

Conversations

“Workforce-Feb.2016”

(March 6, 2016)

In the last “*REALITY CHECK*” article I wrote, there was a lot of talk about mechanical skills testing and how important it was. I received a lot of questions on this subject and I want to try to address them. I do realize that over half the Flexo companies do not have a mechanical skill requirement before being hired, that does not mean your operators don’t know what they are doing, just because you did not test them. Your ace operators most likely would pass with flying colors, but the operator who never seems to hit high standards, or can run jobs that are repetitive but struggles with anything new most likely is not as mechanically inclined as you want them to be.

The first year I started the Flexographic Trade School I had no mechanical skills testing requirement for students to enter the program, big mistake. Out of the 60 students we put in the program the first year about 25% passed. I knew then I had to do something different. We made mechanical skills testing a requirement to get in the program. This was not without concern that we would be leaving good people out who may not test that well but still have the aptitude. So I did my homework and discovered that only about 30% of the population was mechanically inclined. To prove out what we thought I decided to start a mixed class. All the students were tested I took the 3 highest graded students and 3 of the highest graded students that failed the test but were close. At the end I graduated 3 students and they all passed the mechanical test. We went out of our way to help the students that did not pass the mechanical skills test, but no matter what, they could not seem to retain or understand what was expected.

FTS now test all students and about 30% pass. Understand just because someone passes the test it does not mean that they are good employees, it just means they have the aptitude to learn how to do the job and has the potential to become an ace operator.

I understand today it is hard to find good people that want to work and even harder if they have to pass a mechanical skills test, but it is worth the time and effort if you have a plant full of mechanically inclined employees always looking to move up and have the ability to do so.