

Onex, Inc.

STEM Manufacturing Intern Produces Big Results

Onex began in 1965 as a supplier to the many foundries in the Erie, PA area, stocking refractory products for a major refractory manufacturer. In the 1980s, they branched out into other heat intensive industries. As the number of foundries in Erie began to decline, they diversified into a broader offering of products and services such as: design and installation of refractory linings, combustion services, and shop fabrication. Onex became a “one stop shopping” source and a solutions provider for its growing and extensive customer base. In more basic terms, “we build and maintain industrial furnaces that operate at over a 1000F,” said Drew Walters, VP of Engineering and Construction.

The company has expanded geographically to Pittsburgh and most recently moved their Erie location just miles away to better serve their future growth. Onex’s General Manager, Ashleigh Walters, says the company has always been committed to working with student interns. “Ultimately, our goal is to get to know some talented students who we may be interested in hiring in the future,” she said. Ashleigh noted their success working with the Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC) on projects such as Lean Value Stream Mapping and implementation of a new accounting system, “so having them help us identify a qualified engineering student through their STEM Internship program was a natural next step.” Onex was looking for an electrical

engineering student intern to work on specific projects for the company involving programming of controllers that operate the furnaces. Gretchen Reinard, Program Coordinator for the STEM Manufacturing Internship, began working with the Onex Human Resources Manager, Debi Baacke, to develop a detailed job description and qualifications for finding the perfect candidate to do the work at hand. Reinard started by delving into her database



of hundreds of students who applied for internships via the NWIRC website and resumes she collected at various college career fairs. Students who closely matched the qualifications were then passed on to Onex for vetting through their typical interview process.

Jacob Foglia, a senior electrical engineering student from Penn State Behrend, was chosen to work on specific projects, programming controllers which operate various functions of the furnaces, including opening and closing doors and firing the burners. “Jacob was able to unlock applications in the controls that we didn’t even know existed. He took our basic training



(L-R): Ric Walters, President; Bob Zaruta, President/CEO at NWIRC; Michael Ducato, VP Operations- Erie; Ashleigh Walters, General Manager; Drew Walters, VP Operations- Pittsburgh; (Front L-R): Carson and Jackson Walters.

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