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Training help available for employers

By BOB KOSLOW, Business Writer 



Germfree electrician Jason Biancianiello works on a modular laboratory unit at Germfree in Ormond Beach. (N-J | David Massey)



Germfree has sent about half of its 60 employees, including Jason Biancianiello, to the Center for Business and Industry at Daytona State College. (N-J | David Massey)

When Germfree Laboratories officials at the Ormond Beach Airport Business Park wanted to expand and increase international customers a few year ago, they discovered their employees needed updated training without disrupting production schedules.

Seeking assistance, the company turned to Daytona State College's Center for Business & Industry.

"With increased international business, we needed employees to learn metrics and better read blueprints to do their jobs better," said Jane Corkum, Germfree's director of administrative services. "We set up on-site classes with CBI, which was a requirement of ours, so everyone could learn at the same pace and have the same level of knowledge. We couldn't afford to close production or have two or three employees taking off at a time for several days to get trained."

Because Germfree could not wait for the desired training classes to come up on the college schedule, the company secured a state grant to help pay for the contracted training through the CBI.

Such contracted training for companies is one of the program's core missions, said Frank Mercer, the center's director.

"The vast majority of our work is providing customized training for manufacturers and governments with specific needs," Mercer said. "We need to be fast reacting to help our customers."

Germfree has sent about half of its 60 employees to CBI-run training programs that also included air conditioning and refrigeration and written business communications.

The center operates under the college's division of economic development, along with the Small Business Development Center. The two programs work together, but the major difference is the SBDC's focus is on owners looking to expand or start a business while the CBI's focus is on worker training, Mercer said.

The contracted and customized services to companies are primarily geared toward advancing manual and computer-assisted machining skills, but classes in some computer programs, train the trainer sessions and teaching and polishing supervisory skill are also available. Many times, the center can help find grants to cover some of the cost.

The CBI also offers regularly scheduled, self-paced, eight-week basic machining classes at the college's Advanced Technology Center where individuals can learn skills for more advanced classes or be better positioned to get hired at a company who may help pay for additional training.

Gambro, a local manufacturer, took advantage of the classes offered at the Advanced Technology Center after buying a mill and lathe to make small machine parts rather than contracting to have them made. The center had multiple machines to train eight employees all at once rather than one at a time at work.

"It was a perfect fit for us," said Barry Arnett, manager of the Gambro plant in Daytona Beach. "It was so successful, we continue to send employees to classes."

Another resource available to assist area manufacturers is the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a 20-year-old nonprofit organization of technical, manufacturing and business specialists linked by the U.S. Department of Commerce and its National Institute of Standards and Technology with similar organizations in other states.

The goal is to increase company productivity and competitiveness by performing company assessments and offering ideas for technology advancements, supply-chain improvements, sustainability and workforce training.

The partnership's goal is to "help every manufacturer to the point where they don't need us," said chairman, Dick Peck, who owns a manufacturing company in the Tampa area. "Manufacturing is dying for a lack of qualified employees, especially in metal work and machining."

Last year, the Energizer Personal Care plant in Ormond Beach contracted with the partnership to train 15 new machine operators in a custom-designed long-haul trailer classroom operated by Time Wise Management Systems. The Mobile Outreach Skills Training trailer was at the plant for two weeks with instruction in shop math, blueprint reading, weights and measures, computer numerical-control machines and fundamental manufacturing.

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

Other area organizations that can offer assistance to area manufacturers include the Volusia Manufacturers Association and Volusia County's Economic Development Division.