Helping your PT/MC company by providing the next generation of resources to support workforce recruitment and retention plans.
This guide will assist you in planning a company tour for members of your community such as school groups, potential employees and the general population.

The benefits to your company in offering a company tour are many:
• Raise your company’s profile within the community, especially among job seekers.
• Build relationships with parents and educators who influence young people in career decisions.
• Start your “future employee candidate” list from visiting students who show interest in your company.

What kind of preparations do I need to make before a tour?

A few weeks or days before your company tour:
• Prepare for a tour the same way you would prepare to invite guests to your home. Catch up on general housekeeping both inside and outside of your facility to make sure all is clean and neat. If something is broken, fix it or remove it before the tour. Make the best impression for your visitors. Think of them as your future employee recruits and/or customers.
• Students love giveaways. Plan to give a small token of your appreciation for their visit (preferably with your company name and/or logo prominently displayed).
• Food always goes over well for students as well as adults. If you will be providing breakfast, lunch or a snack, order ahead of time.
• Confirm with the group details like arrival time, parking suggestions, tour length, any special requirements (e.g., wear closed toe shoes and long pants).
• If hard hats or safety glasses are needed, make sure to have enough on hand for everyone on the tour.
• Think about how people will be moving around the facility. Is it all under one roof or do they need to travel from one building to another? How will you accomplish this for a group of people? Can they walk or do you need transportation? Is everyone in the group capable of making it up and down steep ramps, stairways or ladders?

On the day of your company tour:
• Depending on your company procedures, you may need to have a sign-in sheet. This is also a great way to collect names and contact information for follow-up if you find a potential candidate you’d like to talk with later.
• If you will be taking the tour to a part of your facility where safety equipment is required, make sure you have it readily available for everyone.
• Be sure to have a safe place to stash jewelry, coats and other personal belongings, just in case your visitors need to remove these items before touring your facility.

Pre-tour briefing for visitors:
Before starting the tour, gather everyone together and give a brief presentation.
If you have a short video on your company, play it for the guests.

Explain what your company does, what they are going to see (in order of the tour, if possible), and who they may meet (Joe, our warehouse supervisor).

Share the story of your own career path.
- Tell them how you started in the field of Power Transmission/Motion Control (PT/MC) and how you achieved your level of success.
- Be sure to explain what PT/MC is and position it as a rewarding career choice. If you have a customer with a process or product of particular interest to your audience (e.g., you install conveyor belts used by the local soft drink bottling plant) you can talk about your work there, tell their story too.

- The more information you can give about the work you do for recognizable products and customers, the more your audience will be able to relate and understand the importance your organization plays in the supply chain.
- Help your audience understand how PT/MC touches every aspect of their lives, even though they might not be aware of the field.

Tip from Jody: Advise employees to share their job descriptions with visitors, especially students.

Tip from Jay: Let employees know a member of the tour might ask any employee a question.

Tip from Van Meter: Prep employees ahead of time – provide everyone with a list of visitors’ names, information on the company or organization, and reason for the tour.

- If you require safety goggles or other safety equipment, talk about why it is important everyone is protected and also make sure they follow any other safety rules your facility requires (standing clear of fork lift lanes, perhaps?).
- Explain why closed toe shoes or long pants might be required.

Talk about plant safety.
- If you require safety goggles or other safety equipment, talk about why it is important everyone is protected and also make sure they follow any other safety rules your facility requires (standing clear of fork lift lanes, perhaps?).
- Explain why closed toe shoes or long pants might be required.
Be sure to communicate whether photography and note-taking is allowed.

- If you don’t allow this at your facility or feel that it might compromise visitor safety, remind them they can take notes and ask questions during the wrap-up portion or contact you later if they need to know something.

- You might want to prepare a fact sheet to hand out after the tour to define industry terms like inventory, automation, warehousing, logistics and more.

During the tour:

As you lead the tour through your facility, think about how an audience with little experience in PT/MC will be viewing the place. **Point out company culture touchstones such as signage and employee gathering places.** Do you have an employee softball team? How did they do last year? Do some of the employees shoot hoops during lunch break? Show how working at your company can be fun and builds camaraderie among coworkers.

Post-tour:

When the tour is over, bring them back together and conduct a de-briefing. Ask your guests if they have any questions now that the tour is finished. Do a brief wrap-up of what they saw. Ask them questions to gauge what they learned. For example, ask what their favorite part of the tour was. Extend an invitation to anyone who wants to learn more to set up an informational interview or email you with

Explain the daily schedule. Pepper your tour with fun facts: “We turn over our entire inventory three times per year on average.”

Photo courtesy of Apex Industrial Automation, LLC
any questions they have later. Give them your business card along with the giveaways you have prepared in advance for them.

Offering company tours is a great way to enhance public relations. Company tours not only build relationships with members of the community who may help your business be more successful, but also help to raise awareness of the field of PT/MC.

Tip from Jody: I usually follow up with an email to the chaperones thanking them for letting us share our business model with their students.

Tip from Jay: Send a thank you email to the instructor who brought the class.

Photo courtesy of Apex Industrial Automation, LLC
FAQs:

What kind of questions do you get from the participants?

Questions run the gamut, depending on the group.

**Jay:** Students may want to know about the level of education you need for an entry level position in PT/MC. They are also curious about the products and where and how they are used.

Some teachers help prepare their students before the tour by discussing the tour in class. Others may turn the field trip into an assignment of sorts and require students to find out certain facts about the company such as when the business started, what kind of technology is used, etc.

**Van Meter:** Knowing your audience is important prior to giving the tours. Because Van Meter is employee-owned, we tend to get questions about company culture as well as about products, inventory, delivery, history of the company and people. Knowing your audience will help you prepare for questions.

**Jody:** Here are some examples of real questions asked by students:

- What’s a typical day like at your company?
- What level of education is required to begin a career in industrial distribution?
- Do I need to go to college to be able to work here?
- Do you work weekends?
- How do I know if I qualify to get a job here?
- How did you learn so much about parts inside plants?

Typically, tour groups are curious to know about the products inventoried. Provide some examples of how specific parts are used by your customers and how the parts work. Questions relating to logistics and human resources, such as salary and benefits, also come up when a tour group is comprised of potential job-seekers. Two questions that top the list at student career fairs are: “How much money do you make?” and “What kind of car do you drive?”

Do you provide any refreshments or giveaways?

**Van Meter:** Everyone loves food and freebies. If you don’t have a place to have a meal, you can offer coffee or bottled water and cookies. We usually provide lunch and sit with those touring to answer questions and discuss various topics.

**Jody:** If you have promotional items with your company name or logo on them, whatever it is, the students LOVE these things. It also gets your company name out in front of more than just the students that complete the tour. Plus, it helps them remember your company when they are ready to find employment.

**Jay:** We give out giveaways. We also provide a flyer on the company that explains the various job opportunities within Motion Industries.

What do you show them during the tour (counter sales, warehouse, offices)?

**There is no right or wrong way to offer a tour.**

Where you start may be determined by the layout of your facility.

**Jay:** We start in the conference room where I introduce myself and provide a short description of Motion Industries Inc. I follow that with a 90-second video on
the company that goes into further detail about the work done. From there, I’ll walk them through the customer service and accounting areas of the office and explain what goes on in these areas. Then we move to the warehouse where more explanation is provided. Shipping and receiving is next on the tour and then we finish up at the sales counter where I’ll explain about walk-in customers and phone calls. Students are encouraged to ask questions of the people we meet along the way.

**Jody:** I start by introducing guests to the staff and then move to the inside sales area where tour participants can ask questions of the employees. Next I’ll move to the outside sales area and the warehouse. Our tour includes spending time talking with the warehouse employees. Students like to get involved with some kind of hands-on activity so our warehouse manager will give the students some pick tickets to pull parts. I’ll show them how to find bin locations, pull the parts and where to take them for packing and shipping. If there’s time, I’ll have them pack up some parts. They seem to really enjoy the hands-on experience. I also show them how to put away parts that were received or returned so the inventory is in the right spot for the next order.

**Van Meter:** Each tour schedule and layout depends on the group coming. At Van Meter, first we’ll show guests the whole service center which includes sales, product divisions and corporate functions. Then we’ll go to the counter, wire and distribution center. How much time we spend in any area will depend on the interests of the tour participants. We reach out prior to the tour to understand their interests before they arrive and hone in on what we think they would want to know most about. We have stopping points throughout the tour to talk to certain departments, cultural pieces, stories and solutions we can provide.

**What do visitors like the best?**

Every visitor to your facility will have a favorite part of the tour, depending upon their own individual situation and interests.

**Van Meter:** Our guests comment on the feeling they get when they walk in the door and feel the culture. Everyone they run into is friendly, willing to help and excited to talk about the company. The cultural pieces are always the ones that stand out.

**Jody:** They like the hands-on activity, but I’m not honestly sure what they like best. It is a tie between the cookies and the hands-on parts pulling.

**Jay:** I think they enjoy learning about how distributors operate and how we fit into the bigger economy in this area of the country.

**How long does the tour last?**

All agree the length of your tour should depend on your guests. Student tours should probably be no more than an hour and a half. Teachers must account for student travel times and their school schedule. Tours for customer groups or members of the community could extend longer, depending on the guests.

Be sure to discuss the tour length ahead of schedule with the group’s leader/planner so there are no surprises. Try to be flexible during the tour. If you find your guests become interested in one topic or another during the tour, let them linger there a little longer and cut the next part a little shorter. Always have an exit plan in mind, in case things need to wrap up quickly.
What do you like best about giving a student tour?

Jay: I enjoy talking about our business, the sorts of customers we serve, the suppliers we represent and how no two days are ever alike. And I enjoy answering their questions and interacting with them.

Jody: I like sharing the BDI story and answering students’ questions the best. It’s fun to see their faces light up when I tell them one of our larger customers makes french fries for McDonald’s and how it is our responsibility to keep their conveyors up and running. They can really relate. The kids really like enthusiasm. They get excited to hear about our business because it is so specialized and they have never been introduced to it before. So if you show a passion for what you do, it rubs off onto them.

Van Meter: Our job is all about people. Giving a tour is a great way to show what we love about our company. Whether the tour is for a customer, prospective employee, vendor, college or non-profit, we like to help others know why our company is special and how we can provide them everything they need to succeed.

How can I organize and offer a tour with a school in my area?

If you are interested in offering a school tour, contact us to help. At absolutely no cost to you, we make contact with schools in your area to discover interested teachers and/or “right fit” programs that could benefit from a tour. Then, we help you determine the time/schedule that works best for you. Generally with school tours, the school/instructor is responsible for transportation and other details. All you need to do is welcome your tour group and guide the tour.

We will uncover as much information as possible in advance of the tour to help you plan. This includes name and contact information, student grade level and interest, and available tour schedule times. Generally, once the tour day and time is set, we will connect teacher and tour guide for any last minute details and arrangements.

When is the best time to conduct a tour?

Events such as National Manufacturing Day (the first Friday of October) present a golden opportunity to showcase your facility to your community, but company tours can be offered any time of the year. Student tours tend to be conducted in fall and spring.

Where Can I Learn More?

PT WORK Force an initiative of the PTDA Foundation
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