

All Aboard for FABTECH ... and We Mean All

Many shop managers bring a few top people to FABTECH, but Jerry Ward, vice president of Metcam, knew he wanted to bring more. After all, it's only about 30 miles between downtown Atlanta and the contract fabricator's shop floor in Alpharetta, Ga. The last time FABTECH came to Atlanta four years ago Ward brought a dozen of his top people.

"And I regretted it," he said. "I should have brought more. Your employees are your greatest asset, and most of them don't get to compare what they work with every day to what's available."

That's why this year Ward invited everyone, from entry-level workers to top-level managers. Weeks ago, managers notified customers and vendors that they would be shutting down Nov. 2 for the event.

On Tuesday morning 115 employees clocked in as usual at 7 a.m., re-

ceived a show floor map, and boarded two buses headed for the Georgia World Congress Center. They broke into smaller groups, walked the exhibit halls, and kept their eyes peeled for any product that, according to Ward, would make their jobs easier or better Metcam as a company. When they returned, they were expected to complete a form to show what they had learned.

So why exactly invite every single employee to the industry's largest trade show?

"About 90 percent of all our employees had never been to FABTECH," Ward said. "And to be honest, I'm getting old, and somebody has to



take over." He explained he's making a concerted effort to spread industry knowledge throughout the ranks. "I figure 230 eyes are a lot better than four or six."

The same way lean manufacturing and poka-yoke events on Metcam's floor help get everyone involved and thinking about ways to make

operations better, so did yesterday's show visit, Ward said. "It's about getting everyone together to see what ideas they can come up with as a group. They have ideas that I don't have, and some of those ideas will be very rewarding." ■

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