

# Developing Talent

## Keeping Employees at the Forefront

by Jesse Schelitzche



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***“As the MPMA continues to promote and fund workforce development issues within our industry, we need to remind ourselves the best way to move the industry forward is to create opportunities that let individuals learn and excel.”***

There is an inspirational story\* that many people have shared about a man who found a cocoon for a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared and he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared stuck.

The man decided to help the butterfly and with a pair of scissors he cut open the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. Something was strange. The butterfly had a swollen body and shriveled wings. The man watched the butterfly, expecting it to take on its correct proportions, but nothing changed.

The butterfly stayed the same. It was never able to fly. In his kindness and haste the man did not realize that the butterfly's struggle to get through the small opening of the cocoon is nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight.

When we coach and teach others it is helpful to recognize when people need to do things for themselves. It is also helpful to know that struggle may change that person for years to come.

As the MPMA continues to promote and fund workforce development issues within our industry, we need to remind ourselves that the best way to move the industry forward is to create opportunities that let individuals learn and excel.

The main article in this issue discusses the initiatives with programs we're supporting like TITANS of CNC: Academy and developing teams on your shop floor. To break these examples down even further, both of these ideas revolve around training and promoting individuals to become great. Sure, we can train our staff to become experts. But we should also be driven to create employees who may decide to do great things outside of our four walls.

I'm a second generation owner of Imagineering Machine Inc., and the former owners started as machinists at Ultra Machining Company (UMC). I remember their stories about numerous employees from that company who went on to start their own machine shops around Minnesota. Upon hearing their stories, it didn't strike me that any of them left UMC out of anger, disrespect, or boredom. Many went on to run their own businesses because they were trained how to become great at their craft.

By offering opportunities to our employees that include on-the-job training, off-site seminars/workshops, the soon-to-be MPMA Academy, or allowing time for traditional education at a local college or university, we're showing our dedication not only to our companies, but to the individuals who work for us.

There is no doubt that there will be tough times when some of your top employees come to tell you they're leaving for new opportunities. The initial feelings of loss or betrayal should be replaced with excitement for the new opportunities to come for your employees. It's hard to accept when a key employee leaves or a young employee you took under your wing decides to move on. Being the ultimate optimist, I try to remind myself that we all benefit from more well-trained employees who can go on to do great things.

I recently listened to an interview with Kim Polese, one of the creators of Javascript. During that interview, she described how after working on the Java project while at Sun Microsystems, she decided to branch off to run her own company with a few other employees knowing there was a huge opportunity with this new product. Rather than become angry or resentful when Polese and her team informed the company of their decision, Sun Microsystems funded the new venture with the best of intentions. The result was a future IPO and many new products that changed the internet and technology forever.

As we work to develop talent that will improve our own businesses, let's keep the employees at the forefront of our decisions. Think about what will set them up for long-term success, regardless of where that might take them. In the long run, we will all be beneficiaries of their successes. **PM**

\* The butterfly struggle story is known by many different titles. It has been adapted from a story created by Sonaira D'Avila, according to writer Paul Coelho's blog, has been referenced in Frank Dupree's book, *Metamorphosis*, and variations of it have been cited by many authors over the years.