



## CAREER CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

### How To Guide



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### Your Guide to Being the Industry Resource for Students

As a PHCE professional and successful small business owner, you have a lot of experience (and wisdom) to share with young people. You've gone through an apprenticeship, earned the education and you know exactly what it takes for someone just entering this industry to have a successful and rewarding career.

As you continue to build your bench of talented employees, look no further than your local high schools. Inside those walls are plenty of young people who don't know what their paths will be after graduation. What they know is that four-year college just isn't their thing. You have the perfect tools right now to help guide these students – and that's your experiences and the wisdom of your employees.

Whether you'd like to host a career event at your shop or have been invited to speak at a high school career day, an outline of items is included below to help you get the most from this opportunity in a limited timeframe.

## CAREER EVENT AT YOUR SHOP

### I. What is a career event? Why should you host one?

There's a big difference between hearing about skilled trade work – and experiencing it. An event at your shop gives students the opportunity to see what it's really like to work in our industry. Let them see you in action.

Hosting a career event at your shop is an interactive and fun way for students to learn about the skilled trades of plumbing, HVAC and electrical. You have valuable insight that will help students decide what they'd like to do following high school.

A career event will also provide students with a unique opportunity that does not exist in a typical high school setting – and that is learning that success isn't only found at a traditional four-year college.

## II. Connect with local schools

Schools operate differently so when it comes time to connect with a local school, the school counselor may extend an invitation to you or it may be up to you to make the first connection. If you are interested in reaching out first, we recommend connecting with the school counselor directly. Introduce yourself, your company and the purpose of your call. Outline the event and share why your team would like to host the students.

## III. Event logistics and outline

After agreeing to host a career event, consider the basic logistics below.

- a. Determine an event date that works for the school and does not fall into your shop's busiest season(s).
- b. Ensure that the school can provide transportation to and from your shop.
- c. Plan for approximately two to four hours for the visit. This will allow the students to learn about the trade(s) and your business.
- d. Ask various members of your team, including your key managers, to be part of the event.
- e. Work with the school counselor(s) and/or teacher(s) to determine if the students have specific requests or questions for the visit.

## IV. What to include in the Career Event

Make it fun and engaging! Think about what will benefit the students the most while they are at your shop. Welcome the students and give them an outline of the visit.

### a. **Make a great first impression**

- i. For example, think of the "High Five Opener" that Nexstar Network often uses at training classes. By doing something interactive and unexpected, it shows the students that your company isn't like the rest. Make your event an experience – don't just be another talking head. A fun group activity illustrates just one aspect of why your company is an employer of choice in this market.
- ii. \*Please find the "High Five Opener" instructions located at the end of this document.

**b. Share your stories**

- i. Think back to when you were in high school, as this provides a connection point between the students and your team.
  - i. Why did you decide to go into the trades?
  - ii. What do you enjoy most about your job?
  - iii. What are some of the unique challenges in your role?
  - iv. All of your managers at the event should also share their stories.

**c. Invite your employees to attend and talk about their roles at the company.**

- i. Include techs, managers, CSR/dispatch, operations, etc. It's important to give the students the full scope of positions available in a residential service shop.

**d. Set up stations**

- i. Create four to five stations where students can learn about different jobs.

**e. Invite your technicians to talk about a typical day in the field**

**f. Residential vs. Commercial**

- i. For many students, the visit to your shop is their first exposure to this industry. To give them a better understanding of how your business works and how it relates to the industry, talk with them about the main differences between residential and commercial. For example, the majority of the students may really enjoy the idea of working with different customers each day while some would prefer the setting a commercial job can offer.

**g. Allow time for questions!**

**V. Tour the truck - talk about the tools**

Allow time for the students to take a look inside the trucks. This can be a great time for the technicians to talk about some of the main tools and their uses.

**VI. Career information**

For more information, encourage students to visit the [ExploreTheTrades.org](http://ExploreTheTrades.org) and [NexstarJobs.com](http://NexstarJobs.com) to learn about careers in this industry. Highlight the video resources available from Steffan Busch, Recruiting and Retention Coach, that include topics such as building a resume and interviewing.

## **VII. Food and fun**

Keep the students energized and alert while at your shop! The students will probably be at your shop between two to four hours – depending on the schedule – and it'd be a nice touch to have refreshments available during that time. Be sure to incorporate short breaks throughout their visit.

Another fun idea for the shop visit is to give away some trinkets and promotional items you have in stock. Close out the day by doing a fun trivia game. Ask questions about things the students learned during the day and see who was listening.

## **VIII. Finish strong**

As the visit concludes, thank the students and their teacher for their participation in the event. Guide the group through some final thoughts and questions:

- What did they like the best?
- What was the most surprising thing they learned during their visit?

We recommend sharing your contact information in case the students have questions down the road...or perhaps are interested in exploring the trades.

## **PARTICIPATING IN A HIGH SCHOOL CAREER DAY**

There are two common structures to a school-hosted career day.

### **Option 1:**

All of the businesses are gathered in an open area, such as a gym or common space. Each business is provided with a table, chairs and a sign with the company name on it. In an open-house setting like this, students will move to each company. Because your interaction time may be brief, be engaging! Provide handouts, a banner and a fun trinket to give away.

This is an ideal time to provide the students with industry selling points. It's possible this is the first time that they have even considered PHCE careers as a viable – and successful – career opportunity.

## Option 2:

Consider reaching out to school counselors to schedule an on-site visit.

In this setting you will have approximately 30-45 minutes to share a condensed version of your story, high points of the PHCE industry and what a typical day would be for a technician, CSR and other jobs in your company.

Because of the limited timeframe, it's important to make a great first impression. For example, as noted earlier, think of the High Five Opener that Nexstar Network often uses at training classes. By doing something interactive and unexpected, it shows the students that your company isn't like the rest. As noted earlier, make your event an experience – don't just be another talking head. A fun group activity illustrates just one aspect of why your company is an employer of choice in this market.

We recommend including resources that can help create a great case for the skilled trades.

Check out the Explore The Trades [online resource library](#) for materials.

Above all, please note that each school has different protocol and requests when working with outside speakers. We recommend confirming with the school contact person before you arrive. If you'd like assistance designing a program, please contact Kate Cinnamo, Executive Director of Explore The Trades or Steffan Busch, Recruiting and Retention Coach at Nexstar Network.

## 'HIGH FIVE OPENER' INSTRUCTIONS

Invite the group to stand up.

**Facilitator:** "By a show of hands, who in this room has shaken hands with someone else before?"

(Many of the students will raise their hands.)

"The history of the handshake dates back to the 5th century BC in Greece. It was a symbol of peace, showing that neither person was carrying a weapon. During the Roman era, the handshake was actually more of an arm grab. It involved grabbing each other's forearms to check that neither man had a knife hidden up his sleeve. Some say that the shaking gesture started in Medieval Europe. Knights would shake the hand of others in an attempt to shake loose any hidden weapons."

"Today, the handshake is still widely used, but other forms of greeting are becoming quite popular. The high five is a big one."

(Demonstrate high five with a volunteer.)

"The fist bump is another popular form." (Demonstrate fist bump with another volunteer.)

**Facilitator:** "In a moment, I'm going to play some music. When the music starts, I'm going to invite you to go around the room and introduce yourself to others and greet them with either a handshake, high five or fist bump until the music stops. What questions do you have? You may begin when the music starts."

(Background music is optional. Give the students approximately 90 seconds to participate in the exercise.)