



# From School to the Skilled Trades Career Discovery Events



# CAREER CONNECTIONS

## Your Guide to Being the Industry Resource for Students

As a professional tradesperson 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 an 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 middle and high schools. Inside those walls are plenty of young people who have the right attitude and aptitude for the trades, but don't know what their paths will be after graduation. 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 middle or high school career day, a list of things to consider is included below to help you get the most from this opportunity in a limited timeframe.

### Before you get started...

As you plan your event - whether at your shop or at the local school - consider ordering a poster kit for the classroom!

<https://explorethetrades.org/parents-and-educators/>



## 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 the 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.

If schedules allow, consider hosting an “exclusive” open house for parents and their child on a weeknight or a Saturday morning. This will provide a great opportunity for parents to learn about the industry, as well.

## **II. Connect with local schools**

Schools operate differently so when it comes time to connect, a teacher or career 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 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 planning 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 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 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.

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

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 the leading expert and employer of choice in this market.

### **2. Share your stories**

Think back to when you were in high school, as this provides a connection point between the students and your team.

- Why did you decide to go into the trades?

- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- What are some of the unique challenges in your role?
- All of your managers at the event should also share their stories.

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

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

### **4. Set up interactive stations**

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

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

Students, and the teachers, will be curious about what technicians do during service calls. Ask the technicians, and employees from other departments, to walk through a typical day working with customers and how their role impacts the success of the business.

### **6. Residential vs. Commercial**

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 and/or new construction. For example, many of the students may really enjoy the idea of working with different customers each day while some would prefer the environment in a commercial setting.

### **7. Allow time for questions!**

On average, allow for 15-20 minutes for questions.

## **V. Tour the truck & talk about the tools**

Allow time for the students to 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 [Explore The Trades](#) to learn about careers in this industry.



## **VII. Food and fun**

Keep the students energized and alert while at your shop! The students will 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 take short breaks throughout their visit.

Another fun idea for the shop visit is to give away 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 concluding 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 with the students should they have future questions or are interested in exploring the trades.

## **Participating at a School Career Event**

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

### **Option 1:**

All of the participating 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. If possible, bring a few handheld tools or a small piece of equipment to show the students what they do and how they work. Depending on the event schedule and location, you might have a bit more freedom as to how your booth can be designed. Some service companies bring a small service van and allow students to tour it and some companies have hosted an interactive game and/or project at their space. For ideas, contact the Explore The Trades team.

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/career counselors and/or technical education teachers to schedule an on-site visit. If you have business relationships with school administration or school board members, consider reaching out to them, as well.

In this setting you will have 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. By doing something interactive and unexpected, it shows the students that your company isn't like the rest. As noted earlier, make your visit an experience - don't just be another talking head. A fun group activity illustrates just one aspect of why your company is the leading expert and 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.

Please note that each school has different protocols and requests when working with outside speakers. We recommend confirming with the school contact person before you arrive. If you would like assistance designing a program, please contact the Explore The Trades team at (651) 789-8518.

### Virtual Career Events

Virtual career events are options in connecting with students if in-person events are not possible. Whether it is a virtual event (like Zoom) or a Facebook Live session, these are options to talk with students about the industry. Virtual tours and Q&A sessions are great opportunities to involve students and teachers - and parents could even participate, too!

The same event format listed in the sections above may be adapted to fit a virtual setting. The videos and handouts found on Explore The Trade's [website](#) can also be integrated into these virtual video calls.

### Contact Explore The Trades

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