

Promising Practice: ManuFest Youth Manufacturing Expo

AT A GLANCE

The ManuFest Expo in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, is an annual, half-day event designed to introduce and expose high school students and their parents to the manufacturing sector, the high-demand careers within the industry, and the postsecondary institutions that offer related degree and training programs.

ORIGIN / IMPLEMENTATION

In 2014, MontcoWorks, the Workforce Development Board of Montgomery County, with the support of the County Commissioners, facilitated the Youth MEGA Manufacturing Summit. The event was driven by the recognized need to preserve manufacturing's most valuable resources – skilled workers. It is part of a local, state, and national focus on changing the perspective of the manufacturing industry, attracting young talent and recognizing the industry's impact on the American economy. In 2015, the event was transformed into ManuFest and was organized by Montgomery County in partnership with the MidAtlantic Employers' Association.

ManuFest is an initiative of the Montgomery County Commerce Department, MontcoWorks, the Bucks/Montco Manufacturing Alliances, the Bucks County Workforce Development Board, and the Montgomery County Community College in partnership with the MidAtlantic Employers' Association. – www.manufest.org

The 2016 event, held on a Saturday in March, was organized as a large expo and took place at Hatboro-Horsham High School. The event offered a keynote address and breakout sessions for parents and students. The schedule was as follows¹:

7:30 am: Check-in for Manufacturers/Exhibitors

8:00 am: Check-in for Students, Parents, and Educators

9:00 am: General Session Featuring Jeremy Bout, CEO of Edge Factor²

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.manufest.org/event-overview.shtml>

² To learn more about Edge Factor visit www.edgefactor.com

10:15 am to 12:30 pm: ManuFest Expo “Meet representatives from local manufacturing companies, tech schools, colleges, and more.

11:00 am to 12:00 pm: “Open House” Break-out Sessions

Marketing the objectives of the event is critical as one of ManuFest’s key purposes is to educate parents about the manufacturing industry, helping them understand that many careers within this fast-growing sector require postsecondary education, are considered white collar positions, and offer family sustaining wages.

Each year, the organizers of ManuFest arrange for high-interest demonstrations or displays at the event. At ManuFest Expo 2016, a KNIGHT robot, used for bomb removal, was exhibited; this not only exemplified high-tech manufacturing but also brought media attention to the event. In addition, North Montco Technical Career Center, a local career and technical high school, brought engaging equipment for students to see and use.

Registration for the event is free but required. Organizers reach out to schools and employers to attract attendees and exhibitors through different media using press releases, presentations to high schools via social media and the www.manufest.org website.

Discussions for the 2017 ManuFest event are underway and the format is again being re-evaluated. One consideration is to offer a weekday event for students and an evening event for parents.

IMPACT / GOALS

Attendance for ManuFest has increased each year. In 2016, over 300 people attended including 190 students and more than 70 parents. Sixty representatives from 35 manufacturers facilitated booths at the event.

Other than collecting the number of attendees and exhibitors, there is presently no method to identify the immediate and long-term impact that ManuFest has on students, parents, and/or employers. However, event organizer Clara Console intends to develop a way in which attendees may provide meaningful feedback. Further, Ms. Console plans to explore ways in which student attendees may have easy access to career counseling at or shortly after the event.

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ABOUT PA-PIN

With backing from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and ongoing guidance from the Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE), the Pennsylvania Pathways Innovation Network is coordinated by the National Center for College and Career Transitions (NC3T), an organization experienced in all aspects of college and career pathways development.

The PA-PIN is designed to identify and share promising practices and replicable strategies that help support the development and implementation of college and career pathways systems. By bringing together leaders from forward-thinking schools, adult and postsecondary institutions, business organizations, workforce development providers, and non-profit organizations effective and innovative pathways can be designed or expanded to increase learner achievement and address workforce demands.

By joining the PA-PIN, schools and organizations accelerate their efforts to develop scalable and sustainable solutions that strengthen connections between education, employers, and economic development in order to prepare today's students for tomorrow's careers. There is no cost to join the PA-PIN. Visit www.NC3T.com and click on the PIN tab to join.