

## Irwin Telescopic Seating Company Employees Upgrade Skills

### Irwin Telescopic Seating Company

#### Retraining at:

Lake Land  
College

#### Courses Taken:

- × Mechanical Drive Systems
- × Fluid Power Systems
- × Electrical Systems
- × Motor Controls
- × PLCs

Skilled workers have been in short supply for an Altamont, Illinois plant that manufactures bleachers and seats for gymnasiums and auditoriums. But Irwin Telescopic Seating



Company has found a profitable way to adapt their employees to the specific technological needs of the company. Several of Irwin's employees have participated in manufacturing training at Lake Land College's Center for Business and Industry.

"It's been a way for us to bridge the gap in our workforce between folks coming on board without the skills they need to work with hi-tech pieces of equipment and productive employees," said Rusty Conner, Plant Manager for Irwin Telescopic. "There

aren't that many people out there in the workforce who walk in the door with the exact skills we need. Lake Land College has helped us develop the skilled workforce we have today."

Conner said Irwin Telescopic has become more self-sufficient now that its own employees can repair equipment, rather than outsourcing repairs, and has reduced production downtime by 25 percent as a result of the Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology (AM/IST) training his employees have received at Lake Land. "Now not only do we now have a staff that's capable of doing most of our own repairs, but we've also integrated some of the things we've learned into our design, our control circuitry, and our systems," Conner said.

"There is a big need in our area for workers skilled in manufacturing technology," said Terry Smith, Lake Land College instructor. "Automation demands are hitting us like a tidal wave. As machinery changes, so do the skill needs of the manufacturers."

And as the face of manufacturing does change, so has Lake Land's response to the needs of its community, including business and industry. Increasing foreign competition and other factors have forced American manufacturers to streamline production by increasing technology. Jobs performing single-task industrial work, such as assembly line production, are on the decline. Workers who are able to understand more technical processes involving many different systems that interact with each other are in demand.

To help its local manufacturing community remain competitive in the global economy, Lake Land College's Center for Business and Industry offers such courses as mechanical drive systems, fluid power systems, electrical systems, motor controls, electro-fluid power, programmable logic controls (PLC), and quality assurance.

Lake Land College has been providing employee training services for more than 20 years, mostly at the companies' locations. Over the last few years, through its hands-on AM/IST manufacturing skills training lab, college personnel have worked with foundries and with manufacturers of cabinets, automotive parts, printers, plastic containers, and more. "We see ourselves as a major economic development team in this area," Smith said.

Irwin Telescopic has been sending its employees for training to Lake Land College for several years. The company's staff members in the engineering department have taken electrical and PLC courses, and employees in the maintenance and manufacturing departments have studied areas such as applications, electrical and PLC.

"We've been able to use the technology we learned there not only in our manufacturing process, but also in product design," Conner said. Conner said he would recommend Lake Land's AM/IST manufacturing skills training lab for any company interested in obtaining or developing its skilled workforce.

This product was funded by a grant awarded under the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative as implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration. The information contained in this product was created by a grantee organization and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. All references to non-governmental companies or organizations, their services, products, or resources are offered for informational purposes and should not be construed as an endorsement by the Department of Labor. This product is copyrighted by the institution that created it and is intended for individual organizational, non-commercial use only.

 Lake Land College

