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## ASA Launches Project TALENT To Help Members Attract And Retain Needed Workforce For Growth

**Project TALENT is a vital initiative to insure ASA members have the ability to adequately staff their organizations for growth.**

**[Chicago, IL, January 3, 2020]** - Today the American Supply Association launched Project TALENT, a unified effort of its members to fully staff their companies with qualified employees. ASA member companies are faced with the retirement of a significant number of their leadership and employees over the next five years, and must fill these positions at a time America is facing a significant labor shortage. The overarching aim of Project TALENT is three fold; to craft an industry narrative that resonates with the potential hires, to help ASA member companies prepare their organizations to effectively attract, recruit, and retain the needed workforce, and to orchestrate local and national outreach efforts.



ASA members are facing a convergence of forces that impede their ability to recruit and retain the needed number of qualified employees. The industry as a whole and ASA members specifically need talent at a time when there exists a shortage of talent due to the national labor shortage. There are currently more job openings than eligible workers to fill them. Moreover, of those potential employees that are available, wholesale distribution and the PHCP-PVF industries are often not a first career opportunity to explore as candidates tend towards today's high profile industries. And in many cases, the work environment and employee value proposition member companies offer employees are perceived to lag behind what the new workforce seeks in their employer. The complexity and scope of this human capital challenge is beyond the ability of any one company and requires a unified industry effort that will attract a diverse group of candidates into the industry.

**"We must attract and retain quality talent to support our growth goals,"** offered Don McNeeley, CEO of Chicago Tube and Iron. **"The future of our industry is jeopardized if we don't adequately staff our companies. We need to come together with a sense of urgency to solve this complex issue."**

Project TALENT is a multi-phase and multi-year initiative laser focused on ASA members being able to attract, recruit, and retain the needed talent. Phase I - Fast Start is structured with a bias for action, to move towards a solution with urgency. Phase II - Scale For Impact is planned to take the lessons from Phase I and expand the effort after its success is proven.

## Phase I – Fast Start

Today with the launch of Project TALENT ASA is deploying the following resources for its members:

**One Industry Narrative:** At the core of Project TALENT was crafting One Industry Narrative - a universal, positive, and accurate message that communicates the relevance of ASA member companies as an excellent career choice. A creative design studio familiar with the industry worked with ASA leadership to craft this compelling narrative that centered on ASA member's commitment to a fulfilling career for a wide range of individuals - from those interested in working with their hands to those wanting to work deeply with technology, as well as those seeking leadership roles.

**One Narrative Video:** The centerpiece for communicating this industry narrative is the powerful new anthem video that is embedded into the career page of ASA member's websites as well as the ASA website. The video presents the industry in an energizing and modern way overflowing with fulfilling career opportunities in ASA member companies.

**Outreach Campaign:** A six month social media campaign is commencing today with the objective of driving targeted traffic to the One Narrative Video on ASA's and member's websites. The campaign is targeted at appropriate high school and college students, their parents and educators, as well as those retiring from the military. Those who visit the sites and view the video will be encouraged to request more information about the career opportunities available.

**Measurement:** The entire campaign is closely monitored and measured in terms of number of click throughs, views, requests for information, sharing of the video, and other criteria.

**Member Preparedness:** Project TALENT acknowledges that even if the One Industry Narrative, video, and social campaign are effective, the effort would ultimately fail if ASA members are not ready to meet the needs of the workforce of the future. As a result, over the last six months ASA has developed a library of best practices that members have built into their business for hiring and retaining employees. The best practices library is available today for all ASA members.

## Phase II – Scale For Impact

The vision of Project TALENT does not end with the deployment of Phase I. After six months the impact, results, and lessons learned will be analyzed with the intent of scaling the effort in a way that the magnitude of the problem requires, should the results warrant it. Included in the initial plans to scale Project TALENT:

**Segmented Industry Narrative Messaging:** Separate targeted messages that build off the One industry Narrative. The fit of the industry and ASA member companies for those transitioning out of the military is an example of this type of segmenting. Testimonials from new hires within each segment will be used in the messaging to effectively communicate to the groups of individuals targeted.

**Tool Box Of Resources:** Beyond the centerpiece videos, a tool Box of resources that members would use locally to communicate the career opportunities will be developed. Early planning includes micro websites, design and HTML code for member websites, Power Point presentations, and other collateral material.

**Outreach Campaign:** Beyond social media, a public relations campaign and comprehensive media strategy will be implemented featuring ASA member executives and new hires telling the story of the career opportunities. A diverse range of media will be incorporated including traditional local and national press, and non - traditional such as podcasts, newsletters such as The Skimm, on campus media, and others. Additionally the PR firm will manage a speakers bureau that features industry executives and new hires interested in telling the industry story as well as their own personal story to relevant groups.

**Measurement:** All efforts will be continually measured for effectiveness and ROI.

**Member Preparedness:** The vision is to develop a "Preparedness Certification" program where ASA members demonstrate a commitment to creating a business and culture that provides a fulfilling career for its employees. A series of benchmarks will be established and certified once the member achieves the defined standard. Upon certification the member will use this exclusive acknowledgement in their recruiting efforts.

"We are excited and optimistic that our decision to address this labor issue is going to contribute significantly to our ability to attract and retain the talent we need. This is the next evolution of building great workplaces," offered Todd Ford, President of Central States Group. "Our phased approach to get started now, with developing the narrative and using social media for initial traction is great. We also know it can't stop there because this problem is on our doorstep and we need to answer the bell."

Starting today ASA members have access to all of the Fast Start Resources and can register on the Project TALENT website to have the social media campaign include their company once the One Narrative video is embedded into their website.

"Looking back over the development of Project TALENT," stated Roland Gordon, CEO of Winsupply, "there were a lot of questions that caused individuals to pause. Who was going to manage all the moving parts, where is the financing going to come from, and can the industry remain focused on one issue for a prolonged period of time? But in the end we came together and said, we have to do this. We'll learn along the way, but our commitment to attract and retain the needed talent cannot waiver. It is that important to our survival."

To learn more, visit the Project TALENT website.