

# Precision Machining Industry: Rebuilding Our Bench

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Our management teams are effectively associating to solve the skills gap issue in their shops. It is a struggle to find employees with the skills needed to add value in our precision machining shops. Quality demands have increased and technology continues to improve, raising the bar for skills needed. Our nation's workforce systems and educational systems have not kept up with the real market demand for people with skills, who can help

**“Our industry is addressing the Skills Gap by taking positive steps to increase employee knowledge and engage talented people seeking well-paying careers.”**

companies grow and stay globally competitive. An abundance of college graduates with no real skills languish in unemployment and underemployment, 53 percent of recent college graduates, according to *The Atlantic*. The member companies of the PMPA are doing something about it.

## Rebuilding Our Bench

I'm not a sports guy, but when a team has a lot of graduating seniors, the coaches inevitably talk about rebuilding their bench. At our recent National Technical Conference



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in Indianapolis, almost one third of the attendees were first timers. They may have had a couple of years in the shop, maybe more, but they were attending their first technical conference to learn new things, meet new people and see new technologies and tools on display by PMPA technical members. All attendees earned 1.1 CEU credits for their participation at this National Technical Conference, which is a great start toward ultimate PMPA CEU accreditation for professional knowledge in precision machining.

This influx of new talent into technical networking will yield a host of improvements as attendees take the lessons learned and implement them in their shops. Functional Gage Design by Gary Griffith was one of the highest-rated technical sessions with 41 attendees. A session

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on shop energy and sustainability was another technical-focus program with 82 attendees. Sessions on SPC and two cam workshops also attracted 60 attendees. These sessions covered the fundamentals of our industry. But two sessions dealing with difficult-to-machine materials and chatter during machining attracted attentive audiences of 135 people wanting to learn more. These issues are faced by all shops, and the attendees in these sessions left with a better understanding of issues and a wealth of possible solutions.

Sessions on managing change and how to implement change were also highly attended and highly ranked. While our NTC is a *technical* conference, it provided material for supervisors and quality personnel to improve their skills and ability to add value on the job.

140 PMPA member companies invested in their bench by providing new information to more than 350 of their skilled employees at the National Technical Conference.

### Farm Team

Where do you find new talent for your bench? If shops have learned anything over the years, it is that there are not a heck of a lot of free agents out there, and they aren't necessarily in our zip codes. PMPA members have been instrumental in supporting many national efforts to attract people to consider careers in advanced manufacturing.

- **Manufacturing Day:** PMPA participating companies distributed more than 1,000 USB drives containing materials and videos promoting career pathways and training in manufacturing.
- **Comprehensive Training Database:** PMPA maintains a comprehensive, online database by state where people can find precision machining training.
- **Right Skills Now:** PMPA continues to help schools establish Right Skills Now programs to help otherwise qual-



ified people gain the skills to jump start their careers and education through nationally recognized credentials and practical training.

- **Veteran Programs:** PMPA member companies have also supported Workshops for Warriors and other programs aimed at increasing employment opportunities for returning veterans.

PMPA members realize that they are facing a steady loss of talent as their most senior workers retire. They are doubling down with a number of efforts through the association; such as sending up and comers to the National Technical Conference, supporting continuing educational unit programs and actively reaching out to bring new talent into our shops.

We're rebuilding our bench. And we're excited about it. What are *you* doing to solve your bench problem?

