

Companies Partner With Local Schools To Introduce Students To The River

To build a great team of employees, companies in the maritime industry often strive to attract the best and brightest already working on the nation's waterways. At the same time, though, many companies are committed to introducing youth to the river, recruiting those fresh faces to jobs in the industry and helping them become the future of the maritime industry.

Turn Services, a New Orleans, La.-based fleet and shifting provider, and its sister company Associated Terminals, are companies committed to introducing young people to the world between the river levees. Turn Services, in partnership with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, has an ongoing relationship with schools in Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans, Jefferson, St. Charles and St. James parishes, where Turn Services team members offer outreach, job counseling, training and support.

"We've been working directly with those parishes to gain access to their schools to speak with the students, not

only about our companies, but about the industry itself," said Mark Pisani, vice president-human resources at Turn Services and Associated Terminals.

Working with educators and students alike, Turn Services team members often visit classrooms, lead field trips and conduct mock interviews to prepare for the hiring process and aid in résumé development. Particularly for entry-level positions, good interview skills can really separate one applicant from the rest, Pisani said.

"When you sit down for an interview, the interviewee is competing with other applicants of similar talent or even more experience than them. It is imperative that they are engaged and well prepared for the interview if they want to be considered for the position," he said.

Key interview skills include making eye contact, having good posture, being engaging, speaking clearly, and even knowing how to appropriately answer a phone call.

Just as important as engaging students is reaching out to teachers and advisors at the school and district levels.

"Each parish has a career and technical education coordinator, and we've created some great partnerships with them," said Dawn Lopez, vice president-marketing and public relations for Turn Services and Associated Terminals. "We believe we are opening the eyes of the educators to the great opportunities on the river."

That's key, as those in-school counselors help students plan their courses of study, which in Louisiana leads to either a college diploma for university-bound students or a career diploma for those seeking to immediately enter the workforce. Current students even have the option of choosing the "manufacturing, construction crafts and logistics graduation pathway" within the career diploma course of study, further preparing them for a potential career in the maritime industry.

All those efforts and educational opportunities align well with employment

trends in Louisiana. A study jointly published in April 2015 by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System underlined just how huge of an impact the maritime industry has on the state. The study found that 20 percent of all jobs in Louisiana are connected to the maritime industry, accounting for a whopping \$3.5 billion in employee income and \$11 billion of total economic impact each year.

"These are not short-term jobs—these are careers," Lopez said.

Once someone joins the Turn Services or Associated Terminals team to begin a career in the maritime industry, he or she has access to pathways for moving into either operations management or the wheelhouse. Pisani said the goal isn't just a successful company but successful individuals.

"The guidance and opportunity is there for those committed to themselves and the organization," he said.

Guest Editorial

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the rivers. When farmers ask how we can raise 10 more bushels per acre, we go to the experts—the scientists who can find out what soybean genetics we need to meet that goal. So when we want to improve the locks and dams on our waterways, we want to speak with the companies that operate on it every day.

We need a well-maintained inland waterway infrastructure to compete in the market. We face competitive pressures from other soybean farmers in Brazil and Argentina, and you compete with other modes of transportation for business. We're linked because we're both the most efficient suppliers of our products and services, and improvements on the waterways will only make us better.

We need to greatly improve the transportation system in the U.S., but we'll need partnerships at all levels to make it happen. USB is committed to partnering with transportation stakeholders to develop forward-thinking solutions to our transportation challenges. One potential solution is investigating alternative financing and delivery options to invest in our infrastructure. Alternative options to the status quo could allow for new sources of funding and faster project delivery due to operational efficiencies that reduce the cost of projects. USB has conducted research on alternative financing and delivery options, and it is now looking into how we can help be a catalyst to develop these options.

Together, we can find a way to improve the profitability and sustainability of the U.S. soy industry and the U.S. transportation system.

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