

The Three 'A's to Successful Employees

[Excerpt from Rick Duimstra with Applied Engineering]

Applied Engineering, located in Yankton, SD is a manufacturer of precision machined parts and assemblies primarily for the aerospace industry.

As many manufacturers are, Applied is proactive in working to inform students, parents, grandparents, educators and the general public on the importance of manufacturing to our economy and the career opportunities in manufacturing.

Manufacturing is not what many think of when they reflect on factories of the past: **we are not** dirty, dark and dangerous – **we are not** a last choice career - **we are not** the 'loser' job as many may view manufacturing.

Today's factories are clean, well-lit and contain complex machine tools, robots, etc. to manufacture product. There are tremendous skilled opportunities and demand for manufacturing positions.

As we have the opportunity to show and talk to students about the diversity of career choices that there are in manufacturing by hosting tours and visiting classrooms, we talk about what it takes to be employed in any career. We talk about what we call the '3 A's': attitude, aptitude and appetite.

There are 2 sets of skills we all need to be a success:

1. Hard, or technical skills for the career, and
2. Soft skills – this is where the 3 A's reside

We tell students that we will hire for the 3 A's before we will hire for technical skills. What? Why?

There are many resources available to help students learn the technical skills – that is, we can help them learn the skill in many ways – schools, on the job training, mentoring, etc.

It is difficult to teach soft skills including the 3 A's and have them truly 'take hold'! As stated above, we can readily teach technical skills (if the individual has the aptitude for the job); it is much more difficult to change attitude and appetite (showing up for work every day, truly wanting to do your best).

If a potential employee shows good 3 A skill set even though they do not have all or any of the technical skills for the position, they have a very good chance of being hired.

If a potential employee has good technical skills but questionable 3A skills, chances of becoming employed are quite reduced.

Bottom line: There are resources to teach technical skills. The 3 A's are difficult to teach and have them take hold – this is the responsibility of the student or potential employee. (Have you ever had the misfortune to work with someone who was very good technically, but from a 3A perspective very much lacking? Who wants to work with someone like this? We don't!)

We also talk with students about the difference between a 'can't do' and a 'won't do'.

We are all here to help students and employees with any 'can't do' they may have – how can we help? What do you need? This is what we do: friends, parents, grandparents, educators,

A 'Won't do' is much more difficult. It is an attitude issue (one of the 3A's). We will ask students, "Who is responsible for your attitude?" – they are! It is tough to help if they choose not to want to change and help themselves!

At times you will find a 'can't do' disguised as a 'won't do'. Overtly they say: "I can't do it!" when really they are covertly saying: "I won't do it!"

**Employers want to
hire people with
the 3 A's:**

Attitude

Aptitude

Appetite