

Training

Facing the COVID-19 Crisis: Problem-Solving is in Manufacturers' DNA

Brought To You by Tooling U-SME | May 14, 2020

This is an unprecedented time in world history, which heavily impacts the manufacturing industry. Yet, at times of national crisis — and through daily challenges — the manufacturing industry has always gotten creative. Problem-solving is in manufacturers' DNA.

Tooling-U SME is seeing countless examples of that innovative DNA through their online community. Throughout each day, manufacturers are sharing ideas with peers on how to retool their operations or leverage existing capabilities to meet the urgent needs of critical industries including our healthcare workers and patients.

For nearly 90 years, Tooling-U SME has worked side by side with manufacturers, continually impressed by the industry's critical high-pressure problem-solving. The partnership they have with manufacturers is one they take seriously. Now, more than ever, they also want to be as creative and flexible in solving the problems facing the industry.

Reflecting back just a month ago, the workforce challenges consisted of finding, upskilling and retaining talent. Manufacturers were furthered challenged to create a structured sustainable workforce strategy as there was little time available, considering production demands and new technology adoption.

Now, everything has changed. Manufacturers are left in very divergent situations with drastically different needs:

- Some companies are quickly ramping up production and staffing to meet the needs of our nation's healthcare system, food production, logistics, etc. and are seeking help in onboarding a surge workforce.
- Others are looking at how existing roles may be expanding, with workers covering areas outside their usual job, requiring cross-training.
- But most are either finding their employees with excess capacity and seeking ways to keep them engaged and productive or, worse yet, having to reduce or layoff staff.

Nearly all workplace and workforce environments are impacted in some way by COVID-19. This leaves all manufacturers, trainers, educators, and government and non-profit organizations trying to quickly figure things out.

Tooling-U SME's strength is in solving learning and development challenges, and they have worked to create plans and programs to help their partners deliver training that can best address critical issues and deliver positive results. Over the last 15 years, Tooling-U SME has utilized online training as one way to complement and support a robust learning and development strategy within a company.

Today, they too are challenged to be even more creative in how to use online learning to best meet the needs of manufacturers. And they have already started seeing some companies taking time to increase training among their production and engineering employees by using virtual resources. In an effort to spark ideas that might be fitting, below are some examples of how others are trying to leverage online training during this time of change:

- Upskilling during downturn:

- **Production** — upskilling core job skills
- **Engineering** — learning more about Industry 4.0, digital factories, additive manufacturing, cybersecurity, etc. for future innovations
- **Retooling** — cross-training employees for new production environments
- **Ramping-up** — onboarding hundreds of workers needing fast, organized, and targeted training

To help with some of the above scenarios, Tooling-U SME has created special quick-start ***online training programs*** that remove the time it takes to think through a training plan.

These quick-start programs are flexible, practical and adoptable options for key manufacturing functions from additive to welding — for new workers to tenured employees. Employees can complete their classes and exams from any desktop, laptop, tablet or phone — anywhere, anytime. And Tooling-U SME is available to provide the support, set-up, implementation and reporting.

For those companies struggling with what to do next, Tooling-U SME is launching a webinar series at no charge; highlighting best practices on how other companies are designing training programs.

Tooling-U SME knows this is an unsettling time for everyone. If they can do their part to be creative and adaptive in providing training to meet manufacturers' needs, this will hopefully provide manufacturers more time to solve the myriad of business, innovation, and production challenges facing our nation.

Tooling-U SME greatly appreciates the hard work the men and women of manufacturing do every day, and it is truly inspiring to witness the grit, determination, and mobilization of thousands of manufacturers in applying their problem solving and ingenuity to helping our frontline healthcare heroes do their best in keeping us safe and healthy.

Be safe and stay well.

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