa Community College (TCC) and Tulsa Technology Center (Tulsa Tech), to help clearly define pathways that lead to careers at their company. Tulsa Community College received a Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) award from the U.S. Department of Labor for Advanced Manufacturing and Related Pathways. This began the development of manufacturing training for youth and the unemployed within the Tulsa community. With TCC, Union High School, and Tulsa Tech onboard, APSCO decided to launch a training program in their facility for high school seniors that provided the preparation to earn **MSSC's** Certified Production Technician certification. The two-semester program currently has its first class of high school seniors participating with increased enrollment expecting in coming semesters.

At the end of the program, students will earn a Certified Production Technician certification, which recognizes their mastery of the core competencies of manufacturing production. Students may also earn college credit through TCC for the certifications they earn throughout the course. The training is led in tandem by TCC instructors as well as APSCO's experienced and talented staff. Additionally, APSCO is offering paid internships and job placement assistance for students interested in further pursuing careers in manufacturing. By offering this program at the APSCO facility, the company is able to provide training in a real-world manufacturing setting and beginning to develop a new pool of skilled candidates.

Results

>> Pipeline Development:

There are currently 23 students in the Certified Production Technician program, which APSCO plans to expand by recruiting students from other area high schools in the spring. Dream It. Do It. Oklahoma's overall activities have reached more than 10,000 people, including students, employers and parents.

>> A Clear Pathway

APSCO is directly involved and connected with local high schools, community colleges, and technical colleges to provide clear and concise pathways into manufacturing careers for students.

>> Qualified Candidates:

APSCO's Certified Production Technician program has allowed students to experience first-hand what a manufacturing career is all about. They spend time interacting with current employees, sharpening their technical skills, and communicating with potential employees. By providing student training right in their own facility, APSCO is ensuring that they are producing quality workers. Additionally, APSCO has hired two of TCC's CPT graduates.

>> Partnerships:

Dream It. Do It. Oklahoma has also partnered with local SkillsUSA chapters and created an Emerging Manufacturing Leader award, which honors manufacturing employees under the age of 30 in recognition of their hard work and achievements. The inaugural awards were held in August of 2014.

"I feel like we're changing lives – we're empowering students to know what career paths are out there."

*– Stephanie Cameron,
APSCO community affairs director,
Dream It. Do It. Oklahoma executive director*

