

International Automotive Components (IAC), in Alma, has partnered with MCC for customized journeyman training for its maintenance personnel. *Pictured, from left,* are Logan Boarsaw, Kirk Saxton and Engineering Manager Jeremy Haller, who are standing in front of an Injection Molding Machine.



TRAINING THAT FITS

Customized learning helps employers and employees make the right connection

“We need (employees) to have particular skills, and we are willing to put the time and financial support into training the right individuals.”

— **Jeremy Haller**,
engineering manager at International
Automotive Components (IAC) in Alma

Earning an industry-recognized credential isn't the end of something – for many students, it's just the beginning.

Often students are focused on selecting an educational pathway and earning a traditional college degree to support their career goals. However, hiring trends are changing, and in some industries — such as manufacturing — employers are willing to hire the right people with fewer skills and invest in their training as part of their employment benefits.

According to a recent insider survey conducted by LinkedIn Learning, professionals are adapting to “new normal” working environments, which are increasingly digital, more mobile and built into daily workflows. The report stated that according to the panel of survey respondents, the most successful strategies will personalize learning for employees when and where they need it.

“More than 60 percent of insiders believe that more employers will make the move to skills-based hiring: choosing candidates based on what they can do, rather than their degree or pedigree,” the report stated.

Montcalm Community College Director of Apprenticeships and Workforce Training Ryan Wilson, who works with area employers to develop customized training and apprenticeship programming, said many employers are willing to take a chance hiring employees with fewer skills, but whose personality will fit in with their company's culture.

“Learning opportunities lead to engagement,” Wilson said. “Many of the employers we work with tell us that providing the right training for the right employees often leads to retention. Ultimately, their goal is to grow their own high-quality workforce, and this model most often works for them.”

Collin McLean, business solutions assistant manager with West Michigan Works!, said the job market is promising for those seeking employment, and employers in certain industries are increasingly willing to invest in training for their workers. In addition, programs through West Michigan Works! have allowed employers to take advantage of funding opportunities to upskill their current workforce, promote new workers and create employment opportunities.

“With low unemployment and businesses in West Michigan expanding, the need for more trained workers has also grown more critical. To address this skill gap, many employers are preparing new hires through apprenticeships or training programs in order to upskill their current workforce,” McLean said.

Ashley Everin, vice president at West Michigan Compounding (WMC), a plastic reprocessing company in Greenville, and Jeremy Haller, engineering manager at International Automotive Components (IAC), a global supplier of automotive components and systems in Alma, agree.

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West Michigan Compounding (WMC) Vice President Ashley Everin, *at left*, said the company is willing to train employees who fit into the culture of the company. Also pictured, *from left*, are Matt Kirvan and Christopher Holmes, who are working on a Universal Test Machine (UTM).



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— **Ashley Everin,**
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“When we first bring someone in, they don’t need to have any type of degree or experience,” Everin said.

“In all of our employees, we look for someone who’s driven, someone who’s eager, someone who wants to grow,” she said. “We have a unique culture around here. It’s important to us to have people that all have the same goal, and that’s just making WMC a great place to work – somewhere you want to come every day.”

WMC has partnered with MCC to offer its employees customized training to meet specific needs within the company.

“We have sent some of our employees for welding credentials at MCC,” Everin said. “That training was based on some established goals.”

Haller said IAC is dedicated to investing in homegrown talent to enhance its workforce. IAC joined forces with MCC two years ago to develop a customized journeyman training program for its maintenance personnel.

“They are taking basic hydraulics and electrical classes to gain those particular skills that we think are important on our equipment,” he said. “We have always used a lot of outside resources to maintain and repair our equipment. We’re hoping to become more self-sufficient.

“When I’m hiring, I’m not looking for credentials. We need them to have particular skills, and we are willing to put the time and financial support into training the right individuals,” he added.

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