

KY FAME's 7 Steps to Solving the Manufacturing Skills Gap

KY FAME (Kentucky Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education) is solving the manufacturing skills gap. This partnership of local manufacturers has created a sustainable pipeline of much needed skilled workers. Here is what they are doing – and it works.

Step 1: Engage and listen to the needs of local manufacturers

Common sense, right? But all too often programs are set up in a vacuum and the “real needs” of manufacturers are overlooked or misunderstood. Today’s high-tech manufacturing means technology changes rapidly, requiring communication between industry and education to be ongoing to ensure a program’s success. This concept is so important that KY FAME included as part of their mission statement to “*be a conduit between industry and education with a primary focus on meeting the needs of manufacturers.*” Therefore, KY FAME reached out to businesses in the community including Toyota, UPS, Hahn Automation, Atlas, Republic Conduit, and GE Appliances to understand the skill gaps in their businesses now as well as what they see coming.

Step 2: Create a program to teach desired skills sets

Taking the desired outcomes indicated by manufacturers, KY FAME crafted the Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) program that combines classroom education and an apprenticeship-style, on-the-job training (OJT) experience. The AMT program offers three days of paid employment with on-the-job-training, and two days in the classroom.



AMT Program at Doss High School

Step 3: Establish OJT training partners

KY FAME manufacturers get early benefit by hiring AMT students and providing OJT. As part of participation in the KY FAME program, a manufacturer such as Toyota, hire the students for the work part of the program. The student starts with a job in-hand, working a minimum of 24 hours per-week, and earning a minimum of \$12 per-hour, though some are paid more. Further, some employers pay for tuition, and the majority of students complete the program after 18 months, debt-free. Let that sink in a little...they are provided with a job and in as little as 18 months they graduate from the program debt free!

Step 4: Identify an educational training partner

The right educational partner makes or breaks the program. KY FAME wanted an educational partner just as excited about the program as they were. They chose to partner with KCTCS (Kentucky Community and Technical College System), a 16 college system located in Kentucky, to deliver the classroom portion of the AMT program. In the Greater

Louisville area, the Jefferson Community & Technical College (JCTC) implemented this program to support local manufacturers.

Step 5: Identify and endorse the classroom curricula

Matching the needs of the manufacturers to curriculum that teaches the desired skills is critical. KY FAME worked closely with educational institutions and businesses—like 3M, Bosch, GE Appliances, and Ford—to find the right curricula and hands-on, hardware training systems to fulfill the needs of the AMT program. They turned to MSSC’s proven Certified Production Technician (CPT) program developed by Amatrol, Inc. Working with the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), KY FAME merged the CPT program with the on-the-job-training element. Gerald Sexton, KY FAME’s Director, said that he was, *“familiar with Amatrol, and had used their training products in a prior educational environment. Also, Amatrol training solutions matched the competencies for the KY FAME program and the industry partner’s needs.”*

Step 6: Promote and launch the program

Filling any manufacturing skills program with students can be a challenge because many people have a misconception about manufacturing jobs. KY Fame used press conferences, local news stories, interviews, and more to attract students. One of the best ways to engage potential students is to organize manufacturing tours. GE Appliances, a Haier company, held a plant tour as part of a press release event and later provided a virtual plant tour that reached even more potential students to open their eyes to the interesting and dynamic world of modern manufacturing.

Step 7: Fill the skill pipeline by expanding the program to high schools

The inflow of skilled manufacturing workers from the next generation is essential to keep the employment pipeline full. KY FAME has forged relationships with Jefferson County and Bullitt County Public School systems to create a program that prepares young workers for future careers. Utilizing MSSC’s Certified Production Technician (CPT) program, Doss High School and Bullitt County Area Technology Center students can achieve a certification that proves that they have the skill sets needed by industry.

“Doss [High School] students are going to be trained in core foundational technical skills that they will be certified in as a result of going through this program, and that certification is their portable certificate to a job, much more quickly than if they didn’t have that certification.” - LeeSa Page, Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC)

Proven Success

KY Fame’s first cohort began in 2010 at the Bluegrass Community & Technical College. The program now has 23 companies participating including Toyota which used this model to establish programs in 8 other states where it has facilities. Additionally, the AMT program now has 8 chapters across Kentucky with more planned. The U.S. Department of Labor’s National Career Pathway Network designated it as the “Best Career Program in the U.S.” in 2013.

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