

Manufacturing Industry Forum

Central Region Consortium – November 5, 2010

A Report from Louann Waldner, Director, Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT)

Employers and community college educators from around the Central Valley participated in a *Manufacturing Industry Forum* on November 5, 2010 at State Center Community College District's Clovis Center. Hosted by the Central Region Consortium (CRC), and modeled after the "marketplace analogy," this industry forum was the first in a series of workforce conversations with employers from one of the Central Valley's critical industry sectors. ([2006 Strategic Action Proposal, California's 21st Century Opportunity](#), the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley)

Moderated by David Clark, CTE Dean at Reedley College, and Louann Waldner, Director of the Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT) at College of the Sequoias, educators heard directly from six manufacturing companies regarding their needs and concerns as they relate to educating the workforce. The conversation spanned the spectrum from hands-on experience to customer service skills. These employers have needs for educational training to upgrade current employee skills and retrain individuals who are being promoted. They also emphasized the need for personnel who can problem solve and use scientific methodology to think through problems that they will encounter in the field.

There seemed to be universal agreement on the need for the following skill sets: 1) computer aided drafting, 2) blue-print reading, 3) fabrication (press break operation, knowledge of a shear, etc.), 4) mechanical components, 5) overall understanding of how machines work, and 6) hands-on experience in all of the above.

There also is a need for customer support skills, such as computer skills, human relations skills, and telephone etiquette at all levels of the organization.

The "manufacturing pipeline" was a final topic of discussion. There was a consensus among the employers present that the experience of past generations is all but lost. Finding journeymen in fabrication, machining, welding and, to a lesser extent, industrial electricity, is next to impossible. In short, current generations don't get exposed to "making things" like they once did.

The Central Region's Economic Workforce Development (EWD) Center Directors (Center for Excellence (COE), Center for International Trade Development (CITD), Workplace Learning Resource Center (Welch) and Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT) were present and gave a brief synopsis of their role in working cooperatively with employers. Michelle Marquez, Director of the Central Valley's Center of Excellence, provided a customized Manufacturing Sector Industry Report.

The CACT reported on two "youth projects": the Catapult Project and IDesign have been developed/used by other CACTs across the state. More information about IDesign can be found at <http://www.californiatechedresources.org/idesign/>. Go to the Sierra College's CACT's I-Tech Explorer website <http://sierraschoolworks.com/section/tech-explorer/> to watch a video and find out more about the Catapult Project. Local CTE Manufacturing programs might be able to work with their local college's Community Education program to offer a "Career Camp" related to manufacturing.

One manufacturer reported his company's work in local elementary school projects related to engineering and manufacturing, but described the difficulty of funding and sustaining such projects.

Our thanks go to manufacturing industry representatives from Serpa, EvapCo, Blue Dolphin, Waterman, Consolidated, and Cen-Cal for joining us for this “marketplace” conversation. Both the time and insightful and enthusiastic contributions they provided served to make this first marketplace conversation successful!

Event planners included David Clark (Reedley College), Louann Waldner (College of the Sequoias), Sue Clark (CRC), George Boodrookas (Modesto Junior College), Karyn Dower and Jim Anderson (Merced College).