

Host Toolkit

Northern Colorado Manufacturing Partnership Student Tour Day!



Manufacturing Rocks!

Dear Manufacturing Tour Host:

Thank you for being part of the Northern Colorado (NoCo) Manufacturing Tour Event for STUDENTS! Local school district students will be participating in this event with each student having the opportunity to see two companies.

This event has been designed to expand knowledge about and improve perception of manufacturing careers. It's a chance for students to learn about real career opportunities, training and resources. Students will see for themselves that manufacturing is alive and well in America and that they need skilled employees.

This is your opportunity to:

- **Tell your company's story**
- **Dispel outdated myths about manufacturing**
- **Inspire a new generation of manufacturers**

Our primary goal in working with these young people is to interest them in manufacturing as a field. We hope to build a corps of future candidates to join our companies and grow the manufacturing sector in Colorado. You are a big part of that effort.

A bus will arrive at your facility with about 20 students and at least two chaperones. You'll have an hour and a half with the students. We recommend you start off with a short presentation of about 15 minutes. Feel free to talk about your company's specific personnel and skill needs as well as expected training, classes and career pay expectations. A take-away handout would be great for the students to review on the bus.

You should spend at least 30 minutes of that time on a tour of your shop floor. If you have enough tour guides, plan to break up the group into smaller teams of 8-10. That will be the most effective way for them to walk your floor and learn about your equipment and processes. Meeting young professionals will impress the students, particularly if they are enthusiastic about what they do. Please ensure that all students will be able to hear your tour guide while touring the floor. Safety is always paramount when you have untrained people on the floor. Please keep that in mind when you are designing your tour.

Students will love any hands-on experience you can give them. If they can build product or operate equipment, we guarantee it will stay in their minds forever. For example, we've had a company give the students a schematic drawing of a heat exchanger and all of the pieces, and had them put it together while being timed. After 'round 1', they discussed how this could have been done faster (lean principles), and then they did it again.

We will be giving the kids an evaluation of the tours. When we have summarized the feedback, we will give you a copy of the report.

Thank you for your participation in what we hope is a regular event!
The Northern Colorado Manufacturing Partnership

Organizing and Planning a Facility Tour

- Put together an internal planning group, if necessary
- Research talking points, your company story, current events, etc.
- Establish a welcoming area
- Create name badges for staff involved
- Craft welcome and introduction
- Determine required safety equipment
- Craft tour script and brief tour guides
- Prepare a one-page information sheet for students

Conducting a Facility Tour

The question is: What is your story and how can you make it memorable?

Put up a welcome sign. This is important both literally and figuratively. Put a sign on the door, shake hands with visitors, thank them for coming, and demonstrate your enthusiasm

for the opportunity you have to share your company's information with them. Have safety equipment ready in the welcome area and/or conference room.

Tips for effectively communicating with students:

- **Give them a reason to listen.** Rather than starting your story with dry historical information, "ABC Company opened in 1922 and has operated out of three different locations," hook your visitors right at the start with an interesting anecdote. Talk directly to them. For example, "Joe and Angela Johnson opened the doors back in 1922. He was 23; she was 19. They'd been married for two weeks and this was their American Dream..." If you're not sure what your "hook" is, ask yourself: How did your company get started? Who started it? What challenges have you overcome? What successes stand out? Is there something about your company that might surprise people?
- **Provide advice about careers** that your company offers, the type of training and educational coursework you seek when hiring employees. No better time to offer comments about opportunities available to dedicated workers with a professional attitude. If there are specific kinds of training or skills that you need and find it hard to hire, let them know.
- **Be proud and prepared.** Know what you want to say and how you want to say it. No matter how long you've been with the company, it helps to plan ahead. Make notes about what you want to say – from key points to fun anecdotes. How you tell the story also matters. When you look and sound proud, that's the positive image visitors will take away. Make eye contact and smile!
- **Back up your stories with facts.** Know your numbers. Anecdotes backed up by figures create a strong impression. If your company employs 200 talented people and the average employee has worked at the facility for 14 years, that tells people something. While visitors may not remember the numbers, they will remember what those numbers mean – professionals who work at your company, stay with your company.
- **Show and tell.** When you read a magazine or newspaper, photographs capture your eye. Think of your plant as a photograph for your story. Point out interesting equipment and/or interesting people. Perhaps there's a safety feature no one would notice, but it makes a huge difference. Perhaps there's a third-generation employee on the floor. Show visitors why your facility is special.
- **You can't, and shouldn't, show everything.** Pick a few stops that represent key stages in the production process and allow you to demonstrate the flow of product through the shop. Where will visitors get the best view? Can they hear you? Which of your team members are the most enthusiastic about their work?

- **Show off your machines.** Let the students see how your machinery works, how different items are put together, what new technologies are being used and your workers' overall productivity.
- **Let your visitors be active participants.** Have guests do something “physical,” such as run a machine, examine your product or look at a computer screen. You could even have them build something multiple times, timing the rounds and providing feedback on manufacturing techniques between each round. These students have an interest and want to touch things!
- **Wrap up on a positive note.** It's important to give your visitors a chance to ask questions. However, people often hesitate to ask the first question. If no one raises a hand, take the lead: “I know one of the questions we're often asked is, “How long does it take to produce ...?” Ask the question and answer it. Or, ask them a question, “What surprised you most about our company?” “Which machine looked most interesting?” You will be pleasantly surprised with the questions and feedback from the students.

