

# VTL PRECISION REAPS REWARDS of Youth Apprenticeship



In 2014, Apprenticeship Carolina™, Trident Technical College and five Charleston-area businesses came together to establish the Lowcountry's first youth apprenticeship program. Jeff Teague, general manager of VTL Precision Inc., explains how VTL is already seeing the positive results of being one of the founding companies of the program.



**EDGE:** Please give us some background on VTL Precision.

**Jeff Teague:** VTL is a privately-owned, progressive automotive precision engineering company with world-class facilities in Europe, North America and India. We specialize in the design, development, prototyping and manufacture of high

specification precision components and sub-assemblies for automotive powertrain applications.

The core business is focused on precision components for engines, transmissions, turbo-chargers and other powertrain applications for some of the world's leading automotive brands.

VTL established a facility in Charleston in 2007 in direct support of their customer Cummins Turbo Technology. VTL employs approximately 50 full-time associates across multiple job categories. VTL has recently been awarded new business and is planning for expansion in 2017.

**EDGE:** Tell us about the implementation of your apprenticeship program. How did Apprenticeship Carolina and your local technical college help you get it started?

**JT:** VTL was involved on the ground floor as one of the first five participating companies responsible for the formation of the youth apprenticeship program in 2014. This effort and the need for the program stems from the industry-wide shortage of skilled manufacturing personnel and the aging manufacturing workforce. The average age of a worker in the industry is late forties.

Apprenticeship Carolina was instrumental in getting the program started. They worked to provide a clear pathway from concept to program execution. Apprenticeship Carolina along with Trident Techni-

cal College and the five initial manufacturers formed Charleston's first sector partnership.

By sector partnership, I mean a partnership of companies, from the same industry and in their natural labor market region, with education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations that focus on a set of key issues identified as priorities by the target industry.

**EDGE:** What would you say is the top positive outcome of having an apprenticeship program?

**JT:** The best outcome has been making progress toward our initial mission of educating youth on the wonderful, rewarding, and high-paying jobs and career paths available in the manufacturing industry. We also achieved the additional goal of filling the skills gap this year when we hired our inaugural apprentice into a full-time maintenance technician role. While working full time, he will pursue a four-year Mechanical Engineering degree with the continued financial assistance of VTL Precision.

**EDGE:** Is there anything specific that you'd like to highlight about your apprenticeship program?

**JT:** As the smallest company by far of the five inaugural companies in the sector partnership, I would like to encourage other companies to take the leap – size or existing infrastructure is in no way a precursor to having a successful apprenticeship program. The key is to simply get started and let the creativity of your workforce and the apprentices shape your specific program.

**EDGE:** Tell us about your company's relationship with your local technical college – how are they helping to meet the training needs of your Youth Apprentices?

**JT:** VTL has a long history with Trident Technical College through several of their adult education programs. Most of our employees are graduates from

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**Within the apprenticeship program, Apprenticeship Carolina's role in the partnership is to:**

- Explain the apprenticeship model to companies
- Draw up standards and training/education outlines based on company input
- Submit all paperwork to the U.S. Department of Labor to get program registered
- Assist with program updates as needed
- Identify funding sources to fund the model through available State and Federal incentives

**Trident Technical College's role in the apprenticeship partnership is to:**

- Serve as intermediary between high schools, parents, kids, faculty/staff, employers and other economic and workforce development partners
- Explain to employers about partnerships and assist them with developing their own apprenticeship in collaboration with Trident Technical College and other partners
- Direct college faculty and staff on their role in Youth Apprenticeships
- Inform economic and workforce development partners on how they can assist in recruiting interested employers and high school applicants
- Educate teachers, counselors, parents and high school students on dual enrollment and youth apprenticeship opportunities for the in-demand jobs in the Charleston region
- Connect qualified students to employers
- Deliver technical dual credit training to apprentices

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— JEFF TEAGUE, GENERAL MANAGER OF VTL PRECISION (CHARLESTON) INC.



one of their programs. Trident Tech's broad goal within the program is to provide the apprentices with the foundational knowledge that employers can then build upon and reinforce through application of that knowledge.

**EDGE:** Can you think of a word or phrase that best describes apprenticeship... why?

**JT:** "Win – Win" is the phrase that comes to mind. Apprentices graduate high school with a high school diploma, two years of paid work experience, a certificate from the technical college and a Department of Labor recognized national credential.

Employers gain the enthusiasm, energy and ideas of a young person. Additionally, employers get actual productivity from the apprentice, and seasoned employees get engaged through the mentoring process. Lastly, employers are creating the foundation for its future workforce.

**EDGE:** What do you like most about your apprenticeship program, and why?

**JT:** The apprenticeship program provides the perfect conduit for young adults to succeed – an

opportunity that they may not otherwise have had.

**EDGE:** If you had the opportunity to talk to another company about youth apprenticeship, what would you say?

**JT:** I emphatically recommend the youth apprenticeship program and encourage all employers to jump in with both feet. Don't overcomplicate the process with misconceptions of what is needed within your company to have a successful program. As long as you can keep your apprentice safe, you are ready.

**EDGE:** Is there anything else you'd like to add about youth apprenticeship and/or Apprenticeship Carolina?

**JT:** My involvement in the apprenticeship program has been a career highlight for me and has paid dividends for all those involved. However, none of this would have come to fruition had it not been for the hand-holding and heavy lifting done by Apprenticeship Carolina. They seamlessly integrated all the steps of the apprenticeship process into a program, removing any hurdle that may have been in an employer's path. ■

# Trident Technical College Advanced Manufacturing



**Trident Technical College (TTC)** Industrial and Engineering Technology programs prepare students for a variety of jobs in advanced manufacturing. An advisory committee of local employers provides guidance on skills that are needed for employment, and labs allow students to practice the hands-on aspects of the job as well as work as part of a team.

Recognizing industry's demand for more skilled labor in the region, coupled with a need for an alternative career pathway for high school students, community leaders in Charleston came together to establish a manufacturing sector partnership and develop the region's first U.S. Department of Labor Youth Appren-

ticeship Program in 2014. The sector partnership includes high schools in all four local school districts, TTC and a consortium of industry partners. It represents a community-wide collaborative approach to developing a comprehensive career pathway that provides a seamless transition for students from secondary to post-secondary education into the skilled workforce.

Some of the local companies that employ grads: Bosch, Boeing, Hubner Manufacturing, Zeltwanger, IFA Rotorion, Scout Boats, Cummins, VTL Group, Aero Precision Products, TorqTek Design and Manufacturing.

Learn more: [www.tridenttech.edu](http://www.tridenttech.edu)

## Programs Offered

### Associate Degrees

- Mechanical Engineering Technology
- General Technology
- Career Paths in:
  - Electrician: Automation and Industrial
  - Industrial Maintenance Mechanics
  - Machine Tool Technology
  - Welding

### Certificates

- Advanced Automation: Mechatronics
- Basic Machining and CNC Fundamentals
- Electrician: Automated Controls
- Electrician: Industrial
- Industrial Mechanic
- Mechanical Drafting
- Welding: Gas Metal Arc and Fluxed Cored Arc
- Welding: Gas Tungsten Arc
- Welding: Shielded Metal Arc