

Industry Outlook: Keeping America Skilled

Written by John Grillos, Executive Chairman, NTT Workforce Development Institute
Friday, 19 August 2011 13:56



We've all heard the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Retirees exiting today's workforce may result in a potential shortage of nearly 10 million skilled workers by 2012. Our mission is to help America maintain a highly safe and proficient skilled workforce, and to play a role in developing the supply of talent required to meet the demand.

Few providers are equipped to help companies find—and *properly train*—skilled workers. For example, companies are asking community colleges to design more sophisticated training programs to meet business demands. Ironically, state governments are cutting funding for more and more of these schools, diminishing their ability to support the business community when it's needed most. Clearly, American industry needs to adopt a more strategic and integrated approach in its management of skilled labor recruitment, training, knowledge transfer and retention.

At NTT Workforce Development Institute, our objective is to replenish the diminishing supply of skilled workers, and to improve their proficiency. We accomplish these goals by supporting companies throughout the lifecycle of their workforce.

First, our client-sponsored apprenticeship programs help enterprises recruit and train workers for permanent job placement. Then, we provide training and hands-on skills development with our Skill Circuit™ Training System, which includes over 60 courses for maintenance workers in the areas of electrical safety, National Electrical Code®, electrical work, compliance, HVAC, fluid power and mechanical systems.

We also intend to “archive” decades-old wisdom from the most experienced skilled workers so that their knowledge may be transferred to younger generations. We plan to do this with the mobile technology that we're developing for maintenance support. Workers will carry a device

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that delivers real-time access to technical information, as well as operations-specific advice from more experienced employees. This is critical, because every company's operating environment is as unique as a fingerprint that's shaped by its specific equipment, facilities and staff.

There's accumulated wisdom about what works—*and what doesn't*—in your environment. This knowledge often resides only within the minds of a small handful of "master" employees who understand and can explain the quirks and nuances of your company's specific equipment, facilities and procedures. Our technology will capture, and then share, your company's operational cultural wisdom with all relevant employees, significantly increasing production reliability and uptime.

Training and maintenance are typically treated as separate activities funded by separate budgets. NTT believes they should be viewed as interdependent, because proper training and worker qualification help to mitigate the risks and costs of maintenance. We believe that a strategic convergence of training and maintenance can really improve productivity, safety and compliance.

NTT also believes it can be beneficial to outsource the management of skilled-labor recruitment, training, retention, knowledge transfer and maintenance support. This allows companies to focus on their core competencies while simultaneously establishing a stronger training and compliance program. For nearly three decades, our organization has conducted instructor-led hands-on training programs for almost 1,000,000 employees at American companies and government agencies around the world. We have witnessed—*first-hand*—the improvements that organizations can achieve with an expert partner.

The skilled labor shortage, along with increasingly stringent compliance mandates, will cause greater pain in the future for companies that don't take proactive steps now. We want companies to know: You don't have to take those types of steps alone. **MT**

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