Written by Henry Peck, President, Geiger Pump & Equipment Company
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My children, one in high school and one in college, lead extremely busy lives. They take fabulous academic courses and participate in a range of great extracurricular pursuits. Although they probably won't use all the details of what they learn through their various courses and activities after they get through school, that's not the point. Just like it was when we were young, these things are part of the pleasure of growing up—an irreplaceable learning experience and preparation for our lives ahead.

On a macro scale, the great American economy is built on a continuous cycle of people like you and me—and, now, our children—most of us moving directly from being full-time students into roles of full-time workers. Unfortunately, when someone enters the workforce, he/she don't always find an environment that supports learning at the same pace found in school. In a relatively short time, we grow up—we have to!

A business may be passionate about its new workers' short-term vocational goals, but those workers may not readily embrace new experiences and continuous improvement—at least not like they demanded of themselves before entering the workplace, or the way we do for our children. Admittedly, our hectic work lives are full of deadlines and tasks, with little time or wiggle room for addressing ambitions to continuously learn. It can, however, be done. Here are some practical suggestions that have worked for our organization.

Put every employee on his/her own computer and workstation, with access to all of your company's basic business and PC tools. Reach far and wide in your organization and encourage professional communication with internal and external customers. Help every person with the basics— like 10-finger typing and the use of proper grammar. This acknowledges the dignity of managing time wisely for everyone in the organization.

If your company does not already do so, offer a tuition benefit for every employee—design it for everyone, not just for management. Pay for these courses up front and include the cost of books. Be liberal with the course selection, which may include non-accredited classes. Be flexible and accommodating with work hours for those who take classes.Additionally, keep in mind that paying for other business-related books an employee is willing to share with others around the company is a way to build a library—and dialogue—within an organization.

Employ high school work-study students or college/university coop students. These programs are good for our community and have a positive influence on our company's collective esteem.

Commit your organization to a learning event that rallies all of your associates and reaches out to your business community. For us, it's our Mid-Atlantic Pump and Process Equipment Symposium, a full day of sharing what we know through hands-on training classes directed to our contemporaries in the fluid-handling community. Designed as an inclusive event, it involves everyone in our company—and is appreciated and attended by all of our business friends, well beyond the decision-makers in our trade.

Most importantly, don't forget—and don't let your organization forget—to enjoy the pleasure of learning and the satisfaction that comes from making a positive impact in the lives of others. In short, keep growing…forever! **MT**

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The opinions expressed in this Viewpoint section are those of the author, and don't necessarily reflect those of the staff and management of MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY magazine.

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