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California Small Manufacturers Get a Break *Special grant supports in-house training for workforce to boost production*

While manufacturing in California has had its share of ups and downs, there are still about 1.5 million employees working at approximately 44,500 firms that contribute to over \$1.8 billion dollars to the California GDP. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, 95% of manufacturers are classified as “medium” or “small” size; medium manufacturers employ less than 2,000 while small manufacturers employ less than 500 individuals. California is comprised of approximately 97% of small manufacturing companies, according to the Employment Development Department, yet face 23% higher costs than the rest of the nation including workers compensation, health care, energy, labor, and higher-than-national environmental standards.

To help these small manufacturers combat these challenges, and maximize their potential, the Centers for Applied Competitive Technology (CACT) are investing in these companies through an innovative Internet-based and/or onsite training program called the Small Manufacturers Training Program (SMTP). As part of the California Community College Economic and Workforce initiative, the CACT received a special grant from the Small Business Administration, to proactively address and provide relief to some of the unique issues facing manufacturers.

Redwood City’s Precision Engineering took advantage of the program to train nearly 30% of its staff. Quality Manager Eugen Francu said, “[If I was] to teach a class myself, I’d have to teach all the employees all at once and stop production. It was very convenient for us to set up a computer in the office and provide online training when our operators had down time.” In addition to contributing to efficiency, Mr. Francu commented, “The training helped greatly with quality assurance, as we’re now able to show that we have certification for specific areas.”

The CACT SMPT Project Director, Virginia Green, PhD said, “Small manufacturing firms are at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to training their small number of employees. Training can be both costly and disruptive. To alleviate these issues, we offer a high quality online training component that maximizes a company’s ROI.”

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The SMPT program has a blend of pre-assessments, industry-reviewed content, post-assessments, and administrative reporting tools to ensure that there are measurable improvements in knowledge leading to changed behavior, and new and upgraded skills on the job, like CNC, Six Sigma, Lean, Shop Essentials, and Supervisory Skills.

Precision Engineering selected CNC, quality control, inspection, grinding (abrasion), stamping and safety classes to support its operations, but there are over 400 online courses from which to choose. When asked if he would refer a colleague to the SMTP, Francu said, “Absolutely. The service was great and inexpensive. It saved us time, was very easy to use, and the support staff was extremely helpful.”

For information about the Small Manufacturers Training Program, go to http://www.makingitincalifornia.com/online_courses.php

The Centers for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT) are an initiative of the California Community College's Economic and Workforce Development (CCCEWD) program. There are 13 CACTS located across California with the mission of advancing the global competitiveness and innovation for advanced technology companies in California through responsive workforce training and technical consulting services.

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