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PRESS RELEASE

Work Skills 101 Program Transforms the Workforce Now

MDI expands soft skills training program to Twin Cities in support of regional workforce development.

MINNEAPOLIS, November 6, 2017 – Research conducted by the Stanford Research Institute International and the Carnegie Melon Foundation, found that 75% of long-term job success depends on ‘people skills’ or ‘soft skills’, while only 25% on technical knowledge. Understanding the importance of these skills and how they contribute to regional workforce development has led MDI to pioneer Work Skills 101.

With funding from the State of Minnesota, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Work Skills 101 launched early 2017 in Cohasset, MN. After the inaugural event, MDI leadership recognized the advantages of honing soft skills, and directed that the program be offered at additional locations in Hibbing, and now in Minneapolis. High demand has an additional four classes on the books for 2018.

“Work Skills 101 and soft skill development is a great investment in our employees, gives them a clearer sense of high standards, and helps them grow as individuals which in turn helps MDI’s business performance,” says Peter McDermott, MDI President and CEO. “There is ‘a direct line of sight’ between development of our employees’ soft skills and MDI’s mission.”

A celebration was held at the MDI Minneapolis facility on Monday, November 6, to recognize nine employees for their completion of Work Skills 101.

“The life-long skills that each individual explained they had developed and the confidence they displayed in making their individual presentations not only challenges the inaccurate and unfair stereotypes that too many people have of individuals with disabilities,” says Donovan W. Frank, United States District Judge, who was in attendance at the Minneapolis celebration. “But the skills they have and the confidence they have shown will promote integration into the community, as well as increase their employment opportunities within their respective communities.”

Work Skills 101 focuses on the soft skills in top-demand, such as:

- Professional Development: communication, teamwork, attendance, attitude, leadership, wellness, peer interactions, coping mechanisms
- Personal Development: communication, leadership/supervisions, teamwork, attendance, attitude

Work Skills 101 consists of pre- and post-assessments of participants as well as structured learning about professional and life skills. The program is strengths-based and customized for each participant, so they have the opportunity to focus on work and goals for self-improvement or career advancement. Fitting to MDI’s mission, the classes are offered to and attended by employees with and without disabilities learning side-by-side.

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“When someone improves or increases their soft skills, there are more options of better jobs and better wages available, ultimately allowing for employees to be self-sustaining with less reliance on government benefits,” said Jeanne Eglinton, Director of Employee Services. “The future is enhanced by our ability to provide the next generation of workers with what they need to be successful in school and in life and to support a dynamic workforce.”

Work Skills 101 aligns with statewide workforce development efforts. As increasing numbers of baby boomers age out of the workforce, new jobs open up requiring higher levels of soft skills and training, it’s incumbent upon stakeholders, such as MDI, to prepare for this transition by encouraging and nurturing all workers. Work Skills 101 helps build a new pathway for individuals, with and without disabilities, to improve their skills and move ahead in the workplace, benefiting the individual, the employer and the community.

Captions

General, During a November 6 event in Minneapolis, MDI recognized nine new graduates of the Work Skills 101 training program and presented them with certificates of completion. The graduates will be able to use their certificates and strengthened professional skills to improve and advance in their chosen lines of work.

Janna Langer, MDI Employment Support Specialist, who spends time coaching staff, “The best word I can use to describe what is happening is ‘empowerment’. But after this training, I am starting to see employees manage some of these issues on their own. I just sit back and smile at how well this program has been received and the amount of learning I see occurring around me.”

Ron Cook, Diagnosed with a cognitive disorder, ADHD and Organic Personality Disorder, Ron has worked for MDI periodically for 18 years. His job at MDI, along with classes like Work Skills 101, have given him the opportunity to increase his professional and social skills. He can now support himself and feels that he has a purpose.

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About MDI

MDI is a leader in manufacturing corrugated standard and custom plastic packaging solutions, production assembly, and environmental services. Through a Social Enterprise model, MDI creates self-sufficiency by providing meaningful work in an inclusive environment, with nearly half of the workforce comprised of people with disabilities. Headquartered in the Twin Cities, with additional locations in Hibbing, Grand Rapids, and Cohasset, MDI offers an unparalleled customer experience, while providing high quality products and services to businesses and organizations.

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