Employer Spotlight

Sun Hydraulics

Challenge

Sun Hydraulics manufactures high-performance screw-in cartridge valves that incorporate precision processes requiring a high-skilled workforce. During the recession of 2009, instead of laying off workers, Sun leadership instituted a rolling furlough system so it could maintain and invest in the skills of its workforce. The company wanted to find a training program linked to certification that would be a fit with its production needs.

Action

Working with Polk State College and the State College of Florida, the company launched an in-house training program based on the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) modules: Safety, Quality Practices and Measurement, Manufacturing Processes and Production, and Maintenance Awareness. Workers who complete all four certifications earn their Certified Production Technician (CPT) credential.

As interest in the training grew among workers, Sun entered into a partnership with nearby State College of Florida’s Engineering, Technology, and Advanced Manufacturing (ETAM) program to deliver the MSSC training. The college offers a variety of options: workers can attend class two nights a week, watch a live broadcast using a phone-in connection, or view previously taped broadcasts over the internet. This flexibility allows workers to take advantage of training based on times convenient to their work and life schedules. The cost of the program has been shared among the company, the state and a federal funding grant.

While many of the workers have never been through “formal” training before, they find many concepts of the training familiar based on their job experience. Sun recently instituted a mentor program so that successful graduates can provide support to those still in training.

Results

>> More Certified Workers: 170 workers – over 30% of the production workforce – have earned Certified Production Technician (CPT) status. The goal is 100%.

>> Higher Levels of Engagement: Workers who have earned certifications are more involved in area audits and continuous improvement efforts within the company.

>> Improved Company Performance: Company leadership sees increased worker skills as contributing significantly to improvements in efficiency and overall company performance.

>> Increased Benefits: Workers realize the benefit of investing time in continuous learning for professional and personal growth. They see first-hand how it links to success in a rapidly changing, technology-driven workplace.

Headquarters: Sarasota, Florida

Products: High performance screw-in cartridge valves and manifolds for the mobile and industrial markets.

Employees: 900 globally; 700 in Sarasota – 620 in manufacturing/production and 80 in support positions.

www.sunhydraulics.com

“At Sun Hydraulics we believe developing and certifying the skills of our workforce is a direct investment in the productivity and overall performance of the company.”

—Tim Twitty, Operations