

Talent Development Best Practices from Southwest Indiana

Posted in [BLOG POST \(HTTPS://WWW.CONEXUSINDIANA.COM/CATEGORY/BLOG-POST/\)](https://www.conexusindiana.com/category/blog-post/) by Laura Miller on April 27, 2023



The Value of an Employer’s Commitment to Community

One of the perks of being a statewide, industry-led organization is access. Because our work requires a deep understanding of Indiana’s advanced manufacturing and logistics (AML) landscape, we regularly meet with industry leaders who open their doors to our team and showcase their great work.

Earlier this month, we spent a week in Southwest Indiana doing just that. We toured businesses from Princeton to Evansville to Jasper and discussed technology adoption, supply chain challenges and much more. But one subject that consistently arose was the challenge of attracting, hiring and retaining great talent.

We’ve assembled some key learnings from our visit with Southwest Indiana businesses that are actively improving their talent development practices.

A common theme emerged: an employer’s commitment to community is one of the most valuable talent development tactics. Learn more below:

1. Give your employees access to support their local community and improve employee satisfaction and retention.

With 7,500+ employees in Southwest Indiana, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana (TMMI) exports more cars globally than any other Toyota facility in North America, working with over 30 Tier 1 auto suppliers and deploying more than 2,000 robots. Located in Princeton, Ind., a town of 8,000, the company is committed to

supporting the community it calls home and giving employees opportunities to give back so they can be a catalyst for change. Additionally, TMMI has donated \$37 million to the Southwest Indiana area to help residents gain access to various resources to improve quality of life, including support for the Gibson County Fairgrounds and the 4T Academy.



2. Understand your community’s needs and adapt company policies and practices to better serve current and potential employees.

Commitment to community also means understanding community demographics and looking internally at practices to ensure a welcoming and comfortable environment for all. Like many Indiana communities, the Hispanic population in Dubois County is steadily growing and local employers, Master Brand Cabinets and Jasper Engines, have adapted to meet the needs of Hispanic employees who do not speak English or speak English as a second language. For example, Master Brand recently adjusted its practices to ensure all employee-related materials are available in English and Spanish to meet the needs of current and potential employees.



3. Identify key demographics in your community that are underrepresented in your workforce and create opportunities to engage them specifically.

Neighboring Indiana Furniture in Jasper is focused on increasing the percentage of women who are employed in advanced manufacturing, specifically for roles like plant maintenance where women are



historically less involved. Most recently, the company hired two young women as maintenance apprentices so that they could explore a career they may have otherwise missed. Today, both women are completing a college degree and have committed to return to Indiana Furniture post-graduation to work on the maintenance team.



4. Take ownership in helping to prepare the next generation of talent in your community.

Evansville’s Berry Global manufactures and markets 100,000 plastics products for health, hygiene, retail, food and more. With such a diverse product set comes a diverse, and often high-tech, range of skills required for its workforce. To help prepare the community’s young people for the jobs of the future, Berry Global partners with local high schools, robotics clubs and the Vincennes University Advanced Manufacturing program to offer in- and out-of-classroom educational opportunities.

Similarly, nearby Evansville Vanderburgh Airport Authority has partnered with Indiana State University and Purdue University “flight school” students, giving students the opportunity to problem-solve alongside the Airport Authority staff with case studies of real-world scenarios at the airport.



5. Don't try to do it all alone. Finding and retaining the best talent is hard work.

The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (E-Rep), which fuels economic development in the region, is a prime example of the value of e community-driven partnerships. In 2021, E-Rep was launched, combining three like-minded legacy organizations in the region to represent nine manufacturing intense counties. Today, they partner with similar organizations and city leaders at all levels. While their business model differs from industry, their commitment to community collaboration is a prime example of the benefit of partnering with likeminded organizations to tackle your biggest community-related goals, like talent attraction and retention.

Conexus Indiana is also focused on bridging the talent divide for Indiana AML. We provide countless resources to help prepare Hoosiers for the open positions today and the positions of the future and all the opportunities they afford. Learn more at [conexusindiana.com/activate-talent](http://www.conexusindiana.com/activate-talent) (<http://www.conexusindiana.com/activate-talent>).

Sign up for our newsletter.

Keep in the know about Indiana's AML with our monthly newsletter. You'll be the first to learn about events, programs, breakthroughs, and new tech.

