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Blackfoot's Premier Technology begins registered apprenticeship program

By LUKE O'ROARK Post Register Feb 14, 2019



Premier Technology Inc. is planning to invest more in its employees, infrastructure, equipment and training opportunities thanks to tax savings. The Blackfoot-based business provides design, engineering, custom fabrication, system integration and field installation support services.

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Photo courtesy of Premier Technology, Inc.

Blackfoot's Premier Technology, a privately owned engineering, manufacturing and construction management company, this week earned a certificate to create its first state-registered apprenticeship program.

The registered apprenticeship program will allow those interested in working at Premier Technology to get hands-on training while also receiving an education from College of Eastern Idaho, Idaho Department of Labor area manager John Russ said.

Training will include machine and system operation, coding and working with advanced technology, Premier Technology spokeswoman Ashleigh Sayer-Frederick said.



Through apprenticeship programs, employers can hire underqualified candidates at a lower wage (above minimum wage) with the candidates working during the day and attending training classes at night or online.

The program is registered with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship for meeting national standards, according to an Idaho Department of Labor news release.

"This provides another feather in the cap for Premier Technology," Russ said. "It's important for (Premier Technology) to use that now as a potential recruiting tool."

Premier Technology received a small state Department of Labor grant to help launch the program.

"We're continuing to teach them what we're already teaching them, it's just a more classified way of putting it," Sayer-Frederick said of the program.

Russ said it took Premier Technology about a month to receive the registered apprenticeship certificate. Potential apprentices must be at least 16 years old and pass minimal qualifications and credentials (proof of age, education and ability to physical perform task).

The United States Department of Labor classifies registered apprenticeship programs as "a unique, flexible training system that combines job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences."

There were 533,607 apprentices nationwide in 2017, according to statistics by the U.S. Department of Labor, with apprenticeship programs growing by 42 percent since 2013. More than 190,000 people entered apprenticeships in 2017.

Premier Technology has four apprentices enrolled and learning machinist skill sets (operation monitoring, mathematics and overseeing systems). Sayer-Frederick said the company employs about 15 to 20 machinists.

Employees who complete a registered apprenticeship have a higher job retention rate of up to 91 percent and see incremental wage increases, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. {/span}

Premier Technology's apprenticeship will last four years, Sayer-Frederick said, about average for most programs.

Premier Technology was founded in 1996 and employs more than 300 people. The company is considering expanding the registered apprenticeship program into other areas, such as welding, according to the state Department of Labor release.

{span class="print_trim"}"(The Department of Labor) are more just backing our program by saying, 'if you come to this program, you will be a legitimate machinist,'" Sayer-Frederick said.

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