


Mobile center preps workers for jobs at Ormond plant

By BOB KOSLOW, Business writer 



Instructor Bob Capehart talks to employees of Energizer Personal Care during a training program session inside the M.O.S.T trailer on Wednesday. N-J | Peter Bauer



Jones



Russell

ORMOND BEACH -- After years of driving a tractor-trailer and taking odd jobs, Keith Russell wanted a more stable job.

So, for the past two weeks, the Palm Coast resident was one of 15 temporary employees taking classes in the back of a long-haul trailer at the Energizer Personal Care plant here, formerly Hawaiian Tropic, learning new manufacturing skills and brushing up on old ones.

"This is a lot better than in school where they just show you a book and let you go," Russell said of the high-tech training. "They take you step by step and teach you all you need to know. They're teaching everyone the same things so we all know what everyone else knows."

Time Wise Management Systems, based in Celebration, created the mobile outreach skills training (M.O.S.T.) program about three years ago. Using an \$865,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, the company uses five customized trailers with computer terminals and simulators to teach entry-level manufacturing skills on the road.

It's more convenient and cost-effective, said Claudia Follett of Time Wise, which administers the trailers in six New England states, Mississippi and Florida.

"The employer has to be committed to hire the employees, move them into full-time positions," Follett said. "We teach skills they need. We have a 96 percent program completion rate. More importantly, a six-month retention rate of 87 percent."

It works so well that Spherion Staffing Services, which provides Energizer with temporary help, called in the M.O.S.T. trailer for a two-week session.

"This adds value to our customers. It also is a great way for the employees to get started in manufacturing positions and sets them up for success," said Carol Peters, who owns the local Spherion franchise with her husband, Wayne.

The Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a nonprofit agency, runs the training programs in Florida in the M.O.S.T. trailers. It coordinates with local work-force development boards, staffing agencies, economic-development councils and manufacturing associations to select manufacturers for the sessions. Students must pass a basic education test, drug screening and an interview.

"We know they will come out with the skill and knowledge needed because of their experience with M.O.S.T.," said Mischelle Romesberg, Energizer Personal Care plant director. "We are confident that graduates of the M.O.S.T. program will meet our standards of excellence."

Shop math, blueprint reading, weights and measures, computer numerical-control machines and fundamental manufacturing are among the skills students are taught. Sessions can be customized for each manufacturer and available in English and Spanish.

Many lessons are self-paced modules done on computers and simulators.

"Our philosophy is teach it, test it, prove it," instructor Larry Meadows said. "We train for positions and do not train to train."

"I was out of work for awhile and also did odd jobs with Spherion," said Brenda Jones of Palm Coast, another student. "Here, they are giving me the training on a pace I can handle. I am learning how to run a machine but also skills that I can use to grow on."

Even in a recession, manufacturers are having a tough time finding skilled employees, said Jayne Fifer, CEO of the Volusia Manufacturers Association.

"To have the M.O.S.T. mobile unit here at Energizer Personal Care preparing employees with the specific skills the manufacturer needs is a tremendous asset to our community and will help in building our businesses," Fifer said.

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