

Q&A /// INTERVIEW WITH AN INDUSTRY INSIDER



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Why is it important to invest in the future of heat-treating?

Nearly every metal component undergoes some type of heat-treating application. Vacuum furnaces contribute to the improvement of important products such as dental tools, medical devices, and components that help us build better airplanes and cars. As the consumers drive expectations, we are driven to make sure we are pushing the performance of our furnaces, resulting in better products and components in those markets we serve. Manufacturing continually gets smarter and, hence, so does heat treating – whether it be by way of automation or IIoT or simply an increase in production output. Consumer expectations are ever present and so are their heat-treating needs, so it is critical we invest in the future of both.

What role does education serve in bridging the workforce gap in the heat-treating industry?

We oftentimes work with general managers, operators, and technicians who have been heat treaters for decades, sometimes growing up in the family business. These situations are ideal because there are many foundational topics, such as metallurgy, furnace operation, recipe building, quality testing, and maintenance-best practices, which can be learned over time. On the contrary, some of our customers are purchasing a vacuum furnace for the first time, so that baseline of knowledge is critical. Over the years, we have found that whether you are an experienced or novice furnace operator, there is always something to learn or get better at, which is why Ipsen offers programs like Ipsen U.

How is Ipsen attracting the next generation of heat treaters?

Ipsen provides a couple of programs to attract and retain our technical resources. By maintaining a positive reputation of being a premier vacuum furnace manufacturer, those already in heat-treating know our credibility. However, when we look outside of the heat-treat world and at new graduates, this talent may not understand what we do. That is where resources such as the Ipsen Corporate Academy (internal) and partnerships with associations such as MTI's Educational Foundation (external) help us. We find people who are skilled and willing to learn, and then train them on all-things-Ipsen.

What types of programs are available, and what effect will these opportunities have on the industry in the next 10 years?

Ipsen has two technical training programs: Ipsen U and the Ipsen Corporate Academy.

Ipsen U is a three-day practical course to build and refresh technical aptitude for customers and employees alike. The blend of lectures

and hands-on training enables metallurgists, new college graduates, operators, engineers, and others to form bonds with others in the class. It is incredible to experience how a dozen individuals can go into the class and then leave as a support network for one another. Ongoing training such as Ipsen U will also make sure everyone, from the new hire to the senior operator, are up-to-date on the newest technology and industry best practices.

The Ipsen Corporate Academy is our strategic initiative to bridge the skills gap by educating and nurturing technical resources. Currently, the curriculum is focused toward newly hired Ipsen engineers and field service technicians. Ipsen adjusts the course content based upon needs in the market at the given time.

During this five-month training program, participants learn Ipsen's core values, culture, and fundamental job skills through classroom presentations, hands-on troubleshooting experience, and on-the-job training. Since Ipsen employs the largest and most skilled aftermarket team in the business, customers benefit from this

program by having better access to on-site inspections, evaluations, repairs, installation, and support for their heat-treating and auxiliary equipment.

In addition to Ipsen's educational tools, the MTI Educational Foundation also offers scholarships. How do those programs enable the other's success?

According to its website, the Metal Treating Institute Educational Foundation's mission is “building and attracting tomorrow's heat-treat talent.”

With furnace building being such a niche industry, the scholarship program helps provide exposure to students who can eventually work for furnace suppliers, builders, or heat-treat customers. It is a well-established connection point for students to find their way into this profession. The ideal outcome for programs like this and Ipsen U is to work together to shorten the learning curve the workforce gap poses.

How can businesses wanting to participate in Ipsen U or the Ipsen Corporate Academy learn more about it?

Those interested in Ipsen U or the Academy should keep an eye on Ipsen's website for the announcement of 2022 dates: www.ipsenusa.com/ipsen-customer-service/training, or connect with their local regional sales engineer for more information. 📞



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