

**Starting Up**

**Mack Molding Still Working To Bridge 'Skills Gap'**

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**Progressive molder hosts another National Manufacturing Day, develops intern program.**

For the second straight year, [Mack Molding](#), Arlington, Vt., was among the plastics processors that took part in National Manufacturing Day, which was held Oct. 3. This year, Mack hosted students from regional high schools for a half-day program. The affair included a tour of the manufacturing area, where this leading custom processor makes parts for the high-tech commercial milkshake blender for f' real foods; a simulated product build by the students (conducted by the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center); and a discussion with Mack's Human Resources staff revolving around career paths and skills needed at Mack.

Mack is among a group of progressive processors looking for ways to bridge the so-called "[skills gap](#)" in [manufacturing](#). For the past four years, Mack has hosted a paid summer internship program for college students returning home to the New York/Vermont/Massachusetts area. "We started small with a just a handful of interns," notes Julie Horst, Mack's dir. Communications. "Last summer, we hosted 20 students. As the program grew in popularity, so did our expectations."

Under this program, any intern must be hired for a specific project that has been approved by Jeff Somple, Mack president. The project must also be completed during the course of a 10-12 week period. At program's end, each intern presents his/her project to their peers and senior management. "That not only builds their presentation skills, but also gives them a PowerPoint presentation to discuss with or forward to potential future employers," Horst says. "Additionally, they participate in weekly Lunch 'n Learn programs presented by Mack personnel on a variety of topics, including resume preparation, interview skills, business writing, etc. And, of course, they can put the entire experience on their resume."

Buoyed by the success of this program and sparked to do more by other National Manufacturing Day events, Mack decided to reach into the high schools and develop a half-day program focused on introducing them to modern manufacturing and potential job opportunities right here in their home state, Horst states.

Adds Kevin Dailey, Mack's dir. human resources, "Our expectations were to introduce Mack and possibly spark interest in manufacturing, engineering and other related careers. Looking at the numbers, with roughly one-third of all who attended signing up to return for more in-depth workshops in injection molding, machining, sheet metal fabrication, engineering and manufacturing, we feel we were successful. Feedback from both students and faculty also indicate that. But The real evidence of success will come in three-to-four years when we see if any of these students come back to us looking for full-time jobs."

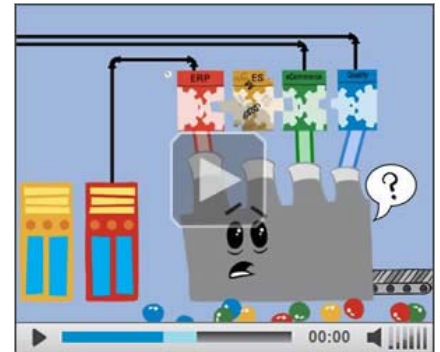
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Bonnie Simon, Mack manufacturing manager, points out all the parts that get assembled into the f' real foods high-tech commercial blender, shown in top image.



Terry Maynard (left) Mack molding manager, gives a primer on plastics injection molding to students during 'Made in Vermont' Days.



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