

Board Converting News

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The **ONLY** Weekly Publication Serving the U.S. and Canadian Corrugated and Folding Carton Industries

PCG Attracting High School Students To Careers In Corrugated Packaging

by Len Prazych

Attracting and retaining employees into corrugated and folding carton manufacturing continues to be one of the most challenging issues our industry faces. Presentations at association meetings and discussions among plant owners often involve attracting and retaining the "next generation" of employees, specifically Millennials, who will soon represent about 50 percent of the U.S. workforce.

There is a school of thought, however, that says that attracting Millennials to careers in the corrugated and folding carton industries is difficult because they are already too old and will have likely begun their careers in other more popular, glamorous or "sexy" industries that don't usually involve the manufacturing of paper and paperboard packaging.

"If you want to attract young people into our industry, I believe we have to get to them in the high schools," said Richard Goldberg, Vice President of Operations at Middletown, New York based President Container Group (PCG). "We already have programs for college students through the fine work of the International Corrugated Packaging Foundation

(ICPF). What about attracting the interest of students while they are in high school so they can develop an interest in corrugated manufacturing? Then they can learn where to go for packaging programs in college."

Goldberg noted that many college programs focus on management, structural and graphic design and customer service. But what about operations? "The

corrugated industry also needs machine operators and production workers. Where will these workers come from? Not every high school student has the desire or the opportunity to go to college," he said. "We need to expose high school students to an industry that they don't even know exists."

To that end, Goldberg struck up a relationship with



Two students in Nick Longo's Engineering class at Valley Central High School begin to cut out and assemble a corrugated board project they also designed.

Nick Longo, a Technology Education teacher at Valley Central High School in nearby Montgomery, New York, who visited PCG with other invited members of the local Council of Industry three years ago. Longo saw the opportunity and the valuable resource PCG extended to the school and decided to incorporate a lesson in corrugated manufacturing into his Introduction to Engineering class.

PCG provided all the board and supplies the students needed to learn about corrugated and to build something using it. Since Longo started the class, students have constructed corrugated sleds, boats, chairs, and snowboards. One group built a corrugated bridge.



This student's Captain America shield was created entirely of corrugated.



One student designed and built a corrugated sled and safety helmet.

Even Longo admitted to not completely understanding manufacturing until he visited PCG, saw the machines in operation and watched how a corrugated box was made.

"At the beginning of my course, we talk about the different types of engineering they will see," said Longo. "They learn the vocabulary of engineering and

Goldberg visited the class regularly over the course of the semester, beginning with an introductory presentation showing Longo's students a video on PCG and what it does and an AICC video on the importance of safety. Students received blades, gloves and safety glasses.

"It's all about exposing students to the world of corrugated that most of them don't even know exists," said Goldberg. "It's manufacturing. But they don't really know what does that mean until they see a video or actually visit a plant to see the machines running to understand what corrugated manufacturing is all about."

Even Longo admitted to not completely understanding

manufacturing until he visited PCG, saw the machines in operation and watched how a corrugated box was made. They are introduced to the concept of corrugated. Then they are challenged to design and build something out of corrugated. They learn CAD and become the engineers of their project. I help facilitate the process. The students are doing so much more than just gluing pieces of corrugated together."

Students attend Nick Longo's engineering class every morning of a semester to work on their projects for about 40 minutes at a time. Goldberg has made regular visits to Longo's daily class at Valley Central to consult, teach and help the students through their projects while instilling some foundational lessons in creativity and real world problem solving. He expressed his satisfaction at watching students learn



Several Valley Central students in Nick Longo's class engineered and built a corrugated bridge that supported more than 800 pounds.

about corrugated. "They come in to the morning class still half asleep. When they begin working on their corrugated projects, they wake up, they are engaged, they are learning and they are happy. I wish I can get some of my employees to be so enthusiastic!"

PCG continues to provide opportunities for high school interns who want to experience a world-class manufacturing environment, whether it be for community service, something they would like to study in college or perhaps, a future career in the corrugated industry. "Our door is open to every kid within a hundred miles of here to take a tour of our plant," said Goldberg. "I want them to know that there is a potential career for them here. Whether its one student or five, we are gaining an interest in what we do. Spread over the entire industry, how many students could we attract?"

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Longo Wins Manufacturing Champion Educator Award

Nick Longo was recently honored by the Manufacturers Association of the Hudson Valley with its Manufacturing Champions Educator Award. He teaches 7th grade technology and a High School Engineering Class that he pioneered in the fall of 2013. With the help of Richard Goldberg and the support of PCG, Longo's students have engineered a variety of structures using corrugated as the media.

Goldberg, VP of Operations at PCG and a member of the Council of Industry's Board of

Directors, presented Longo to more than 150 attendees at the recent Awards Breakfast.

“Nick was truly excited about the opportunity that PCG and manufacturing was going to pro-

vide to his students,” said Goldberg. “I've learned that Nick is a true teacher. He lights up when he teaches his students and the reactions he gets from them is incredible.”

“Thank you for recognizing me, but it's all about the students,” said Longo. “If PCG hadn't opened their doors to us, they wouldn't have these opportunities. They didn't understand what manufacturing was until they stepped into the plant. They were awed at watching the machines producing corrugated boxes,

something they would never have had the opportunity to see. We need to continue the partnership between manufacturing and the schools. It will only lead to better things.”



Richard Goldberg, VP of Operations at PCG, left, presented Nick Longo with the 2017 Manufacturing Champions Educator Award.