

From the Atlanta Business Chronicle:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2018/08/26/viewpoint-leading-manufacturing-teams-takes.html>

Viewpoint

## Viewpoint: Leading manufacturing teams takes the right training

Working with new and emerging leaders in more than 800 manufacturing plants a year, our team continued to hear, “I have the technical skills, but need help on the soft skills to be an effective leader,” or, “I need to better communicate my organization’s goals to team members.”

That had us wondering: How could the state’s second-largest industry — which employs more than 340,000 people — have difficulty training its managers on leadership skills? In speaking with those leaders, we realized many were promoted from within their plants. They were once workers on the shop floor and are now leading teams. They can tell you how to do the work, but don’t understand how to develop metrics, deal with conflict or effectively communicate with their teams.

These findings led the GaMEP team at Georgia Tech to collaborate with manufacturing leaders from metro Atlanta and across the state. The leaders at these companies we’ve worked with over the years, such as Seasons-4, Southern Aluminum Finishing and LioChem, provided insight into their managers’ needs and



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what defines success in their organizations. As a solution to this challenge our clients and other manufacturers were facing, we developed the Manufacturing Leadership Certificate, to address the necessary skills gap for leaders implementing or managing continuous improvement cultures in their plants.

Our first two program graduates had similarities aligned to the issues we were seeing and hearing. Chris Shipman graduated from Valdosta State University and began working for CJB Industries. He started as a lab technician and is now the production manager. He said, "For me, it was not just learning how to solve issues, but teaching my team how to solve them. Since implementing tactics I learned in class, our error rate has decreased, enabling us to make products faster and deliver them to customers quicker than before."

Similarly, Chantrey Reece of BorgWarner in Asheville, N.C., joined the company in 2005 as a freight unloader and is now the master scheduler, where he oversees final assembly and five machining departments. He had registered for our Lean Boot Camp class and then received an email announcing the certificate program.

"I looked into the certificate further and saw that it addressed a need for me," Reece said. "Although I had been with BorgWarner for years, I was new to my position, and it was the first time outside of my military career that I had to manage people."

The Manufacturing Leadership Certificate consists of five required and two elective courses. The certificate is taught by GaMEP team members, with years of practical experience working in manufacturing companies.

According to Training magazine's 2017 training industry report, 28 percent of organizations increased their staff from the year before and manufacturers, on average, spent \$1,200 per learner on training. The data showed us that not only were many individuals promoted from within, but they were also hired from other manufacturers, meaning they were products of their previous companies' internal training, or, in many cases, lack thereof.

We took this certificate idea and refined it to address specific areas such as: effective leadership practices, and building and engaging leadership teams; creating the right metrics and using them to optimize operations; hiring, training and coaching employees; efficient project management skills; technology

applications such as robotics, additive manufacturing and composites, and more. The result was an immediately implementable, hands-on, activity-based program.

“I not only learned the importance of good communication, well-defined processes and employee engagement,” Reece said, “but I learned how to be a good communicator, a leader for process improvement and how to engage my team so their voices are heard and they buy into the team and organizational goals.”

GaMEP is a program within Georgia Tech’s Enterprise Innovation Institute and is a member of the National MEP network supported by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). With offices in 10 regions across the state, GaMEP has served Georgia manufacturers since 1960. Through coaching and training, GaMEP offers solutions-based approaches designed to increase top-line growth and reduce bottom-line cost.