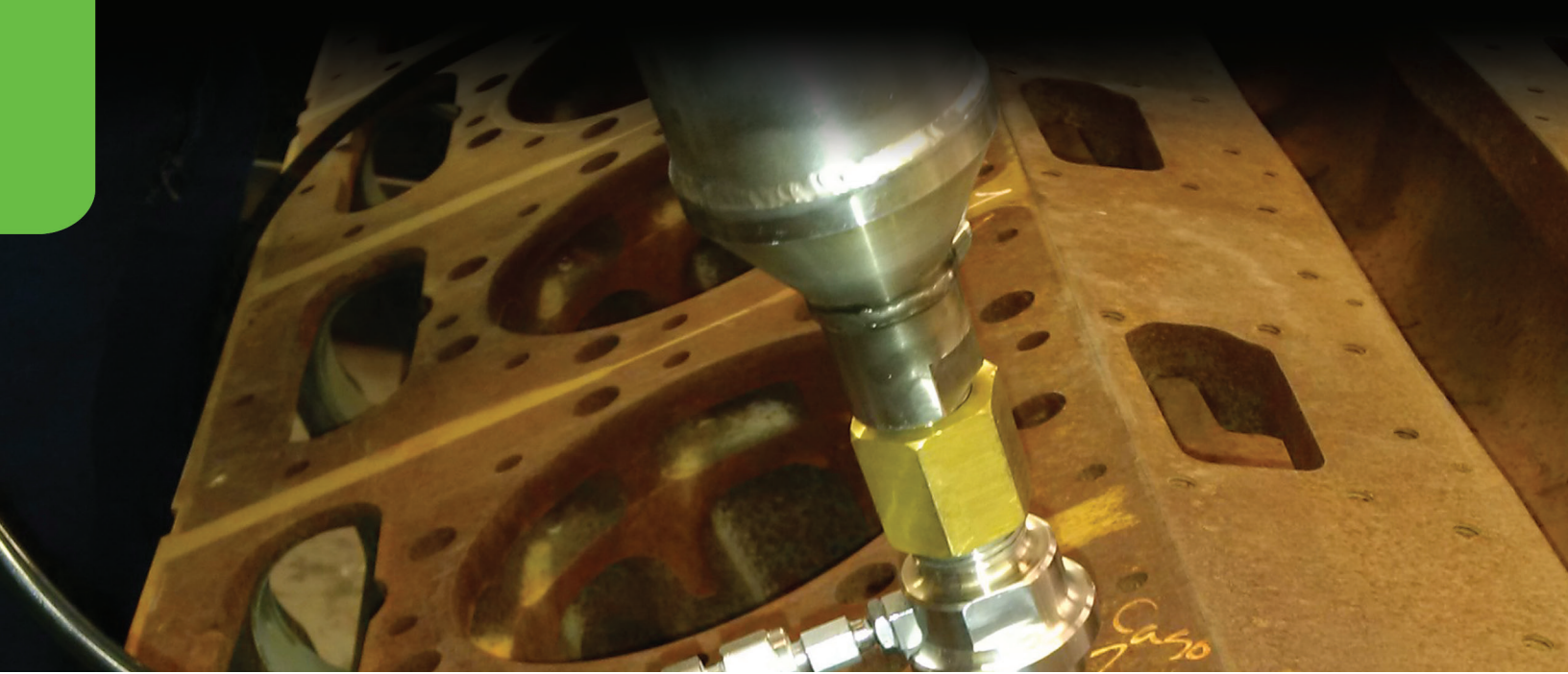


# SPRAYTIME

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## HIRING THERMAL SPRAY TECHNICIANS *By Scott McLaughlin*

I often get asked, “Do you know any good thermal spray technicians?” Thermal spray job shops are always looking to either upgrade their talent or expand their workforce to manage sales growth. I discussed this with Kathy Dusa, Managing Editor of Spraytime and we agreed an article would be a good way to share some ideas on how to recruit quality spray technicians.

In a past role as national sales manager for a global coatings service company, I had to do a fair amount of recruiting, interviewing and hiring. Finding A players was always the goal. Steve Jobs stressed to Google cofounder Larry Page in a conversation as retold in Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson, “We talked a lot about focus. And choosing people...what you have to do to keep the company from getting flabby or being larded with B players”. Also, quoting Steve Jobs, “I’ve learned over the years that, when you have really good people, you don’t have to baby them. By expecting them to do great things, you can get them to do great things.

The original Mac team taught me that A-plus players like to work together, and they don’t like it if you (management) tolerate B-grade work.” Knowing where to look for A players was something that comes with experience.

I recommend a multi-pronged approach to reach, recruit and hire thermal spray technicians. Social media, networking, local trade schools, colleges, high schools, search firms and trade magazines are all excellent sources for good employees. The best thermal spray technicians I have known were proficient in basic math, are able to read engineering drawings, problem solve, were self-starters, and were inherently creative. Understanding how heat affects metals and an ability to learn material science are also key attributes. People with welding backgrounds have made excellent thermal spray technicians. Another goal should be to draw qualified, quality, A players to your company. If a candidate comes to you, they have some baseline interest in your company. Using the mass media job sites, Monster,

Career Builder, Indeed.com, Simplyhired.com etc will generate a lot of resumes for you to review. But from my experience, it is simply trying to find the needle in a haystack. While casting a wide net is important it is also important to be as efficient as possible. Having to pour through hundreds of resumes is not an efficient means to finding an ideal, A player candidate.

### GET THE WORD OUT

First action to do after writing a clear job description would be to post the opening on your company website. Create a page titled Careers or Employment or Job Openings if you do not already have one on your company website. These will draw candidates in your area to your website. Make sure to use common words that candidates will be typing into search engines. Thermal spray jobs, flame spray operator, spray tech, HVOF technician, plasma spray technician. Be sure to use several position titles when referring to the opening you are trying to fill. That increases the chances candidates searching for a new thermal spray job will find you.

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## LINKEDIN

Check out LinkedIn Discussion Groups like Thermal spray coating and Thermal Spray Forum. Post your opening there. Start a conversation. Post on your LinkedIn profile that your company is hiring. You can search LinkedIn by position type, experience and current and past employers. You can also post your opening on LinkedIn which can be easily found by anyone searching Thermal Spray. As of April 2016 there were 64 jobs posted for thermal spray in the LinkedIn Jobs Section.

Susan Healthfield, Human Resources Expert says, "Develop a complete, keyword-rich profile for your company on LinkedIn. Prospective employees, who are looking for employers, search LinkedIn by keywords, too. They also look at company profiles to make up lists of companies for whom they'd like to work." You can also search for potential candidates by searching on Current or Past Employers. LinkedIn's InMail service can be used to contact candidates directly and discretely. Ms. Healthfield also suggests that responding to questions in discussion groups will increase your visibility on LinkedIn so prospects looking for a new career will more easily find you.

## FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Many companies maintain Facebook pages in order to share company news, promote products, launch new products and recruit new employees. Again, the goal is to draw qualified candidates to your company. Tweet out your job opening and include several thermal spray industry handles such as @McLaughlinCoat or @Polymet. If you can get them to retweet your tweet, you have instantly and exponentially broadened your reach to potential candidates. Encourage current employees to use Facebook to send out your weblink with job openings to expand your reach. What better endorsement could your company have than a current employee? Offer incentives for employees who bring new employees to your company. Combine the incentive with recognition and you have a powerful recruiting tool. There are apps which can add a Jobs tab to your Facebook page. See [www.Linkup.com](http://www.Linkup.com).

## HIRING MILLENNIALS

Your target demographic for hiring new, entry level employees will be the Millennial generation. While Millennials have a lot in common to previous generations, they also have some unique characteristics, concerns and preferences. Knowing their

preferences will enable an employer to attract the best Millennial candidates. Julie Schrader, Career Services Associate Director at Butler University in Indianapolis says the job market is good currently and improving for job seekers. Which means finding good candidates will be more difficult for hiring managers. Ms. Schrader quoted Lindsey Pollack on Three Things Every Employer Needs to Know about Millennials ;

1. Millennials see themselves as Individuals
2. Millennials require recognition
3. Millennials can't live without technology

Ms. Schrader also said millennials prefer employers who demonstrate a responsibility to the community, exhibit social responsibility and are inclusive to all employees. They place high value on having their ideas listened to. She said developing a relationship with local schools is a good way to find workers also.

## LOCAL COLLEGES, HIGH SCHOOLS, VOTECH SCHOOLS, TRADE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Local education providers offer a wealth of hiring candidates. It is highly suggested hiring managers and HR department heads develop a relationship with the schools in their area before the need to expand your workforce arises. Get to know the Career Development Director, Placement Director and alumni support contacts at local colleges, training schools and vocational schools. Also get acquainted with the guidance counselors at your local high school. While a large majority of graduating high school seniors are choosing to continue their education at four year colleges and universities there is a measurable percentage of seniors for whom college is not the best choice. Frequently, they are the hands on, work with their hands people who make excellent thermal spray operators. Finding these individuals on your own is difficult at best. Guidance counselors at high schools know who these students are and eager to help match them up with local employers.

## PROFESSIONAL RECRUITERS

Also known as head hunters, professional search firms can be extremely helpful in a tight labor market. They can search the thermal spray industry for qualified candidates in ways a hiring manager can not. The common misconception of recruiters is that they are too expensive. While there is cost to use a recruiter, many work on a contingency whereas they are paid only if the client company hires a recruit brought to them by the recruiter. Based on the job market

recruiters may also negotiate terms which could be more attractive. A good recruiter can also reduce the lead time finding a candidate by culling underqualified applicants and help manage the selection process to increase the odds of finding a better candidate (A player). Besides we all know just how expensive a bad hire can be to your business. Joe Smith of Smith & Syberg Executive Search located in Columbus, IN says recruiters are valuable when there is a "shortage of talent" in the position being sought such as with thermal spray this is due to the relatively small number of people in any given region with thermal spray experience. Recruiters can help with targeted searches for thermal spray operators in similar industries which have like skill sets. Welders and machinists make excellent thermal spray operators. Recruiters can also help find skilled, experienced thermal spray in other regions of the country, places with which the company hiring manager would not be familiar. Mr. Smith also says recruiters can help find qualified candidates for openings who are not currently looking for work but may consider switching should the right opportunity come along.

## GOING OLD SCHOOL

Every spray shop in North America has a few copies of Spraytime laying around and available for all to read. A 2" by 2" ad in Spraytime is fairly inexpensive and is a great way to directly connect with thermal spray technician contacts. Besides, copies of Spraytime get passed around and stay in lunch rooms and lobbies for months giving your ad a long shelf life and a constant stream of new prospective recruits. If you do choose to put an ad in Spraytime, experts suggest using a minimum of words, being clear and to the point. Do not put a paragraph into an want ad. Minda Zetlin, coauthor of The Geek Gap writes on INC.'s website, "Write an ad, not a job description". As briefly as possible mention why your company is a great place to work and include your company's mission. List a phone number, company website and an email address. Since the audience is relatively small and targeted there is no need to artificially screen or filter inquiries.

## BOTTOMLINE

The best path for hiring new thermal spray operators is to look for the A players and to expand your search with a targeted approach.

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