

# Workforce Solutions

## Certifications Can Help Curb Skills Shortage

By **Kris Deckard**



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**R**ecently, I've been in three different meetings with medium-to-large employers and a similar statement was made in each: *"We're going through too many applicants just to find people qualified to work in the jobs that we need and even then we are doing a lot of training after hire."*

Each employer described a "revolving door" of applicants, unmet staffing needs and disappointment. Yet, in the midst of record unemployment, thousands of current employees and job seekers are unsure if there is training within their reach that would make a difference to employers.

So what is really going on? Potential employees feel that employers are reluctant to hire due to economic uncertainty, while employers see that individuals aren't obtaining the training and skills needed for jobs that are going unfilled. The solution for both sides becomes more attractive and practical when an investment of time and money is abbreviated, but still meaningful.

### Benefits for all

For individuals, industry-based certifications can provide a shorter-term, less academic credential that is aligned to workplace standards set by employers. In the case of Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) certifications, employers can be assured that those standards are the fundamental competencies needed by front-line employees in manufacturing and logistics facilities nationwide.

For employers, credentials like MSSC and adapted policies to incorporate those credentials will provide results, lower recruiting and entry-level training costs, reduce turnover and increase training standardization. In the long run, establishing these practices will develop a more competitive workforce.

It's a strategy worth adopting, considering the American Society for Training and Development estimates that in 2009 employers spent \$125 billion on employee learning and development.

MSSC has a long list of advocates nationwide and in Indiana. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) includes MSSC in its NAM-Endorsed Skills Certification System, which directly addresses the education and training deficits that are limiting the pool of qualified candidates for U.S. manufacturing jobs.

In 2009, Ready Indiana and several partner organizations hosted the Indiana Manufacturing and Logistics Skills conference, bringing industry leaders from several states to Indiana to

discuss the direct results they've experienced after implementing MSSC. Next, a public announcement from several manufacturers in southeastern Indiana declared those organizations would prefer or recognize MSSC-certified applicants.

### New, convenient model

For Hoosiers, this training and certification has been offered through Ivy Tech Community College. The business-to-business model now offered by Ready Indiana, the workforce program of the Indiana Chamber, gives employers increased flexibility for providing this training to current employees. The model utilizes company-based trainers and online courseware that is accelerated for experienced employees, cutting traditional training time in half and traditional costs by even more.

"The Indiana Chamber of Commerce is offering the MSSC courses most ideally suited to effective use by industry employers, including 'Fast Track,' and other fully online courses that enable busy front-line workers to secure training without being taken out of day-to-day operations," remarks Leo Reddy, chairman and CEO of MSSC.

The Ready Indiana-Indiana Chamber combination is ready to assist companies and employees.

The Chamber is the fourth largest organization of its kind in the country, with nearly 5,000 member companies, employing 800,000 Hoosier employees in all 92 counties. This includes a full range of industry sectors and company sizes. Throughout its nearly 90-year history and particularly over the last 20 years, the Chamber has played a substantial role in bridging the education/workforce development gap as one of the drivers of Indiana's business climate.

The creation of Ready Indiana in 2007 was a direct result of these efforts. The addition of this MSSC offering is based on the belief that businesses and employers must be engaged more effectively as partners in shaping and implementing solutions.

**INFORMATION LINK**

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