



R.J. Reynolds targets a highly-skilled workforce candidate pool

North Carolina-based R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company uses the ACT WorkKeys® system as part of its robust pre-hire screening and hiring process.

RESULTS:



46,325

individuals

in the region with ACT Workkeys NCRC



2,100+

hours saved

in testing and training time for new hires



90%+

improvement

in employee retention rate

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS USED:



Hiring best practices

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company is the second-largest tobacco company in the United States. The company's largest plant – Tobaccoville, a 2 million-square-foot facility constructed in 1986 – is located in the town of Tobaccoville, near Winston-Salem. The company also has manufacturing operations and a significant research-and-development facility in Winston-Salem. As its innovative manufacturing processes have become more technology driven, Reynolds reviewed this process, which included examining candidates' work experience and education background, conducting preliminary telephone screening and administering engagement surveys.

R.J. Reynolds began by conducting ACT job profiles for its production associate positions by an ACT authorized job profiler. What it learned in this process was which of the WorkKeys assessments aligned to skills needed and at what levels to ensure new hires were able to be successfully trained in its hired positions. From there, the company incorporated WorkKeys assessments into its hiring process. All new employees hired for manufacturing positions since 2012 have met the pre-hire screening requirements including the four WorkKeys assessments: Workplace Documents, Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Observation. The company has also experienced an increase in the diversity of its applicant pool, and can now report that 35% of the new hires in this employee base are members of racial/ethnic minority groups.

“R.J. Reynolds is proud of its increase in diversity hiring since deploying ACT WorkKeys solutions. Having a skilled and diverse workforce is important to our company and our community.”

Barbara Carter
Talent Requisition Partner—Regulatory
RAI Services Company

Partnerships, internships, apprenticeships

THE SOLUTION

R.J. Reynolds has been a corporate partner with Forsyth Technical Community College (ForsythTech) for many years. As a corporate partner, R.J. Reynolds has provided financial support to ForsythTech as well as participation at Open House and Career Fair events on campus. In addition, representatives from R.J. Reynolds serve on the employer advisory boards at the college that help to ensure program content is aligned to the needs of the manufacturing community.

R.J. Reynolds has also incorporated a robust internal apprenticeship program for Electronics and Instrumentation Technicians, sourced through local community colleges. The company uses WorkKeys assessments for entry into this advancement opportunity and has experienced greater program completion rates among participants who have earned entry-level WorkKeys scores. Several of the apprenticeship completers have been hired into full-time, related positions. Over 100 new employees have been promoted to higher positions within the company since WorkKeys solutions have been deployed.

The company requires all of its mechanical specialists to complete the Industrial Systems Technology/Machine Operator certificate program, offered up to three times a year as needed. R.J. Reynolds employees looking to be promoted to mechanical specialists and individuals seeking to gain employment at either R.J. Reynolds or another company are able to take the 16-week program four mornings or evenings per week. Since 2008, 180 students have successfully completed the program and earned the certificate. The college also offers an associate degree program in Electronics Technology. Graduates of this program have been hired by R.J. Reynolds as Electronics Repair Technicians.

In addition, to the apprentice program, the company also provides paid engineering internships to students enrolled in college engineering programs of study, providing them with real world experience.

Retention increased, Training time decreased

OUTCOMES

Since the introduction of the WorkKeys system into its pre-hire requirements for Production Associates, R.J. Reynolds has seen increases in retention and decreases in training time, and an increase in those hires being promoted to higher-level roles.

Below is data reported by R.J. Reynolds that show the benefit of incorporating ACT WorkKeys solutions into its hiring process and training programs:

- Improvements in employee retention rate: Over 90%
- Decrease in testing and training time for new hires: Over 2,100 hours saved
- Number of employees promoted into higher-level roles: Over 100

ACT reports the number of individuals in the region with an ACT WorkKeys NCRC is 46,325 (through August 2017).

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R.J. Reynolds has embraced the WorkKeys system and considers it as a strong tool to identify applicants who have the foundational skills to meet our stringent hiring requirements. The fact that it is a universal system, we know that all of the applicants have met the same criteria regardless of where they were tested. This has helped increase our candidate pool to enable hiring the best of the best.”

Barbara Carter

Talent Requisition Partner—Regulatory
RAI Services Company

SEGMENT OVERVIEW

As community engagement grew, R.J. Reynolds came to rely on partners like Forsyth Technical Community College to provide testing and to issue the corresponding ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)® credential.

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Forsyth Technical Community College greatly values the opportunity to partner with employers in the region to provide WorkKeys assessments, including R.J. Reynolds. We are always happy to schedule additional assessment sessions, as well as offer on-site testing at their facilities when needed.”

Juanita Murphy

CRC Coordinator/Advisor/Recruiter
Forsyth Technical Community College

ACT WORK READY COMMUNITIES



North Carolina is proud to have numerous ACT Work Ready Communities, a collection of counties leveraging the NCRC to close the skills gap and strengthen their region's economy.

See what other counties are work ready at www.workreadycommunities.org.