BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
Bison Gear & Engineering

Challenge

One factor of Bison’s success is access to talented individuals. With a workforce comprised of engineers, production, and other critical personnel the training needs at Bison run a gamut of soft skills to more technical requirements. Hiring production personnel and having them be work ready on day one is a constant challenge. Having the tools in place to assess our talent for our succession planning is a key objective. Mentoring workers for success is a top priority and motivating each of them to build their skill sets. We strive to achieve a 100 percent certified production workforce. Bison works closely with community college’s and is a true advocate of the “learn and earn” philosophy.

Action

In 2008, Bison launched an aggressive strategy to incorporate industry certifications into its hiring processes and incumbent worker training. Bison first began offering current workers the opportunity to improve knowledge through an online curriculum developed by the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) and provided at the Bison Learning Center.

Four critical areas are covered: Safety, Quality Practices and Measurement, Manufacturing Processes and Production, and Maintenance Awareness. Workers are rewarded with $100 for each of four modules they pass and an additional $100 if they pass all four and earn their Certified Production Technician (CPT) credential. Workers typically spend 16-18 hours of self-study to complete each module.

In 2011, Bison started using the ACT WorkKeys assessments as a part of its hiring process. Applicants need to score at least a Level 4 (Silver) on the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) in Applied Math, Reading for Information, and Locating Information to be considered for hire.

Results

>> Increased Productivity:
Productivity has improved by 31% since 2008. The 2011 quality level set a new standard in the history of the company.

>> Improved Safety and Quality:
Bison credits the certification with fewer accidents, increased quality improvements, and a more self-directed, confident and engaged workforce.

>> Better Candidates:
100% of new hires since 2012 have achieved an NCRC prior to being hired into the Bison workforce.

>> Increased Service Levels:
Return on measurement can also be tracked to Bison Gear’s “Pride Rating”, which measures On-Time Delivery, Service Responsiveness and Field Warranty. Following the launch of the MSSC training, the rating bumped from 62% to 90% and has leveled off at a consistent 85%, a gain of 23%.

“Credentials clarify competencies and provide insight for job placements, rotations and promotions.”
- Sylvia Wetzel,
Chief Learning Officer

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