Youth Apprenticeship
Employer Engagement Best Practices

Prepared for LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network by Network Kinection

Employer Outreach Best Practices
Youth Apprenticeships

Automotive

Methods of Outreach

In-person outreach is the preferred method of reaching automotive employers. Whether it is a dealership or a small, local shop, it's best to show up and introduce ourselves in person. Attempting to utilize phone or email as your primary method of outreach will lead to a lower response rate. Service Managers and Directors are supporting their entire team, speaking with customers and more. When catching them in person, these leaders are generally in need of a strong candidate pipeline and within a short conversation, a partnership can start to be discussed.

Ideal Messaging / Messaging Options

Messaging for automotive employers has been dependent on the level of engagement that each employer is looking to have with the program. Here are the effective strategies that have peaked the interest of employers:

- (Primary) Building a long-term talent pipeline - Speaking more specifically about dealerships, not all of them will be hiring when they first engage with apprenticeship programs. However, they will most likely need a technician at some point within that given year. Dealers have enjoyed knowing that becoming a partner will provide access to a talent pipeline when openings become available. For dealerships without dedicated recruiters, this message is welcomed. Without an apprentice pipeline, service managers spend much more time sorting through online resumes or waiting longer than needed to receive candidates from for-profit colleges.
- (Secondary) Curriculum / Program Feedback - Many automotive employers, specifically dealerships have tried numerous ways to hire early career technicians. Those include hiring from for-profit private colleges, community colleges and referrals. Service Managers cite that employees that have not been a strong fit for their dealership do not have the base training that they were seeking. This has included technical skills, but also necessary skills that involve safety and cleanliness of the shop. While receiving strong candidates may be the employers first interest, it is common to find automotive employers who are also interested in continuing to provide curriculum feedback as this is now a hiring source that they'd like to ensure stays available.

Faculty Involvement

While schedules and responsibilities of instructors at each college vary, having consistent automotive faculty involvement within technician apprenticeship programs will increase their effectiveness. Here are some ways faculty involvement helps:

- Best Fit for Students / Brand Recommendation - When faculty have relationships with participating employers, they get to know their leadership better. Through these conversations, it is recommended for faculty to key in on skills / competencies that each specific employer is particularly interested in. By having this awareness, faculty can

assist with recommending specific students apply with specific brands or shops. Faculty speak with students on a daily basis and know their interests as well. With this, faculty can become the intermediary between employers and students to ensure a strong fit for both parties.

- Vetting Process - For students to start working on cars, employers will be seeking someone who can handle lube technician responsibilities at minimum. This will include skills such as oil changes and fluid checks. In early automotive classes, these skills are taught and important to an apprentices candidacy. These technical skills are just an example of what can be added into a vetting process for students who are entering apprenticeship programs. Faculty can assist in ensuring that students have met these requirements before entering an apprenticeship program.

Apprentice Availability

The automotive industry heavily leans towards full-time staff. For apprentices, this can be quite a challenge while balancing related instruction. This has led to two different paths to make apprenticeships work with their availability:

1. Evening Courses - this is the simplest route. If courses are at night, employers can have students work a normal schedule (EX: 7AM - 4PM, 8AM - 5PM) while still maintaining their related instruction.
2. Release Time - Not all colleges offer evening courses in Automotive. In this case, some employers are open to discussing release time for apprentices to leave their worksite and go take courses during what would be a normal shift. This option has been a more rare occurrence as most dealerships / shops want apprentices to work the same shift as the rest of their employees.

Competition to Community Colleges

Automotive employers need a talent pipeline. They have many choices to make when figuring out where they will receive candidates. For early career openings that typically align with apprenticeships, there are two primary competitors for automotive employers to consider:

1. Private, For-Profit Colleges - Outside of the community colleges, there are other institutions training the next generation of automotive technicians. These private, for-profit colleges also have strong relationships with local dealerships and shops. Community Colleges provide prospective technicians with a quality education at a typically much lower cost and apprenticeships provide continuous feedback to ensure that their standards are meeting employment skills needed on the job.
2. Experienced Technicians - With apprentices continuing to sharpen their skills on the job, an employer may opt for a technician with 1-2 years prior experience. This decision comes down to time available for mentorship and training.

Preferred type of job (internship, apprenticeship, externship, etc…)

Prior to non-traditional apprenticeships becoming more popularized, the automotive industry was focusing on standard full-time and part-time employment. This is the reason why automotive technician apprenticeships are such a great fit and why it is being adopted smoothly into the industry. Apprenticeship takes traditional employment and increases its benefits with:

- Covered Tuition (state of CA)
- Consistent feedback from employers
- Employer-led advisory committees
- Seamless training vehicle for incumbent employees looking to upskill
- Structured wage increases

What's the entry point for students? Type of job, skills needed, etc…

Entry into an automotive apprenticeship has been slightly different for students with some experience vs. students with no experience in industry. Here's how each of those students begins:

- Some experience - when an apprentice has some experience, employers are generally open to interviewing for automotive technician / mechanic roles. These students may have already got their repetition with oil changes / tire rotations and are able to work on a wider variety of jobs.
- No experience - By working with tire and lube shops, these students can gain experience for 3-6 months that will assist them in then being stronger candidates for auto shops or local dealerships.
    - For some youth apprentices, an employer may also opt to start them at a Porter position. This role does not handle technician responsibilities. Should this be the situation wtih an apprentice, it is important to ensure the employer understands that the individual is looking to become a technician. Within 6 months to 1 year, this individual will need to move into a technician role at their current company or move onto a company that will allow them to complete their competencies.

Key Contacts to Engage for that industry

Engaging the right person as it relates to automotive employers will depend on the type of business:

- Dealerships - In nearly all cases, the best contact to connect with is the Service Manager or Service Director. This leader is generally responsible for the Service Department where auto technicians will work. They have the best understanding of hiring needs and standards for that specific dealership.
- Tire Shops / Lube Shops / Small Auto Shops - For these various shops, there have been various contacts that may be the right contact for apprenticeship partnerships. Here is a list of them:
    - Owners / General Managers - For small shops that are not franchised, it's much more possible to connect directly with the owner or an individual who is in charge of day to day operations for the shop. This individual will generally make decisions on if apprenticeships are a fit for their company.
    - District Managers - For franchised lube and tire shops, it is recommended to seek district managers or even regional recruiters who are finding talent for multiple locations. These managers will often have the ability to connect apprenticeship programs with multiple locations.

Best Timing to reach out

For automotive, timing does matter quite a bit when talking to dealerships specifically. Dealerships have monthly goals across their facilities. Individuals conducting employer outreach during the busier times of a dealership's month may experience a lack of interest due to their current priorities. For employer outreach professionals looking to connect with automotive dealerships for apprenticeships, it's recommended to stay away from the beginning and ending of the month. Why? At the beginning of the month, dealerships have received new goals across the facility and that is their primary focus. Related to that, the end of the month is all about achieving monthly goals. It is recommended to visit dealerships during the middle two weeks of each month.

Common Barriers / Objections

There are a couple primary barriers / objections from automotive employers. They are as follows:

- Full-time availability of apprentices - some employers are not willing to provide release time and if colleges do not have evening classes, it is difficult to set up apprenticeships
- Driver's Licenses - Not all potential apprentices have driver's licenses. For automotive technician opportunities, this is very close to mandatory to start working in industry.

Compliance Requirements / Industry Regulations to consider

When it comes to compliance in the automotive industry, employers focus primarily on ensuring that apprentices are up to date on safety requirements. Some examples include:

- Hazardous Waste Management - Technicians are handling many hazardous materials including engine oil, coolant, batteries and more. There are mandatory guidelines to follow when handling and disposing of these materials.
- PPE Knowledge - Safety equipment is crucial to an automotive technician's job. Apprentices must have knowledge of when and how to use safety glasses, gloves and proper footwear.
- Background Checks - Although background checks are normal in many industries, they are standard and will happen at nearly every automotive employer who hires apprentices. It is crucial that students can pass a background check.

Certifications of Interest

Employers within the automotive industry want to ensure that students are working towards ASE requirements. It is often very helpful when connecting with automotive employers to mention that their apprenticeship hours will count towards ASE certification.

Manufacturing

Methods of Outreach

For manufacturing, a diverse outreach strategy should be deployed. When putting together an outreach strategy, it will be crucial to understand the size of the business. Once the size of the business is determined, this will be a strong indicator of how successful in person outreach will be. For small and medium size manufacturing businesses, in person outreach has a better

chance of being a successful strategy. This is generally due to there being less layers between you and leadership. Additionally, the first employee or gatekeeper may not have standard procedures to turn anyone away who does not have an appointment. For larger manufacturers, they are generally used to sales people or solicitors walking in their door throughout the day. There is a greater chance of these employers also having strict policies around individuals who do not have a meeting set with specific employees within their organization. Whether you are visiting a small, medium or large sized manufacturer, it is always a best practice to do research on a contact you are looking to connect with. By having the name of an individual, your chances of being connected to that employee may increase.

Emails and phone calls are also a strong outreach method to utilize with manufacturers. It is recommended to try multiple different contacts within an organization when first trying to build a relationship. For some companies, especially larger manufacturers, connecting with HR / Talent Acquisition is the best way to start. For smaller companies, requesting a conversation with ownership or leadership on the manufacturing floor may help start a conversation.

Ideal Messaging / Messaging Options

Several topics have been important to highlight when reaching out to manufacturers. Among these topics are the following:

- Defense against “poaching” - When speaking to manufacturers, they often find themselves in a battle for talent with competitors. This battle is not just for candidates who are unemployed looking for work, but instead centered around employees being recruited directly by other manufacturers. With manufacturers seeing a lack of training providers, this method became a best practice in the industry to keep up. With apprenticeships, local colleges can build your pipeline. This training helps also increase retention because of the investments their employer has made.
- Local talent pipeline - Manufacturers often find themselves needing expertise that they traditionally have recruited for without much luck. This has pushed manufacturers to look out of their county and sometimes out of state for talent. Apprenticeships promote local talent and by engaging with LEA’s, candidates become aware of the opportunities they may have never been aware of without this training program.
- A strategy for upcoming retirements - When visiting with manufacturers, there is a theme of employees who have been with the company for 30+ or sometimes 40+ years. The expertise within these individuals has not been passed down to others in the company. This issue puts employers in a dilemma that needs to be solved quickly. Apprenticeships provide students with a baseline of skills. Employers can then take those baseline skills and create the expertise they need for the next 30, 40 years through intentional OJT and mentorship.

Faculty Involvement

Manufacturers enjoy working closely with faculty. While it isn’t a requirement to do so, it has been helpful for manufacturing faculty to collaborate with employers in the following ways:

- Program pre-requisites - there’s typically a baseline of essential skills that manufacturers would like to see before students begin apprenticeships. By working closely with faculty

to set that baseline of skills, employers can now feel confident in candidates applying to their open apprenticeships. This also allows for faculty to provide a simple, yet effective way for apprentices to set goals related to their entrance into an apprenticeship program.

- Tours - If manufacturers are going to trust that an apprenticeship program is a fit for them, seeing the facilities and equipment where training is held will be a priority. Whether it's the cleanliness of the college facility or interest in specific machinery, inviting an employer to come visit an LEA helps build trust in apprenticeship programs.

Apprentice Availability

Manufacturing is an industry that typically provides full-time employment. With that, employers are generally hoping for full-time or close to full-time employment from apprentices. This can often be difficult for community colleges who are trying to encourage students to maintain their classload while working. There are some key topics to discuss with employers when figuring out how students will provide the availability needed:

1. Class release time - If shifts are mostly during 6AM - 5PM, employers can work with colleges to figure out a schedule where apprentices work as much as they can during these hours and then leave for class when necessary. Typically employers will want to still get close to 40 hours per week, but negotiating classroom release time allows for the student to train in the classroom while minimizing time away from the worksite.
2. Multiple Shifts - One special opportunity we have with manufacturing employers is that some will have multiple shifts. Sometimes, they're even running 24/7 operations. This flexibility has provided apprentices with options and a way to work 40 hours while maintaining classroom instruction.

Competition to Community Colleges

For non-engineering roles in manufacturing, the competition for becoming a consistent source for these businesses comes from the following:

1. Staffing agencies - Although the cost can be high for manufacturers to use staffing agencies, it can be a reliable way to get vetted candidates delivered directly to their door. It is difficult to find skilled machinists, technicians, welders, etc…so paying for talent makes sense if it keeps production continuous.
2. Experience vs. Early Career - A question that manufacturers often find themselves asking is what the ROI will be after investing in someone that is early in their career. Will they have more success finding an already skilled candidate, even though the cost will be higher? That may be the case, but companies then find themselves wondering if they have the right retention strategy to keep that employee. Apprenticeship is a way to invest in an employee while they grow. While this strategy does take time to build, the long term outlook is rewarding after someone has completed their apprenticeship.

Preferred type of job (internship, apprenticeship, externship, etc…)

Manufacturing has generally focused on full-time employees. Some employers to have some flexibility with part-time opportunities, but those are typically more difficult to find. What you will not see in manufacturing - internships. This is not to be confused with engineering internships which are a popular tool used by many employers. When we talk about manufacturing roles

(machining, welding, various technicians), it is rare to see employers open up internships as a strategy to develop talent.

With full-time employment being the preference, this has fit seamlessly with apprenticeships. Employers can maintain their same hiring strategies while adding in more structure through the apprenticeship program. Apprentices also receive more benefits and ongoing mentorship by converting these opportunities into apprenticeships.

What's the entry point for students? Type of job, skills needed, etc…

Entry points in manufacturing will largely depend on the apprenticeship. However, there are common skills or courses that are generally seen for all positions. Employers will typically want to see OSHA and / or safety training completed. Additionally, blue print reading has been a key skill that is necessary for any manufacturing role.

During the initial weeks and months of an apprenticeship, we have also seen employers ensure that apprentices can perform the roles of their most early career positions. This has typically come in the form of an Assembler or a Shop Helper. It has been more typical to see apprentices start with assembly roles when they are starting positions as technicians (mechanical, electrical, etc…). Shop helper has been more of a direct fit for machinist apprenticeships

Key contacts to engage

Decision makers at manufacturing companies typically fall into the categories below. When first connecting with a business, it's crucial to figure out who needs to be involved as it may involve a combo of these leaders:

- Ownership - For smaller companies, it is not uncommon to connect directly with the owner(s) of the business. These owners generally have a role in the day to day operations and will have interaction with the apprentices. This is a far less common occurrence for large employers as there are many more layers in their infrastructure.
- Direct Supervisors / Management - Whether a company is small or large, this will be an important stakeholder. Managers that are overseeing apprentices will need to be involved at some point. For small and mid-size businesses, these individuals may be your primary contact and / or your opener to the rest of the company. For larger companies, it is normal to work with talent acquisition / recruitment / training and development and then have direct supervisors included.
- Talent Acquisition - For companies with recruitment teams, talent acquisition leadership is charged with creating recruitment pipelines. These leaders are generally appreciative of the opportunity to build a new source for their openings. While connecting with talent acquisition, it's crucial for apprenticeship staff to listen deeply to recruitment needs for the near and long term future. Our goal as an apprenticeship program is to make these individuals' lives easier with our apprenticeship program.

Common Barriers / Objections

- Mentorship - Manufacturers are in need of talent pipelines. However, it's important for employers to also understand their role in apprenticeship as mentors. Production is the

name of the game for manufacturing so it's common for employers to immediately look at ROI even when an apprentice is still skill building into their role. Apprenticeship works in manufacturing when employers and sponsors have clearly determined OJT and RSI hours to ensure apprentices are fully supported.
    - IMPORTANT NOTE: Manufacturers often make specific components or products. This is where OJT is crucial and should be discussed with the employer. Colleges can lay the foundation while employers train apprentices on what makes their company unique.
- Full-time availability of apprentices - some employers are not willing to provide release time and if colleges do not have evening classes, it is difficult to set up apprenticeships.

Compliance Requirements

Manufacturing companies have many compliance areas to consider:

- OSHA / Safety - Candidates should be trained and ready to adhere to OSHA standards.
- PPE Knowledge - Depending on the role, apprentices will need a strong knowledge of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Background & Screening - While many industries require background checks for candidates, it is highly common to go through drug testing and comprehensive background checks in this industry.
- Industry Specific Standards - For specific industries within manufacturing, apprentices will need to be up to speed on specific quality management standards.

Information Technology

Methods of Outreach

When engaging employers or leaders within the Information Technology space, it is crucial to not get connected to one type of outreach. Instead, various forms of outreach should be attempted:

1. Industry Events - Cold outreach in the IT sector can be hit or miss. Attending industry related events tends to provide a warmer way to connect with industry. Additionally, dedicating time to an industry shows that we are trying to build relationships for the long term vs. transactional outreach.
2. Phone / Email outreach - As mentioned above, cold outreach in the IT sector can be hit or miss. While some IT leaders / businesses are active on the phone, others may have automated systems that make it difficult to find the right contact. For some IT companies, email can be a great idea if the general company address is periodically checked. For some companies, especially Managed Service Providers, there are dedicated individuals waiting for client tickets. With this knowledge, sending a short, to-the-point email to their ticket system can sometimes spark conversation.
3. In-Person Outreach - This is another noteworthy method that can also be hit or miss. For IT firms, a door knock may lead to a door opening or a completely empty office. Why would their office be empty? Because they're out working with clients. However, sometimes a receptionist is there to greet you and help make the connection. For IT leaders across various industries, it's best to walk in with curiosity. Rather than telling

the employer what you're looking for, an inquiry into their interest in advising the college may be the route to go.

a. IMPORTANT NOTE: Most companies have IT staff or utilize a firm to manage their IT. If visiting a company in person that is not in the IT industry, but rather has IT staff, doing research on their IT leadership and finding a name to reference is a best practice.

Ideal Messaging

The IT sector can be tricky when trying to find the right message for decision makers. Companies typically have different opinions on what is a strong fit for their early career opportunities. Here are some common messages that will help engage these employers:

1. Low Cost, Risk Mitigator - IT leaders understand risk as it's a daily conversation surrounding their work activities. If companies don't pay attention to their IT infrastructure or Cybersecurity, it can hurt them down the line. Similarly, in recruiting early career IT professionals, it's crucial to find candidates that are coachable into your company's processes and culture. If companies solely focused on experienced talent, they run the risk of having exceedingly high talent costs for perpetuity. While it is difficult for IT leaders to invest in talent over a multi-year period, by using apprenticeship programs, these businesses now have a skilled individual that fits their custom needs.
2. Minimal Recruitment Effort - Hiring managers in the IT field will receive plenty of candidates when opening up a job. The problem comes when it's time to review resumes and find the right fit. Employers typically work long hours or put in the extra time to find talent as they don't have resources to bring in recruiters. Apprenticeships provide a platform for employers to utilize colleges or intermediaries to put them in front of the talent that is tailored to their business.

Faculty Involvement

Whether it's faculty or other IT program related staff, their presence is important in solidifying employer partnerships for these apprenticeship programs. This is a technical field and employers are highly interested in ensuring that courses and certifications align with the work they need completed at their business. Here are some ways to build your IT employer relationships:

1. Other work-based learning - Apprenticeships can feel like a daunting task to IT employers or leaders. Openness to other types of work-based learning as a warm up are highly recommended. Cyber competitions, short internships, and faculty externships are just a few ways to help employers warm up to the idea of apprenticeships.
2. Campus Visits - For many IT programs, students have the opportunity to utilize various types of equipment on campus. Employers enjoy being able to see the type of training equipment that students have access to. Whether it's specific types of computers, hardware, server racks or other infrastructure, these visits can help visually show businesses that their campus is a capable training site.

Apprentice Availability

IT apprenticeships come with flexibility which is much appreciated for participants of these programs. IT leaders and companies have typically used internships in the past to bring in early career talent. These internships have been flexible, especially during the school year. This precedent has helped when setting up apprenticeships. While many employers will still want to see a minimum of 20 working hours each week, they do understand the need for classroom release time. Many IT programs are not run fully at night so this flexibility is necessary.

Competition to Community Colleges

Competition is unfortunately a common reality when setting up IT apprenticeships. It's also one of the primary barriers for getting started. Data suggests that there is a shortage of IT professionals. The race to supply talent comes from numerous sources and not all of these sources believe that having a strong early career pipeline through apprenticeships is the way to go. Sources that community college apprenticeships programs will compete with include, but are not limited to:

- 4-year Universities - IT leaders differ on when they believe individuals are ready to start working in industry. There are still many who believe a 4-year degree is necessary.
- Staffing Firms - employment agencies do a great job filling open roles within this industry. Because finding the right fit for IT roles can be complicated, staffing firms are a popular choice even though they can be costly.
- Private, for-profit schools - These colleges also have interest in securing opportunities for their students and they generally have more staff in their career services department to cover the local area.

Preferred Type of Job (Internship, Apprenticeship, etc…)

For years, the way to get into the IT field has been through internships. And even though we are well into the 2020's, some of these employers still prefer unpaid internships for an occupation that is highly technical and requires a significant investment from learners. This is one of the primary questions to consider when building an IT apprenticeship. Does my local industry want an apprenticeship program? Or, do they want interns? There's a great argument that they can work together.

What's the entry point for students? Type of job, skills needed, etc…

For many students, beginning their career in IT starts in a Tech Support or Helpdesk position. These roles allow for the individual to start gaining a wide array of experience in the IT field. It is still typical in the IT industry for this experience to begin through an internship or a full-time job after completing their college coursework.

For apprentices seeking to build a career in Cybersecurity, it is also highly recommended for the apprentice to begin in an early career role like Tech Support or Helpdesk. Companies often like to develop an employee prior to advancement into cybersecurity roles.

Key contacts to engage

As with other aspects of IT employer outreach, engagement will be diverse and lead to different roles. However, best practices in outreach for IT apprenticeships can be broken down into the following:

- IT Firms - Businesses that provide IT services to other businesses, often called Managed Service Providers (MSP's) may be simpler to navigate. With many of these firms being smaller, it is recommended to connect with direct supervisors / hiring managers and / or ownership (if possible). These companies do not typically have large recruiting teams which means that hiring managers and ownership are involved in direct decision making over new hires.
- IT Leaders (Outside of IT Industry) - IT is in every industry and is a part of most businesses. With that, organizations that are not focused on IT, but nonetheless have IT staff provide another opportunity. Within these organizations, it is recommended to also seek out Human Resources, Recruitment or Talent Acquisition. While not every company will employ each of these roles, they are another layer of leadership that may be able to let you know of any interest in your IT apprenticeship program.

Common Barriers / Objections

Non-traditional apprenticeships are a new concept to IT professionals. With that, employer engagement professionals may come across numerous barriers or objections when trying to build these programs.

- Internships - For decades, internships in the IT field have been the standard. When speaking with IT leaders, they don't feel much of a need to switch up this strategy for early talent. However, many of these same employers will mention that retention is often difficult with strong employees. Apprenticeships have been proven to strengthen retention due to the investment from employers and built in wage increases. Apprentices see their path ahead within the company.
- Apprenticeship Standards (Multi-employer Programs) - For IT apprenticeship programs that are looking to build on a set of standards for multiple employers in a given community, you may find that agreement on standards can be difficult. Each IT leader may have different skills they want to see in their apprentices, making it difficult to build a program that fits everyone's needs. In addition to this, wages within the IT field for early career individuals vary greatly. While some companies will mention paying minimum wage ($16.90 / hour in CA - 2026), others will hire apprentices at $24.00 / hour. Apprentices in the same registered program want to make sure they earn a living wage so it can be difficult to work with different employers offering vastly different hourly wages.
- Competition with experienced workers - Work within the IT field is important for a company's operations and even apprentices are expected to perform early in their careers. With that, IT leaders are faced with a difficult question, do I continue to hire more experienced workers at a much higher wage? Or, do I start to invest and grow our own talent through an apprenticeship program? Experienced, high-wage workers are more likely to leave after shorter stints, but they do provide comfort that they are already

competent in the skill set needed. Apprentices may take time to train, but will do so within the specifications of their company, leading to strong returns in the future.

Compliance Requirements

While apprentices starting in help desk roles or tech support roles may not have to focus much on compliance, the IT industry will eventually require compliance knowledge to move upward in their career. Examples include:

- HIPAA - for careers in healthcare
- GDPR - Data privacy
- Information Security Frameworks - EX: SOC 2, ISO 27001

When engaging IT leaders or IT companies for apprenticeships, employer outreach professionals should ask if there are any specific additional compliance certifications a student would need for their candidacy.

It's important to also mention that asking about compliance could also provide a new opportunity for the LEA and / or intermediary with that company. Should there be skills that a student needs that are not currently offered, employers may be able to work with the LEA and / or intermediary to develop new courses or certifications to solve industry needs.

Certifications

CompTIA certifications are an important subject for early career IT professionals. Each one of the following certifications will assist professionals in furthering their career:

- CompTIA A+ Certification - This training is widely considered the starting point for IT professionals
- CompTIA Network+ Certification
- CompTIA Security+ Certification
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)

Healthcare

Methods of Outreach

Building relationships within the healthcare industry happens from various different methods. However, it's important for colleges and partner staff to focus on existing relationships. When discussing best practices, this is the primary area to highlight.

Oftentimes, when we talk about different ways to conduct outreach, we think about using our phones, emails, networking events or walking in the front door. However, in Healthcare, most colleges have existing programs with formal partners for clinicals and externships. These employer partners are already working with schools and they are your best starting point. If students are gaining experience and working at these healthcare providers, apprenticeships are a different model that can be applied to provide more benefits to students and more consistent evaluations of their work.

After working with your existing partners, then outreach specialists can pivot their focus to cold outreach as needed.

Ideal Messaging

Healthcare professionals are needed more than ever. In some cases, healthcare employers are content with their current college partnerships, while others are exploring how colleges can assist with positions that are hard to fill. For both of these cases, there are best practices around messaging that can help in building these partnerships:

- Partnership Upgrade - For colleges with strong clinical and extern partnerships, apprenticeships are the next step. While maintaining these existing structures, apprenticeships serve as yet another level of support for students and incumbent workers as they move into new positions. Apprenticeships provide a way for employers to provide consistent feedback on existing programs while also providing evaluations on students who have started their careers in healthcare.
- Answering workforce shortages - Employers also have very specific roles (EX: Imaging positions) that may be difficult to fill in certain geographic regions. It has been typical for healthcare employers to utilize online resources, staffing agencies and other sources to try and fill these roles. Even with these efforts, organizations are still finding certain roles difficult to fill. This puts a spotlight on apprenticeship, especially for organizations that believe their incumbent workers can fill these difficult roles. Healthcare providers are encouraged by opportunities to connect with colleges about skills that can be trained collaboratively to help place individuals into hard to fill positions.

Faculty Involvement

Professors must be involved in healthcare apprenticeship programs. It is typical for professors to be directly involved with clinical and externship opportunities. With that in mind, they will want to do the same with apprenticeships for numerous reasons including:

- Vetting of facilities - To ensure quality of experiences, faculty are involved in conversations to make sure there is alignment between program outcomes and the appropriate employer.
- Evaluations / Feedback - this is a highly technical field and healthcare professionals want to speak with other healthcare professionals. This helps ensure that the program is running optimally and does not place other apprenticeship staff into a role of healthcare expertise that they do not possess. Consistent communication between employer sites and faculty will also help provide consistent feedback to improve curriculum as needed.

Apprentice Availability

Availability of apprentices will vary on the specific type of apprenticeship within healthcare.

For careers such as Registered Nurse, Licensed Vocational Nurse or Certified Nursing Assistant, licensure is needed to start your career. With that, the structure of apprenticeship programs for these occupations must be set up so that students can take care of all licensure requirements prior to starting their apprenticeship OJT hours. If apprentices are incumbent

workers, they will likely be working part-time hours at their current job while completing related instruction in the classroom.

For non-licensed careers in healthcare such as Community Health Worker (CHW), apprenticeships may follow the more typical “earn and learn” model. An apprentice pursuing CHW in California is able to start their work as a Community Health Worker through an apprenticeship program. Students pursuing this career may be able to work close to full-time hours while going to school.

Competition to Community Colleges

Community Colleges have strong relationships with the healthcare sector as a whole. One can argue that building apprenticeships in healthcare with the community colleges is difficult to compete with from a sourcing perspective. When employers look to fill their early career roles, community colleges are competing for filling roles with other colleges, primarily 4-year universities and private, for-profit colleges. Unlike IT or Automotive apprenticeships where someone could conceivably not go to college for training and still land a job in the industry, that is not possible in Healthcare. Healthcare professionals need to go to school. It’s crucial for community colleges to realize that providing quality candidates for open roles is what will set them apart from others.

Preferred Type of Job (Internship, Apprenticeship, etc…)

It is typical for healthcare students to get their experience in the field through clinicals and externships. Apprenticeships within Healthcare are generally a new concept.

When connecting with your colleges existing clinical / extern partners, it is important to work with these employers to understand what gaps may still exist in training or finding quality candidates. An apprenticeship program could involve conditional offers from employers at the beginning of a nursing program in regions where there is a talent shortage. Or, a community with a long wait list to get into a healthcare program, could utilize apprenticeship as a vehicle to open up more space for local incumbent worker training. These are both examples of listening to an employer's needs to understand if apprenticeship can become a preferred method of employment.

Key contacts to engage

Contacts for healthcare will largely depend on the type of organization you are trying to contact. Here is a simple breakdown:

- Hospitals - There is typically someone assigned to manage relationships with colleges. Employer engagement professionals should seek out this individual. This manager is generally able to bring in other stakeholders who need to provide input on what an apprenticeship program looks like. Stakeholders may include Chief Nursing Officers, Talent Acquisition leaders and others.
- Private doctors offices - Referencing smaller offices, it’s highly recommended to stop in to introduce yourself at these locations. Even if someone is not available to speak with

you, a front desk representative may point you in the right direction or provide you with knowledge on what next steps to take.

- Inpatient facilities - While these organizations are not typically as large as a hospital, there are typically managers that are on-site. Inquiring if these managers can take a few moments to speak with you will be the start to your conversations. It's important to keep in mind that managers at inpatient facilities have a wide variety of responsibilities. If time is not right for them to speak, seek out a better time where they can focus on your inquiry into apprenticeships.

Common Barriers / Objections

The most common objection to healthcare apprenticeships is employers' existing strategies. To expand further, healthcare employers generally have strong relationships with colleges for clinical / extern experience. If that process is working efficiently, healthcare employers may question why there is a need for an apprenticeship program. It's important to ensure there is value added to the employer when brainstorming with them. Value added could be one or more of the following:

- Incumbent Worker Training - Sometimes the solution to a workforce issue is already within your organization. This solution has been valuable to healthcare employers because they can provide further development for current employees who want to move upward within their organization. On top of this, incumbent staff already understand their employers' respective workplace culture, making it a seamless transition.

  This strategy is also particularly strong as it provides a customized solution for a company's workforce. When we think about apprenticeship, we tend to typically think of early career, but in healthcare a customized pipeline can be created with incumbent staff.
  - EX: Company A has numerous medical assistants looking to move upwards. A program created around getting these medical assistants into an LVN role could be set up for a company.
  - EX: Company B is eager to help their LVN's gain the necessary skills for open RN positions. A customized pathway to help these students move into RN positions can now be created.

In summary, incumbent workers can fill roles through apprenticeship and open up opportunities for other healthcare professionals to start their careers.

- Talent Pipeline - For roles like Medical Assistant or opportunities within Imaging, employers are experiencing a shortage of candidates. Employers can build a customized apprenticeship program to develop a pipeline of candidates for their openings. This helps employers move away from focusing heavily on online job postings.

Compliance Requirements

Compliance will certainly be a topic that apprentices will learn. The type of apprenticeship will greatly affect the knowledge students will need to learn. Here are some examples:

- HIPAA & Patient Privacy - this is a non-negotiable skill that anyone in Healthcare will encounter.
- OSHA Requirements / Infection Control - hand hygiene standards, PPE usage, sharp disposal and other topics.
- Workplace Safety Protocols
- Scope of Practice Awareness - understanding which tasks require supervision and what assistance is legally allowed to be provided.
- Documentation Standards
- Mandatory Reporting
- Ethical Standards

Certifications / Licensure

Not all positions in Healthcare require certifications, but many do. The following opportunities involve licensure or other certifications prior to employment (Not exhaustive list, but most popular programs):

- Registered Nurse (RN)
    - Completion of Associates Degree in Nursing
    - Pass NCLEX - RN
- Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)
    - Certificate or Diploma
    - Pass NCLEX - PN
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
    - State approved training / certificate
    - State Exam
- Radiologic Technician
    - Associate's Degree
    - ARRT Certification
    - State Exam
- Community Health Worker
    - Certification in some states