

Speaker 1 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 1 00:00:20 Creativity is the mother of invention, so when a labor shortage forces us to get creative, we do exactly that. Joining us today is Arianne Spencer, Training Specialist for PGT, and Arianne helps oversee a partnership called Pathways to PGTI. This program is a collaborative effort with a local high school that allows students to explore what working for a manufacturer looks like. For our dealers, this could spark a similar partnership with your local high school as well. We also hear from 2 of our interns who were right out of high school and participated in our summer 2021 internship program, Ben Byrd and Andrew Mierau.

Speaker 2 00:00:55 Oh, so I am Ben Byrd, and I'm from Taylor University, which is up in Indiana. I'm a marketing and management major at my school. And for me, I chose this, I came to PGT, just because I really wanted to get experience in supply chain. It was all new to me. I have no prior industry experience. So this is my first internship. So it was really good for me to get some hands-on work of learning about what supply chain is and how the process works. I can kind of figure out what area of supply chain I would really want to pursue.

Speaker 1 00:01:24 And that's not an easy space right now. Supply chain is the beast of all things right now. Like how do you get what you need? Uh, you definitely get that supply-demand. You see how those statistics classes and those algebra classes and those economics classes, how those all kind of come into the real world scenarios, right?

Speaker 2 00:01:43 Yeah, no, it's been really good. I'm pretty much just, you know, again, thrown straight in with my work. So it's been really fun to work alongside the supply chain team. I got to meet almost everybody involved with supply chain. So I was really just kind of blessed this opportunity just to be able to spend time with every individual person, pretty much in the office, get to know them, get to know their work. So that way I can better understand how PGT works and what a supply chain process like truly looks like.

Speaker 1 00:02:09 So good morning, we are here on the Clear Impact Podcast and we are in a series called workforce of tomorrow. And we're talking to our dealer audience today about how are they going to fill the open positions? Maybe they don't have any open positions today, but maybe in a couple of years that guy's going to retire or that lady's going to have a baby and not come back or whatever the thing is. I mean, business is booming. We are swamped. The construction trades are just buried alive with so much work. We can't even handle it. So if we had more people, we could do more work. And so how do we get more people that are trained? Well, all the people who are trained are working. So how do we get people who aren't trained, trained? That's where PGTI University comes in small plug for our venue and platform and all of our instructor led classes and e-learning classes and webinar classes. But one of the things that I like to do with this podcast is leverage some of the in-house expertise to help our dealers. And one of the things that our guest today has done is kind of started a thing with high schools. So I want to introduce Arianne Spencer. Welcome. Thank you. Arianne, tell us what your job is here and like a little bit about what you're up to with, it's pathways to PGT?

Speaker 3 00:03:26 Yeah, so it's pathway to PGT, or PGTI. So I'm the training specialist here at PGT. So a lot of the onboarding experience for the new hires and anything pretty much that has any education for our internal employees are getting internal employees in. And, uh, so the Pathways to

PGTI was a project that was started with Rachel Evans, working with the Sarasota County School Board and trying to partner to see how they could help us and how we can help them. And so after months of collaboration and kind of working on a plan, Rachel came to me and was like, let's put together a syllabus for this program and let's look at what this is going to look like for us. So with the help of Yusi Barrios, who's my direct supervisor, we sat down and put our heads together and came up with this, not to pat ourselves on the back, but really great syllabus of material, covering four major areas that are kind of almost dying trades in today's, I guess, generation, from welding and these things that are just not as popular as they once were. But these kids are super interested in the things that weren't as popular as they once were.

Speaker 3 00:04:33 We look at today's fashion and it's a flashback of my nineties childhood.

Speaker 1 00:04:38 Right?

Speaker 3 00:04:39 So we put the syllabus and, and worked with the school board. And we've got six students in right now. And they're rotating through these skilled trades with the supervision of our subject matter experts in the field and it's going great. The feedback has been really nice. The students are super engaged and we're going to be doing it for the entire 2021 - 2022 school year. And looking forward to doing it again every school year after that.

Speaker 1 00:05:04 Wow. So what does that look like for a student? So they go to school until what, like two in the afternoon or one in the afternoon, and then they come here and we let them stand next to somebody that knows what they're doing. And they learn?

Speaker 3 00:05:18 Pretty much, so they report to campus every day that there's a scheduled school day at one o'clock. So they meet their leaders at their perspective, you know, departments, and they are getting hands-on exposure with a mentor, standing with them throughout the process. So they are, they've always got a coach there, someone helping them understand what they're focusing on that week and, allowing them to kind of get to play with that a little bit. You know, there's several different kinds of learners, whether you're auditory, you're visual, or you're someone who's kinesthetic, you need to get your hands on it. And these leaders are able to tap into all of those components. So the students, I talked to Patrick Mattola, who is over the welding division of the program, and he's like, they're welding, they're there with their mentor and they're welding. And so it's really nice to hear that they're giving the students the opportunity to actually do these things. And they're not just putting them on the sidelines and saying here, watch me. They're saying here, let's do this together.

Speaker 1 00:06:19 Wow. That's awesome. Are they getting school credit or is this just completely voluntary for them?

Speaker 3 00:06:24 So it's voluntary for them, but they're also, it's playing into their school credits. So guidance counselors obviously are talking to them about what's life like after high school, and for a lot of students, college isn't what they want to do, or they want to take a break or, you know, take that swing year. And so there's guidance counselors (saying) like here's a great program that we're involved with. So they have that relationship with their guidance counselor, the guidance counselor has a relationship with the superintendent, who we have a relationship with. So we're helping them gauge the students' interest in what's going to happen after school, as far as like school credits and that stuff. We have progress reports that the leaders are actually using during their time here. And then we take those

progress reports and we're sending them back to the school for them to kind of review and see where the student's interest is really kind of veering towards. So they can work with the student more one-on-one in school, to what's going to happen after they're finished with school.

Speaker 1 00:07:21 So they're getting a kind of a cross sampling of a bunch of different things, not just one specific thing, because I think that's one of the things that's really hard for kids at that age bracket, they feel like they have to drill down into one choice and one path. Um, I think that's really cool to give them some exposure. And I think so for a dealer who would be trying to set that up, that would be a good template for them to kind of consider like, let them see the various components of what your business has to offer. So not just stick them in a warehouse and make them rearrange things, or have them cleaning the lobby or whatever, but give them some real exposure to the different components and the different facets of their business so that they can have a more well-rounded experience. Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:08:04 I think we all still questioned like what we're going to be when we grow up.

Speaker 1 00:08:07 Right? Yeah. I still don't know.

Speaker 3 00:08:09 And it's completely normal. And there is this caveat behind your senior year of school and what's next and what are you going to do for the rest of your life? And there's a lot of pressure there. And one thing I really love about what we're doing is like you said, we're letting them play in different fields. We're letting them experience different areas of our market and seeing what works for them, what doesn't, and letting them have that "aha" moment too. I think this, my input, what I want to do when I'm done with school. And we've had students, already, like in the tool room, like, oh my gosh, like, this is what I wanna do. And I'm like, well, you know, it is your first semester. Like, it's your only one you've done yet. Let's go and play in the other departments and see if at the end of the year, is that really where your calling is still at? And if the case let's talk about what life looks like here for PGT, for you after this program is done for you.

Speaker 1 00:09:00 Right. Because we need to see how you're performing and how well you're catching on before we can commit to hiring someone just because they come through the program, doesn't guarantee a job afterwards. Exactly. But it's a great process. I love that. What are some other things that, I mean, other than we're giving them a broad base of exposure, what are a couple of other things that a dealer should keep in mind when they're hiring an older teen? Like that's a different age bracket. And so what are some things that would be helpful for them to keep in mind?

Speaker 3 00:09:30 I definitely think with the younger generation, sometimes us older folk, if you will, we have that, that mentality...

Speaker 1 00:09:37 More mature. Yes. The more mature, yes.

Speaker 3 00:09:40 I like that much better. Um, and it's crazy, as having three kids of my own, ranging from 8 to almost 22, to seeing these kids specifically in our program, how engaged they are, how polite they are, their mannerisms, like I'm blown away. Every time I hear like, yes, ma'am, I'm like, oh, no, like, thank you. I appreciate that. But not necessary. One thing that I can definitely say that I think maybe some of these older teens are not getting the benefit of, is what they really are capable of. Especially coming out of high school, they're eager, they're ready to hit the workforce. I think we can all remember when we were, you know, 9, 10, 11 years old. Can't like not being able to wait until we could grow up. And they're at that age where it's time, like it's time to grow up, and they're so ready to hit the

workforce. So not only have I seen that, they're very eager, but they also have this very interesting vision. And so I think for a dealer, where they're looking for like a new, innovative idea, that's where these students, where these older teens, I think would play a big part in someone's business, and helping them come up with new, innovative ideas and new approaches. And I just think that that's so cool, especially having experienced one-on-ones with some of our current students in the program.

Speaker 1 00:11:01 So don't underestimate them.

Speaker 3 00:11:03 Yeah. 100% do not underestimate them, because they are coming with a cause. Okay.

Speaker 1 00:11:09 I love that. Um, what kinds of work and, you know, air quotes, what kinds of work could a dealer reasonably expect for someone at this age? \

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Speaker 4 00:11:38 Um, one of the biggest things that I took away from this was just working instead of on one specific project, kind of working on various smaller projects. I think just widened my insight. And I was able to meet so many different people from so many different departments, people from engineering and maintenance and facilities and just all across the board. And I think I was able to have a better look into what goes on every day here and what we could do to improve it.

Speaker 1 00:12:06 Right. And sometimes it's really fun just to be the one with fresh eyes, you know, because things become familiar and then you don't really see it anymore. And then somebody comes in brand new and they're like, how come you put that over there? Why don't you put that there instead? And it'd be like, oh

Speaker 5 00:12:21 Right, you get into the same routine of things after you do it for awhile, but bringing in a new perspective with new energy and everything, it's always a good thing.

Speaker 1 00:12:28 I agree.

Speaker 1 00:12:31 Um, what kinds of work in, you know, air quotes? What kinds of work could a dealer reasonably expect for someone at this age? I mean, they're under 18. So like, I don't know all of the HR rules and regulations that apply in those spaces, but I mean, are they going to be able to work? Like pretend a dealer wants to hire somebody for the summer, right. Hey, my son wants to, or my daughter wants to get involved and they need a summer job. Can you expect a 40 hour workweek from a teen? Can you expect them to be at there at seven in the morning? Like what are some reasonable expectations that a dealer can have for this age group?

Speaker 3 00:13:07 So I definitely say, especially for a student who's still in school, as you mentioned, most of our students are not 18 yet, but are turning 18 before the end of this program, which is why we've already spoken with a couple of them about life after the program, because they'll be able to come back as a PGT full-time employee if that's something they're interested in. But someone who is, you know, in the summer and it's still school time, um, legally there's some hours that they're not allowed to work over long periods of time they're not allowed to work in a day. So being able to really gauge what their legal capabilities are first, I think is obviously most important for a dealer. Um, and that

would depend on, I guess, the, the market, what state they're in. Cause I know state statutes are different, but being able to teach them what they need to know in order to service or help in that business.

Speaker 3 00:13:54 And then obviously having somebody who could still devote themselves as a mentor. So I don't wanna use the word handholding, because obviously they need them to be able to help. And if you're taking somebody away from their current job to focus on a student, sometimes it could feel like it's slowing you down. But like I said, with these students being so ready to be engaged and to learn, and they, they don't want you to hold their hand, they want to be able to do it themselves. So being able to, just to give them the components you need for them to do the basics, I think that that's going to be the strong suit for the dealer to really take advantage of that moment, that teaching moment, because they are a sponge. Whatever you want them to know, teach them, they'll do it.

Speaker 1 00:14:34 Oh, awesome. Okay. How do you evaluate whether the experience was a success? They keep showing up, that's one measure, I suppose, but how would you evaluate, would you treat them just like any other employee with, you know, a certain metric or like how would a dealer evaluate whether or not that experience was a success?

Speaker 3 00:14:53 Right. So as I mentioned, we're doing the progress report. So the leader is keeping track of when they're coming in, if they're late, if they're on time, et cetera. And then they track their strong and weak suits in this proper support, it's got a series of, this is what they're good at. This is what they need to work on. This is their interest, this is their disinterest. And then there's feedback areas for both parties to say, like, I think they'd be really great here, or I think they use more development and then for the students input, right? Cause it's very easy at that age for someone to tell you to do something and just do it because you feel like you have to, but the student gets a say in it too. They get to say, you know what, maybe this program isn't for me, maybe, maybe I really need to focus on my academics more, or I really did like this department or this team or this role.

Speaker 3 00:15:36 So once we get to all sit down and all have that touch point, and I have touch points with both the leaders that are involved and the students, the students have my phone number, they'll text me and we have that open communication. So I think that's the most important point for being able to gauge, I guess, pretty much where they're at in the program or where they could be at, in with you know, a dealer, if that would the case be, is that communication being able to have those honest conversations to gauge how they're doing.

Speaker 1 00:16:06 Okay. They should probably have someone who's not their direct report as an ally or kind of the person to be a little bit more objective about what's happening. Um, and not just the direct report, like that could get tricky,

Speaker 3 00:16:20 Right? So then that's aware obviously their guidance counselor and their teachers with the schools come in a little bit too, which again, that's somebody that, that is trying to help them find themselves, I guess you could say. So between myself, between their leader, between Rachel Evans and their guidance counselor and Tripp Jennings, which is the Superintendent over there for Sarasota County, having all of these people kind of come together and view that content, view that feedback and be able to go back to the student and their parent obviously, and discuss like next steps or if it's working for us not working. So there's cooks in the kitchen and every one of us are playing a significant role to the success of this program.

Speaker 1 00:17:02 That's amazing. I love that we're thinking ahead and trying to help forge, you know, the next generation, because I mean, that's really where it's at. I mean, you have to, to train up the next generation or there's not going to be anybody here to work.

Speaker 3 00:17:16 Exactly.

Speaker 1 00:17:17 I mean, we can't all work in fast food and we can't all be teachers and we can't all be fireman, you know, somebody has to build windows.

Speaker 3 00:17:24 Yeah, for sure.

Speaker 1 00:17:26 I mean then once they're built, somebody has to know how to install them properly. And so, you know, everybody has to, has to keep moving and keep going and population, at least in our state is not slowing down at all.

Speaker 3 00:17:38 Not at all.

Speaker 1 00:17:38 So what would the next step be for a dealer if they wanted to bring in a high school student?

Speaker 3 00:17:46 I would say if they're trying to work with high school students, obviously we would make a good bridge for them with the relationships we've built with the school board. Um, but I would say probably working with the district directly, would be my recommendation because they can give the specifics of what they're looking for, and kind of let the school board gauge their audience, and do like they did for us and the pathway program, really kind of getting out there and getting their staff educated on the why, and the how, and what the next steps were going to be for us moving forward with the program. And then the guidance counselors and teachers were able to say, hey, I have a student that I think would be really interested in this, and kind of offer them up if you will make that recommendation. And I think that that's how and why we got to where we're at so far with the Pathways to PGTI because of the relationship that we've been able to make with the schools. So I would definitely recommend not being afraid to reach out and make that relationship happen, to get the audience that you're looking for to come and work for you.

Speaker 1 00:18:47 Another question are the students paid?

Speaker 3 00:18:50 They are not paid because it is during working hours. So it's not a true OJT. Okay. We're not by any means calling it that either. Right. Um, so it's just, it's just a program of what she gets some out of school an hour or so earlier. And they come and hang out with us for an hour and 15 minutes and get some real education time out of it.

Speaker 1 00:19:11 Okay. Other schools probably do have an OJT program that they could maybe tap into that, if they didn't want to reinvent the wheel. We just decided to kind of do our own thing because we're a large company. Obviously we can do things that smaller companies cannot. Absolutely. So for dealer or distributor who are trying to build their workforce, they could certainly get in touch with their local school district and find out like, how do we partner to get some kids in here and give them some real life experience and maybe build our labor pool from a younger space.

Speaker 3 00:19:40 Yeah, for sure.

Speaker 1 00:19:41 Okay. I love stories. Do you have any stories, any memorable moments about working with an intern?

Speaker 3 00:19:47 Yeah. Morgan Lingle is an intern that we had, who is now a full-time employee.

Speaker 1 00:19:52 She's in one of our episodes for this series.

Speaker 3 00:19:54 I love her and we work in the same office. She's my desk partner seeing her blossom right before my eyes from going from intern to employee, has been one of the most joyous, I think, experiences. Just because again, you watch somebody who comes in hot out of school, you know, with zero experience, pretty much, in the professional field. And she is rocking in recruiting right now, like recruiting this year and getting all of these people that we've had join us here at PGTI onboard successfully. So every time I see her and she's just a bundle of joy, like I'm sure you experienced that with her. Yeah. She's a riot. Oh my gosh. So I'd definitely say like having her as my, my desk mate definitely makes every single day worthwhile and it's so fun to see how much she's developed and grown just in my short time of working with her.

Speaker 1 00:20:45 That's awesome. I think it's always good to see the fruits of our labor and to see someone really thriving when we give them the environment to do so. Absolutely. I think that's a huge payoff. Awesome. Well, I hope this was helpful to our dealers. Arianne, thank you so much for coming in and chatting with me today. Thank you for having me. This has been a great conversation and I look forward to another one meet too. All right. Take care. You too. Okay. Bye. Bye.

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