

IMT Critical to Growth

AT HAYES PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS



Hayes has a long history as a manufacturer of motorcycle brakes, and it's seeking to extend that expertise into other automotive markets including agriculture, construction, and defense. For Hayes to diversify successfully, its workers need to be flexible, nimble, and able to learn new product lines quickly and efficiently. But even as it is diversifying its product line, Hayes faces an impending wave of retirements among the baby boomers in its workforce, who are highly skilled and experienced. The [Industrial Manufacturing Technician](#) (IMT) apprenticeship is a critical tool for addressing both of these business challenges.

The 18-month IMT apprenticeship trains frontline manufacturing workers to set up, operate, monitor, and control production equipment. Apprentices learn to understand manufacturing as a business system that integrates multiple disciplines, processes, and stakeholders. That knowledge allows workers to efficiently and safely manage time and materials, which helps improve manufacturing processes and schedules.

Approximately 10 percent of Hayes' workforce is currently enrolled in the IMT apprenticeship—and Timothy Hake, director of human resources at Hayes, has no doubt about the return on investment: "Higher productivity, better quality—I don't need to quantify it, I can see it every day on the shop floor."

Mentoring is central to the IMT apprenticeship, allowing younger workers to learn from experienced employees, who are not only highly skilled but have tremendous institutional knowledge. Sharing that knowledge with younger workers is essential to productivity, Timothy explains. "Instead of short little spurts of increasing productivity in response to specific challenges, transferring older workers' knowledge means that we can keep productivity growing steadily."

Establishing an apprenticeship program is a significant undertaking, and Timothy attributes Hayes' successful implementation of the IMT apprenticeship to its partnership with [WRTP/BIG STEP](#), an intermediary organization. Companies get distracted, Timothy notes, and that's where the intermediary comes in. "For the first cohort [of the IMT], we were very organized, but for the second and third, we started to lose focus. Rhandi [Berth from WRTP] calls and keeps me on task," he jokes. Working with a supportive organization to set up the apprenticeship makes the employer's life easy, Timothy explains. "It's all been laid out—all you have to do is follow the steps."

Employees who participate in the IMT are more productive, not only because they can read blueprints and understand the manufacturing processes holistically, but also because they are more confident. Timothy finds that IMT participants take more initiative in driving change and making improvements:

They tend to be more engaged—they feel able to speak up and share what's going on in different work areas; they're able to be an advocate in any number of ways—be it a production issue or a peer issue.

Finally, the IMT offers advancement opportunities that appeal to the workforce of the future—younger workers, women, and others who may hesitate to work in manufacturing. "Millennials," Timothy notes, "are interested in personal development and growth—these things are as important as working conditions and pay; if you're going to stay in business, you need to be able to attract a younger, more diverse workforce."

For more information on the IMT Apprenticeship, including resources for employers, workforce development organizations, unions, and apprentices, [visit IMTApprenticeship.org](http://IMTApprenticeship.org).