

CONXUSNEO:

# Key Partner Promoting Manufacturing Careers in Summit County

ConxusNEO, a Summit County nonprofit, partners with companies to identify the skills they need and build a talent pipeline. The organization serves a wide range of industries, including manufacturing. While traditional workforce initiatives focus on helping people overcome obstacles to employment, ConxusNEO starts with the needs of companies.

“By clearly understanding what manufacturers need, we can collaborate with our education partners to ensure the right skills are embedded in their training programs,” said Jenny Stupica, Director of Manufacturing Engagement. “This insight also helps us bring together educators, workforce programs, economic development organizations and government agencies to develop training resources and recruit for the specific skills manufacturers need.”

For instance, in 2015 ConxusNEO collaborated on a study that found manufacturers would face a shortage of skilled workers due to Baby Boomer retirements and the difficulty in attracting young people to industry jobs. Those findings resulted in a county-wide wide effort that started with the Akron Public Schools.

ConxusNEO led an outreach effort that connected 50 teachers from the Akron Public Schools with area manufacturers. Through site visits and other activities, the teachers gained a deeper understanding of the well-paying career opportunities available with manufacturing companies – and the specific skills needed. Manufacturing company executives also visited the schools to talk with students. This approach helped drive a 30 percent enrollment increase in the district’s advanced manufacturing program.

ConxusNEO is also playing a key role in raising awareness of manufacturing careers. While “signing day” is a well-known ritual that highlights talented athletes as they announce which college they will attend, ConxusNEO decided to spotlight high school students making an equally important transition – right into good-paying manufacturing careers. This signing day celebrated five students from across Summit County who were awarded full-time jobs with local manufacturers right after graduation from high school.

The students had connected with employers through career programs at their schools. Working part-time at the manufacturing company during their senior year helped them apply what they had learned at school. This was an important asset for the employers. “The program filters students that have a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the industrial arts,” said Terry Ellis of Acro Tool & Die. “They arrive day one with good fundamentals in blueprint reading, machining processes and computer skills.”

The signing day event highlighted how manufacturing offers strong careers. The students were starting out with salaries in the mid-\$30,000 range with good benefits – and bright futures with opportunities for raises, career growth and the potential for college tuition reimbursement.

“Signing day” is just one example of ConxusNEO’s innovative approach to promoting manufacturing careers by collaborating with students, educators, manufacturers and other stakeholders to raise awareness. For more information, visit <http://conxusneo.jobs/>



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