

Bremen Welcomes HL-A

On July 19, 2001, HL-A, Georgia Quick Start and West Central Technical College signed their third training plan agreement at the company's facility in Bremen. Tetsuro Komaki, president of HL-A, was on hand, along with West Central Tech's President Janet Ayers and Jeff Lynn of Quick Start, to sign the agreement, which ensures another positive link in the business and educational community of Haralson County.

The facility employs approximately 82 people and has plans to expand that number to 192 by December of 2002.

"We are excited to see this kind of development in our county," noted Don Rhodes, vice president of the First National Bank of Georgia and chairman of the Haralson County Development Authority. "We hope to continue a long relationship with this fine model of world-class manufacturing." Rhodes, who also serves on the board of West Central Tech, was present for the signing, along with his father, Edgar Rhodes, who serves on the State Board of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education.

HL-A, a supplier to Honda, first came to Georgia in 1998 as an extension

of its headquarters in Selma, Ala. Quick Start was involved from the very beginning when the company decided to build the plant in Bremen to make zinc die casts for door locks on Honda's cars. A team of project leaders from Quick Start went to Miyazaki, Japan, to conduct a project study and returned to the United States to train the first 25 employees. Progress was so effective that the company asked Quick Start to go to Japan a second time in 1999, this time to study door-latch manufacturing. This expansion meant an increase of 55 employees, as well as a dramatic increase in the physical plant's size in Bremen.

In the spring of 2001, Quick Start returned a third time. Soon, the Bremen facility will be manufacturing outside door mirrors and handles in addition to the lock assemblies. This third expansion also added the somewhat complicated step of painting the products.

West Central Tech's President Janet Ayers noted the important relationship between the company, Quick Start and the local technical college, which is expanding its operations dramatically just down the road from HL-A.

"Our technical colleges work hand-in-hand with business and industry in

Georgia," explains Ayers, who grew up in Haralson County. "Fifty-two percent of our citizens leave the county every day to go to work, which is a drain on the county's income. With the HOPE Scholarship and the Workforce Investment Act passed by the legislature, no Georgian who has been laid off is without access to some retraining, either by way of traditional enrollment in post-secondary schools or by certificate training for specific job skills," says Ayers.

Companies like HL-A are the beneficiaries of these programs. Workers can develop new skills or enhance those they have in an on-going effort to improve quality of life.

Haralson County, which is a Tier 1 county, was very dependent on the textile industry for many years. When that industry began to dry up in recent decades, local eco-



Above: Mike Burnett, HL-A Plant Manager, with an automotive mirror his company will soon produce at its Bremen facility.
Right: Tammy James inspects products at HL-A.



Quick Start's Service Industry Program Celebrates Ten Years

conomic development teams comprised of business leaders and politicians began actively courting manufacturing companies like HL-A.

"There are a lot of people who don't have time to take off a few years and go back to school. They've been laid off and they need to find work as quickly as possible. I see these certificate programs as a 'quick response' for these workers. They make it possible for them to learn new skills and find jobs in the new industries coming to the area," Ayers adds.

"West Central Technical College will be here to assist you for the long-term," Ayers promised the HL-A gathering, "and we greatly appreciate your company's decision to come to Bremen."

Joan Young, president of the Haralson County Chamber of Commerce, is equally appreciative of HL-A's presence in Bremen.

"We were one of 50 cities in six states that the company was considering when they decided to come here. We had lost almost 5,000 textile jobs and badly needed a new industry. Since HL-A came, they have not stopped expanding. They were instrumental in helping us re-establish a manufacturing base in the county," she explains.

Young believes HL-A is an especially good model for manufacturing and sees the value of its presence in terms of local employment. "These are local jobs for local people. Just what we need!" she adds enthusiastically.

Haralson County is in the process of building a second business park not far from HL-A. WestPort Business Park will have 170 acres devoted to technology, light industry and distribution center businesses. The business park will have fiber optic capabilities to provide high-speed Internet service at the same level as is available in Metro Atlanta.

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Pictured here is part of the Service Industry team at Quick Start (l-r): Nick Morning, Liette Utt, Sandra Morris and Mary Fornoff.

This year, Quick Start celebrates a decade of assisting service industries across Georgia with successful start-ups or expansions. During this time, we trained new employees of many national and international service companies.

Through Quick Start, employees are trained to positively interact with customers, operate complex computer systems, and work together effectively.

The Quick Start service industry program, like its manufacturing counterpart, provides comprehensive training services at no cost to qualified new and expanding companies. Probably the question that is most often asked about our service industry program is, "What is a service industry?" You may be surprised to learn that our definition is fairly broad.

With few exceptions, most non-manufacturing and non-retail operations that are primarily "back-office" in nature may qualify for Quick Start training assistance. In-bound customer contact centers; regional, national and international headquarters; billing and remittance centers; consolidated shared-services centers; and select e-business enterprises have all qualified for Quick Start training assistance when creating new jobs.

While qualified businesses are different — some provide banking/financial, telecommunications, insurance, or hospitality services while others provide transportation or customer service support for manufacturing companies — what they all have in common is the need for a large number of employees to have a strong balance of interpersonal and technical skills.

To provide training that meets this need, we conduct a job analysis for each service company to determine training requirements. Most service industry training programs are quite extensive — three to 10 weeks in duration. Our goal with each service company is to add training and business value, whether developing new training programs or enhancing existing programs.

Programs developed for each company may include training in a company's business and key processes; commercial and proprietary business software; communications and other interpersonal skills, telephone etiquette and call-management; problem-solving; service/product knowledge; service policies and procedures; and leadership development.

Quick Start's training program for service industries was formally initiated in 1991. Our first projects included training for Equifax's consumer information center established in Marietta (500 employees) and Holiday Inn Worldwide's international headquarters (1,000 employees).

Quick Start recently completed training projects with E*Trade's customer support operation (650 employees) and GEICO Direct's regional operations center located in Macon (2,000 employees). Current projects include AFLAC's worldwide headquarters located in Columbus (1,000 employees).

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