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**Tech Talk** is a publication of the Mohawk Valley Applied Technology Corporation. MVATC is an affiliate of the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership and the New York State Office of Science, Technology and Academic Research.

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## MVATC Named Partner in New York State Pollution Prevention Institute

New York State Created the Pollution Prevention Institute to help businesses clean the environment, and reduce their costs, by reducing the use of toxic chemicals, cutting waste, and more efficiently using raw materials and energy. The institute is centered at the Rochester Institute of Technology and is a partnership among Clarkson University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, SUNY at Buffalo and MVATC.

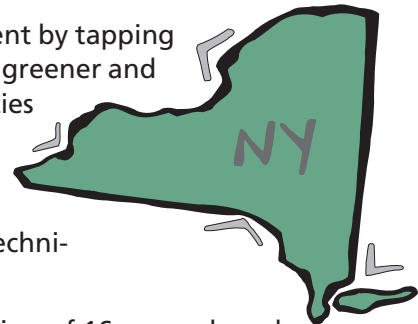
The benefits to New York will be demonstrated through the successful implementation of pollution prevention strategies. This will have immediate impact on the environment and will result in significant economic benefits for business and industry throughout the state.



### New York State Pollution Prevention Institute

In 2005, the Federal Toxics Release Inventory showed that New York companies reported 312 million pounds of toxic-chemical waste generated and 42 million pounds released into the environment. These figures point to an untapped opportunity to reduce the impact of toxins on human health and the environment. Moreover, regulatory action at the state, national and international level indicates a shift toward reducing the use of toxic and hazardous substances and an emphasis on product recycling. A 2003 report by the New York State Assembly found that lack of a focused research and development center and on-site technical assistance for businesses was a major shortcoming in pollution prevention.

The Pollution Prevention Institute will address this environment by tapping into academic research to make technology and manufacturing greener and help bring pollution reduction processes to market. Center activities will include: the identification and implementation of practical prevention methods, cost-effective equipment and safe materials; the development of professional education and training programs and the creation of a communications pipeline for technical assistance.

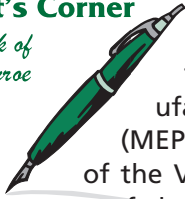


An additional component of RIT's proposal includes the creation of 16 research and development test beds, or technological laboratories across the state, through partnerships with Clarkson University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the State University of New York at Buffalo. Capabilities of these test beds will include: environmental engineering of nanomaterials and printing applications at RIT, green processing and biofuels testing at Clarkson, polymer processing and testing at Rensselaer and sustainable chemical processes at the University of Buffalo.

MVATC's role in this process is twofold. The first is find the environmental issues facing the companies in our region and to get the best minds in the university on finding cost effective solutions. The second is to take the good work of the researchers and share it with as many of our companies as possible. This program augments MVATC's current "green" services. Your entry way into this entire system is through MVATC by contacting Paul MacEnroe, [paulm@mvatc.com](mailto:paulm@mvatc.com) or 315 793-8050.

## President's Corner

*From the desk of  
Paul MacEnroe*



I just returned from the national conference for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program and was reminded of the Verizon commercial. MVATC is one of the 10 Manufacturing Extension Centers in New York State. As part of the national and state systems we are backed by a strong network. This network includes a field staff of nearly 800 specialists in business and manufacturing that provides direct assistance to customers throughout the U.S. These specialists are employees of MEP-affiliated programs—or MEP centers—throughout the country. MEP supports 59 centers in 443 locations in every state and in Puerto Rico. Like MVATC these centers provide manufacturers with an array of services that focus on growth, productivity, and efficiency, plus they are resources that we can call on to meet your specific needs.

Beyond the federal system there is a state wide NYSTAR system. NYSTAR supports technology development, innovation and commercialization leading to economic growth in New York State. In addition to supporting

MVATC, the NYSTAR network includes: Centers of Excellence, Gen\*NY\*sis Centers, College Applied Research and Technology Centers, Centers for Advanced Technology, Strategically Targeted Academic Research Centers and the Advanced Research Centers. These are university based research institutions that are charged with helping New York State businesses improve.

Also standing behind us in our network is the New York Pollution Prevention Institute. This program is outlined further in this newsletter.

Our network is your network. This is just a reminder that we have the tools and resources to meet whatever your need is. Any of our staff members can help you access these resources and we are just a phone call or email away.

On behalf of all of us here at MVATC, have a great summer and if there is anything that we can do to let you focus more on your family than on your work, let us know.



# New York State Industrial Effectiveness Program (IEP) Provides Funding for Manufacturers

## The Process is Simple and the Rewards are Very Generous

The Empire State Developments (ESD) mission is to provide the highest level assistance and service to businesses in order to encourage economic investment and prosperity in New York State. One of the programs they offer is the Industrial Effectiveness Program (IEP). By sharing the cost of consultant-based improvement assistance, the IEP program helps restore the competitiveness of qualified small and medium sized manufacturing companies and industry groups in New York State.

By leveraging IEP Grants, MVATC has assisted area manufacturers in making dramatic, measurable improvements in all aspects of their operations. The process is simple and the rewards are very generous. After going through a brief prequalification process, your company invests in a full operational assessment which produces a list of recommendations. Typical recommended projects may include such

things as: Strategic Planning, Lean Enterprise, ISO Quality Services, Software Selection, Sales and Marketing Assistance, Training Within Industry (TWI) Employee Training and Operations Improvement and Process Analysis. Once you have decided which projects you would like to pursue, an application is submitted to Empire State Development. *MVATC can assist you with all phases of the IEP grant application and program management.*

The IEP Grant assistance will share the least of the following costs:

- 1-24 employees, the lesser of 2/3 of eligible consultant costs or 50% of the total project cost, up to \$25,000.
- 25-100 employees, the lesser of 2/3 of the eligible consultant cost or 50% of the total project cost, up to \$40,000.
- Over 100 employees, 50% of the eligible consultant cost, up to \$50,000.

Contact Cory Albrecht at MVATC for additional information on how the Industrial Effectiveness Program can help improve your business.

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# Critical Steps To Becoming An Outstanding Communicator

Strong communication skills are essential to being an effective manager. In fact, studies prove that it's the most important skill for leaders today. Good communication is critical regardless of your position in the organization.

Listed below are a number of critical steps you can take to ensure those who you are communicating with, get your message:

- **Be direct when the situation demands it.** Say what you mean clearly. Do not confuse your message behind phrases that are difficult to understand or soften its impact.
  - **When making a request or giving a directive, be polite but decisive.** You can thank your employees for doing extra work without being apologetic.
  - **Take a moment to think before speaking.** What is it you really want to say? What emotions do you want to express? Which ones do you not want to express? How can you communicate them through your use of language?
  - **Make sure you have all the information before making a statement.** You can either delay the discussion or ask questions first to help you collect the necessary information.
  - **Be clear and specific about what you want.** If you are not sure that the people to whom you are talking have understood you, ask them to repeat your message.
  - **Always keep your own manager informed.** Your superior wants to be prepared, to look good and in control. If you embarrass him or her, it will come back to haunt you.
  - **Don't hide bad news.** The grapevine will get to your boss before you do, robbing you of the chance to put your slant on the issue.
  - **Speak confidently.** Present your ideas in a few words and clearly. Your body language should reinforce your self-confidence. Lean forward and maintain eye contact on critical issues.
  - **Know your listeners. Who are they?** What do they already know? How much detail do they need? What have they experienced prior to your message? What do they want to hear? Are they paying attention? Do they care about you and what you have to say?
  - **Work at listening.** Most people speak at an average rate of 120 words per minute. The average listening capacity is about four times faster. The difference can cause your mind to wander when someone is speaking unless you focus on the speaker's words. Don't plan your response while the person is speaking.
  - **Focus on solutions rather than problems.** Whether you are communicating verbally or in writing, show that you not only have a solution but are willing to take responsibility to apply your solution.
  - **Ask for your employees' opinions.** This will make your employees feel valued and can have a positive impact on their commitment. Demonstrate you really heard their ideas by acting on those ideas. If you can't act, explain as soon as possible.
  - **Don't assume that what you know, everyone knows.** Your employees won't know unless you make a deliberate attempt to carefully convey the information.
  - **Avoid the possibility of rumors developing.** Take the attitude that it is better to give too much information than too little. Keep a flip chart in your area. Write news on it regularly. Allow your people to write questions that they want to deal with at your meetings.
  - **Begin conversations positively.** If there is the possibility for conflict, start off with something you both agree on. Build on areas that you have in common to establish a positive atmosphere.
  - **Use positive language.** Be conscious of both what you say and how you say it. Don't get the reputation of being a pessimist, someone who is very good at finding holes in the ideas of others.
  - **Solicit the other's perspective.** In a negotiating situation, use questions to find out what the other person's concerns and needs might be. Try: "What do you need from me on this?" "What are your concerns about what I am asking?"
  - **State your needs.** Just as you need to know the other party's needs, he or she needs to know what you need. It is important to state not only what you need but also why you need it. Often, disagreement occurs over the method for solving an issue, not the overall goal.
  - **Prepare your options beforehand.** If your preferred solution isn't acceptable, know how far you will bend. Anticipate why the other party may resist your suggestion and be prepared to counter with another idea.
  - **Don't argue.** You argue when you want to prove the other person is wrong, not to make progress in reaching an agreement, whatever the situation. Arguments put down the other person and often result in a power struggle.
  - **Determine when written communication is preferable.** Is a major decision required? Is the issue complex? Does the matter need to be studied prior to a decision? Under those circumstances, a written document is preferable.
  - **Keep written communication brief and specific.** Focus on the meat-not the potatoes. Make your first paragraph short. Get your reader's interest and keep it by writing clearly and concisely.
- Does your organization need to improve their overall communication skills? If you desire more information on this topic or related topics, give MVATC a call at 315-793-8050 or e-mail to [davida@mvatc.com](mailto:davida@mvatc.com).

# Top 10 Commandments of Customer Service

It's a fact of business life. To keep your competitive edge, you must constantly upgrade the quality of the service you offer. There's no getting to a certain point and then stopping. If you do that, your competition will quickly pass you by. But how do you continuously achieve service improvement? If you follow this list of the Top 10 Commandments of Customer Service, you can achieve a level of service that will help you outdistance the competition:

1. Care about your employees and treat them well. Employee relations mirror your customer relations.
2. Praise and recognize your employees often. The more, the better. You need to have both formal and informal programs in place.
3. Know and listen to your customers. If you don't really know your customers, how can you know what they value?
4. Believe that customer service drives profit. Truly believe. Your bottom line can be positively impacted if your service is good enough.
5. Train and empower your people. How can you expect your employees to handle irate customers very well if you've never taught them how to do it?
6. Clarify your service strategy. What level of service do you want to offer and how are you going to accomplish it?
7. Ruthlessly weed out all policies and procedures that are customer unfriendly. Many companies put up numerous barriers to good customer service. Get rid of all your "rupoles" (rules, policies and procedures) that stand between you and your customer.
8. The company culture must be totally fanatical about customer service. Everything must be focused on serving the customer.
9. Continually improve your service levels. Be perpetually dissatisfied with your level of service. Everyone in your organization needs to continually look for ways to improve your service.
10. Remember that everyone has customers. Internal customer service is just as important as service to the external customer. Do not allow different departments, divisions or organizations to deliver poor service to each other.

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