Manufacturing Awareness Program

Corning Incorporated is one of the world’s leading innovators in materials science. For more than 160 years, Corning has applied its unparalleled expertise in specialty glass, ceramics, and optical physics to develop and manufacture products that have created new industries and transformed people’s lives.

The Challenge

With an increased emphasis on getting a college education in order to succeed in America, the need for an equally important set of workers has been sidelined. Manufacturing jobs can provide substantive work that earns a premium over non-manufacturing jobs. Skilled trades in manufacturing are in short supply in the U.S., but often these jobs are not portrayed as worthy of pursuit by youth.

Our challenge was clear:

- College education is typically emphasized as the path to career success.
- This sidelines the need and importance of skilled trades in manufacturing.
- As such, and to ensure a manufacturing skills base to keep manufacturing thriving in America, there is a need to elevate the stature of these types of jobs.

We can help to address this challenge by creating awareness and educating young people about what jobs are available and what they can expect from a career in manufacturing.

The Solution

To ensure America has the skills base to keep manufacturing thriving, we need to elevate the stature of those jobs by educating young people about what is available and what they can expect from a career in manufacturing.

In 2014, Corning committed to piloting a program to introduce youth to jobs in the manufacturing industry.

Corning, working with local school districts, designed and piloted a Manufacturing Awareness Program (MAP), targeting opportunity youth ages 15 – 21, that introduced and created awareness of the importance and benefits of careers in manufacturing.
The series of workshops included:

- A general introduction of careers in manufacturing
- Tours of manufacturing facilities to acclimate individuals to what working in a factory is like.
- Exposure and focus on work and life skills needed to obtain a career in manufacturing (such as basic math, English skills, importance of attendance, presentation in the workplace, etc.).
- In collaboration with the Corning Federal Credit Union, basic financial education on salary, taxes, banking, saving for life events, and retirement.
- Key messages from Corning's chief human resource officer and executive sponsor of MAP.

The next phase of the commitment includes:

- Expanding and delivering the program at locations where Corning has operations across the U.S.; collaborating with local school districts to help identify opportunity youth who would benefit from this program.
- Longer-term, Corning will engage other manufacturing companies to provide new job pathways to youth by:
  - Encouraging companies to make similar commitments-to-action
  - Joining a working group with other manufacturers to develop and publicize strategies to hire, train, and mentor opportunity youth.
  - Packaging the program and making it available to companies with similar challenges and interests.

The Outcome

After the conclusion of the pilot Manufacturing Awareness Program, over a three month period, the feedback from students and staff counselors ranged from:

- An increased awareness (and change in perception) as to what working in a plant environment was like (positive).
- A realization that there were career (path) opportunities within manufacturing that could lead to leadership roles as well
- Corning's clear commitment to invest, inform and contribute in part to inform and contribute to the career decisions that youth in our community face.