



## EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

# EDUCATION STANDOUT

## Perkins Helping Schools Better Serve Community

By Anthony Schoettle

At just 31 years old, Jacob Perkins is already reshaping the future of Indiana’s workforce.

Perkins’ work at Jeffersonville-based Amatrol – a global leader in career and technical education (CTE) training solution – has helped bridge the gap between Indiana’s high school graduates and the state’s growing demand for skilled workers in advanced manufacturing and technology.

Over the last three years, Perkins researched best practices throughout the U.S. and organized a series of statewide summit meetings to bring these best practices to Indiana. As a result, significantly more Hoosier high schools have gotten onboard and adopted Industry 4.0 programs, which use technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence, to name a few, to improve productivity and quality in manufacturing. This translated to a 45% increase in the number of students engaged in these hands-on initiatives and on a potential path to a future career.

Perkins, the regional education manager at Amatrol, has been tapped as the inaugural 2025 Jackson Lewis Emerging Leader of the

Year by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.

The award recognizes a young professional who has positively contributed to the Hoosier business landscape. More than 40 quality nominations were received from across the state and in various industries.

“Jacob led efforts to gain Indiana’s statewide adoption of cutting-edge educational programs that will enhance the advanced manufacturing process to create a more efficient, flexible and intelligent production system,” remarks Brian McDermott, Indianapolis office managing principal for Jackson Lewis. “He’s made a tremendous impact, and we can’t think of a more deserving honoree.”

Larry Wade, Amatrol’s director of market operations, echoes that assessment. “Jacob’s efforts have had a triple impact: Indiana high schools are better positioned to fulfill their mission of preparing students for in-demand careers, companies gain access to more highly skilled employees and individuals are empowered with the abilities to earn higher wages and provide greater security for their families.”

### A leader is born

Schools, institutions and businesses utilize Amatrol’s expertise in creating up-to-date educational solutions to empower their students and staff. Products run the gamut from e-learning solutions to hands-on workstations and assessment systems and more. The company also provides in-house training to teachers.

Perkins’ ascent at Amatrol began in 2020, when he found himself

Jacob Perkins (center) has used a mentality sharpened by his athletics background to become an inspiring leader at Amatrol and for nurturing the next generation. (Pictured with Tina Dukandar and Brian McDermott of Jackson Lewis and the Indiana Chamber's Vanessa Green Sindors [center right]).

in the middle of a firestorm of changes as the pandemic took hold. It would prove something of a revelation for his ample leadership abilities.

Perkins saw his role in his family's business grow exponentially – widening from doing mostly office work to being involved more directly with the manufacturing process and customers. Though the staff was down a bit due to the sudden strike of the pandemic, Amatrol's business overall increased by about 40%. Perkins, then in his mid-20s, saw the number of people he oversaw more than quadruple to about 30.

"At one point, we were running 75% worker capacity at nearly 50% business increase. There seemed to be about a million things to do," Perkins recalls. "We implemented new technologies, purchased new equipment and were a lot more focused on research and development than some other companies."

Amatrol's growth was due in large part to their online learning solutions. "We had the perfect package. It was right place, right time, right product," Perkins explains.

A former collegiate tennis player who also has competed in downhill ski racing, Perkins used the discipline, determination and speed he honed in sports to excel in such a challenging time.

He noted then that many operational changes needed to be made often "on the fly" and in a hurry. Perkins, who appears to have a good handle on human psychology, relied on his sports background to navigate the tricky terrain.

"Making changes is always a team effort," he notes. "Some people here had been using and executing the same processes for more than 20 years. Making changes like that can be overwhelming at times. We had to explain why we were making those changes and how it benefited not just the company, but the customers and employees as well. My question to our employees is always, 'How can we make things better? How can we make your job better?'"

## Unquestioned influence

"I lead by example," Perkins expresses. "I show up on time, show a great attitude, show respect, and I take an interest in the employees."

And, say those who know Perkins best, he does it all without raising a clatter.

"I'm not the loudest person out there," he explains. "I listen more than I talk. That



Perkins has a strong commitment to professional excellence, technical innovation and community engagement, and dispenses wisdom in many different formats.



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– Kent Powell, senior vice president of global sales, Amatrol

resonates with people in manufacturing."

Though he can be quiet, Perkins' sway at Amatrol – and beyond – is unquestioned, relates Wade.

"The combination of Jacob's academic and business experiences have enabled him to serve as a highly effective consultant to Indiana high schools, crafting national best practices and advising high schools how to best serve the needs of their community," he emphasizes.

Another colleague touts his impact inside Amatrol.

"Jacob brings an incredible amount of enthusiasm and dedication to his role, which

has inspired our entire Midwest sales team to significantly raise their performance in K-12 education," offers Kent Powell, senior vice president of global sales at Amatrol.

"Jacob has leveraged his engineering education extensively, using data and analytical skills to solve sales and marketing challenges and conceive of new product designs," he adds. "This past year, he led the research to identify the educational needs in the semiconductor industry, which resulted in the signing of an MOU between Amatrol and the Florida Semiconductor Institute to expand the work."

## Motivating forces

Perkins, whose job now covers 15 states for Amatrol, has a deft touch with attending to seemingly minor details as well as major projects. He is also tuned into the needs of not only his customers, but those he works alongside at Amatrol. He draws inspiration from several key sources.

“The thing I’ve really learned from sports is perseverance,” Perkins emphasizes. “There are going to be days where everything goes really well, and there are days when things are off. In tennis and skiing, I’ve had both of those kinds of days. Learning how to deal with that and how to push through – will yourself through – that’s key in any job.”

Other things he learned from his grandfather, Don Perkins, who started Amatrol more than 40 years ago, and his father, Paul Perkins, the company’s president and CEO. His mother, Kimberly Perkins, Amatrol’s vice president of market development, also has been a guiding light.

“My two biggest mentors and inspiration – especially for my career in manufacturing – are my mom and dad,” Perkins offers. “It’s great to see the challenges they’ve overcome and success they’ve had.”

“The first word that comes to mind is energy when I think of my mom and dad. Dad is out on the production floor every day, my mom is too, talking to assembly and shipping and leadership teams. That really resonates with me. They’ve always been loving and caring and have a vision and are willing to try new things. They’re always looking five or more years ahead. And they’ve always been a tremendous support, and not just to me, but to all the employees at Amatrol.” ■



Perkins is already a role model for young people and mentor to many.



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