

8 Tips for Young People Entering the Industry from Top Executives

#1

Ask the right questions

“They have to ask the questions of what type of on-boarding programs do you have, what type of training do you offer, what is a career track in the organization and what is the history of employees being promoted from within. My advice to them is to get a well-rounded education, look for a company and culture that fits their own personality and their own interests.”

- *Gerry Helbig, president,
Curbell Plastics*

#2

Distribution is exciting

“It touches practically all aspects of our economy. Almost anything in our society is moved through distribution. It's a central point in streamlining the value chain between the manufacturer and the end user of a product. At its core, (distribution is) a simple business, but when you add scale, that scale adds complexity. For young people...interested in a complex system and driving efficiencies through a complex system, then distribution is probably a great field for them.”

- *Michael DeCata, president and CEO,
Lawson Products*

#3

Seek opportunities early

“I would encourage young people, even in middle school and high school, to take advantage of industry-sponsored competitions, such as the Fluid Power Challenge that's sponsored by the National Fluid Power Association.”

- *Judy Wojanis, president,
Wojanis Hydraulic*

#4

Study the industry closely

“Make sure that that's where their passion lies. If their passion lies in industrial distribution, whether that be on the manufacturing side or distribution side, my suggestion to them would be to dive in with both feet, to learn as much as they can about the industry, be a student of the industry, network with as many people that have been in the industry for a long time – people that have been successful. And I think that plus a lot of hard work will prove to be a very positive result for them, both professionally and monetarily over a long time.”

- *David Ruggles, president and CEO,
Martin Industrial Supply*

#5

Don't be afraid to fail; failure is a learning experience

“Find an organization that is aggressive and is looking to grow. And don't define your role too narrowly. Be prepared to volunteer for work assignments that may take you out of your comfort zone. Don't be afraid to fail because those failures tend to be great learning experiences as you move forward in your career.”

- *Dan Nowak, president and owner,
Falcon Fastening Solutions*

#6

Be a lifelong learner

“As technology changes, as customer needs change, all of those things require a contemporary focus on learning and staying refreshed and revitalized in serving customers. Financial literacy is extremely critical. When you think about moving products through multiple processes, every one of those steps has a value, and understanding the financial value or the quantitative value of the process steps along the way is also critical.”

- *Michael DeCata, president and CEO,
Lawson Products*

#7

Networking can pay dividends

“Investigate what careers exist in manufacturing and distribution before you make a long-term commitment in pursuit of your education. By doing that you'll develop connections and network in manufacturing and distribution, and I think that is probably the healthiest, easiest way to get into a career that is fun and good paying and can provide for a great future.”

- *Judy Wojanis, president,
Wojanis Hydraulic*

#8

Build financial, technical acumen

“Learn everything you can about computers and accounting. If you can do accounting and you understand how to use computers, you can apply yourself in any business. Any business runs on basic principles, and they're all accounting principles. Sales makes the boat float, but then you have to collect and you have to pay the bills. Be a whiz at accounting. And in this day and age, if you can't use a computer you're in trouble. Computer science is definitely something to focus on.”

- *Charles Brunson, CEO,
Capitol Coffee*

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