

# Employers Recruiting Techies

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## EMPLOYERS RECRUITING TECHIES

NTID Brings Students That Are Deaf Or Hard-Of-Hearing And Employers Together

Dell Tool of Rochester, New York, typifies the American company of the 2000s—a small business scrambling to meet intense competition with too few hands.

Paul and Gary Jordan, cousins who run the 19-year-old family business had tried everything to attract workers—even posting signs by the side of the road.

“Our biggest problem was getting people with machine skills who could read blueprints and inspect their work,” Gary said.

But then Gary stumbled upon a solution right in his own backyard.

He heard that the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), a college of Rochester Institute of Technology, offered a computer-based machining program. Its graduates represented an untapped source of workers and a partial solution for resolving the chronic labor shortage that plagues the industry.

The Jordans say they’ve benefited from this valuable source of skilled workers. “I feel it gives us an edge over the person down the street that’s in the same situation,” Gary said.

“Deaf people are definitely an untapped source,” said Mark Seeger, customer relations manager for Sprint. His 150-member department includes 20 managers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Seeger said Sprint has found that deaf people bring to the job a different kind of training and preparedness. “They are extremely conscientious, and tend to have a survivor’s instinct because throughout their lives, nothing has been handed to them. They approach their jobs with the positive attitude of “I’m going to work this out.”

NTID/RIT is the world’s first and largest technological career-oriented college for deaf students. NTID/RIT students come from all 50 states and other countries. They are trained by faculty recruited from business and industry, and graduates specialize in a variety of technical fields at a variety of degree levels. For example, associate degree programs are offered in Computer-Aided Drafting Technology, Digital Imaging and Publishing Technology, and Applied Computer Technology. More than 200 different bachelor’s and graduate degree programs are offered in business, engineering, graphic arts, science, technical and professional communications, among others.

With 95 percent of its graduates who choose to enter the workforce employed, NTID credits its success to two critical areas: Co-op experiences, a requirement for most majors in this career oriented college, and its Center on Employment. Co-op experiences let employer and student try each other out, relatively risk free, allowing employers to observe firsthand the skills of prospective employees while filling short term staffing needs. It also provides employers the opportunity to diversify their workforce, a topic that, at times, can be sensitive.

“Let’s face it. Some employers feel that there is a significant barrier to hiring a deaf employee and integrating him or her into the work environment,” says Allen Vaala, director of RIT’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf Center on Employment.

That’s exactly why NTID developed a training program. “Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People,” to help employers address their concerns. NTID employment specialists assist in effective communication and integration of deaf employees in the workplace. They provide information on communication strategies, accommodations, and even loan assistive equipment such as TTYs, and make on-site visits to speak with students and their supervisors. Vaala, formerly director of university relations and college recruiting for

Eastman Kodak Company, attended a Working Together workshop while at Kodak, and said he learned a great deal.

"I realized that it really is not difficult to work with a deaf or hard-of-hearing hire," he said. "Kodak and other companies are looking for top high-tech workers who must be computer literate in all fields. The majors that NTID has in computer-related fields strengthen the college's ability to produce the kind of graduates employers are looking for."

Kodak now has a full-fledged recruitment drive at NTID, along with IBM, The University of Michigan, Ford Motor Company, Goldman Sachs, Paychex, and the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), to name a few.

TIAA-CREF's Linda Lippert found NTID's Center on Employment to be of tremendous benefit. "The NTID students we have hired are hard working and dedicated," she said. "They are reliable, punctual, flexible and able to learn quickly."

"Paychex has been actively involved with NTID for the past three years," said Senior Human Resources Representative Marijo Thompson. "NTID has done a terrific job preparing students for the workforce and working with us to make the transition successful."

Another employer, the Federal Aviation Administration, agrees. "NTID students are very knowledgeable, productive, and very easy to work with," said Donald P. Thomas, Manager, Reproduction Division. "They are an asset to any organization."

Because finding capable, ambitious and hardworking employees is critical to the success of any business, many employers, large and small have found a valuable, untapped source in hiring deaf workers.

For additional information about hiring one of the school's graduates or starting a co-op arrangement through the school, call the NTID Center on Employment at 585-475-6219 (v/TTY); email at [ntidcoe@rit.edu](mailto:ntidcoe@rit.edu); or visit the NTID Web site [www.rit.edu/ntid/coops/jobs](http://www.rit.edu/ntid/coops/jobs).