

SmartBusiness

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Grow your own

Local school districts, colleges and businesses are partnering to train a new technology work force.

By Chip Chapman

If your company is like ours, finding good, well-trained people is one of your toughest challenges. Right now, many parts of Ohio, including Columbus and its surrounding communities, are experiencing an unprecedented skilled labor crisis.

Trained technology workers are in short supply and hot demand. At ADC Information Technology Services, we feel it every day.

We have a large, untapped future labor source in our community, one that stands ready to fill our employment gap but needs the right training to make the jump. The labor source is our children, and there are several educational programs that are working **to ready students for technology jobs.**

It's been my pleasure to be associated with an educational program called Tech Prep that has a proven track record of preparing students for technology positions in our communities. Tech Prep combines innovative thinking with new ways of learning, focusing on college prep academics while allowing students to learn through hands-on applications. It begins in high school and continues through a college program in the technology-related area of a student's choice.

Tech Prep is important to businesses in our communities because it is one of the most comprehensive approaches **to broadening the pipeline of future technology workers.** This year, we will have 350 graduates from 24 Tech Prep high school programs.

These students will be prepared for entry-level, technology-related jobs in fields including automotive diagnostics, business, construction, engineering, environmental, computer information, health and agriculture. Students are also prepared to continue on to a two- or four-year technology-related degree in a Tech Prep pathway.

Many students will work while going to school. Those who graduate from our college Tech Prep programs are finding tremendous success in the workplace, commanding top dollar and standing out as valuable workers.

But education can't go it alone. Today, more than ever, we need businesses to help guide and enrich the kinds of learning experiences that make Tech Prep students successful in their courses. We need business partners to help design and update what courses the students study. We look to employers to provide much-needed information about what business and industry requires of its employees.

Many of our business partners hire Tech Prep students and teachers for internships, job shadowing and summer jobs or give them mentoring experiences throughout the school year. Executives and managers have spoken in Tech Prep classrooms and many businesses have provided in-kind donations to support student successes.

I got involved with Tech Prep to be sure my company has a hand in shaping the work force of tomorrow. Plus, we get the first look at the best and brightest employees.

For more information, visit the Tech Prep Web site at www.cscce.edu/techprep.

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