

National Skills Standards for Woodworkers

Meeting the Need for Skilled Workers in a Global Market

The Challenge

Forest products industry managers know that a highly trained workforce provides businesses with a competitive edge. Challenges include hiring and retaining employees with the skills needed to efficiently produce quality products. Other concerns cited by plant owners and managers include improving safety, reducing waste, having a level playing field for compensation, and attracting new talent to the industry. What has been lacking is a coherent system to encourage woodworking companies, employees, and training institutions to collectively focus on woodworker skill improvement for their common benefit.

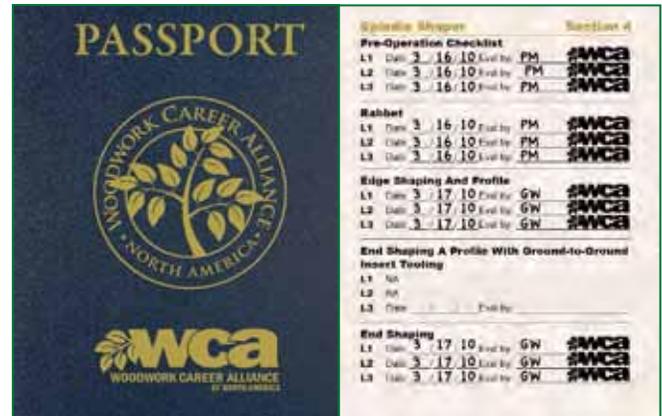
The Solution

To address this challenge, the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC) provided a series of grants to the Architectural Woodwork Institute. The institute developed the Woodwork Career Alliance (WCA) partnership with other national and regional industry associations, educators, and others.

WCA developed the measurable Woodwork Manufacturing Skill Standards for over 50 tools and machines and over 150 operations. These unified standards serve as a comprehensive, industry-accepted compilation of operational procedures for use in measuring performance of and results produced by woodworking professionals. The WCA program includes a voluntary assessment by an approved evaluator and documentation in a WCA Passport (photos).

WCA maintains a national database of passport holders and verifies their skill levels. WCA also provides employers a menu of certifications from which they can select the tools and operation level relevant to their jobs or training needs.

“What I really did like about this ... is that it gave me a tool to take to the shop floor to open discussions with employees. We were able to talk about operations, procedures, and safety. My employees were anxious to see how they performed, and it provides a measurable goal to reach a higher level.” —Louisville Lumber



The Woodwork Career Alliance passport provides a portable, permanent record of a woodworker's professional skills.

Resulting Benefits

- Employers have a way to assess the skill level of new employees, align compensation to proficiency, and strategically evaluate training.
- Employees have clearly defined career paths, a means to evaluate the value of training offered by vocational schools, and a means to demonstrate and document their woodworking skills.
- The WCA's initiative increases the professionalism of woodworkers and ensures a well-trained and well-respected workforce.

Sharing Success

- WCA partners promote, educate, and encourage adaptation of the skill standards among their business customers or members or both.
- Electronic media outlets have been developed to share information and success:

<http://woodworkcareer.org/>

<http://woodworkingnetwork.com/Woodworking-Skill-Standards-Call-to-Action/2010-10-10/Video.aspx?oid=1255271&fid=WVN-EDITORIAL-VIDEOS>

Acknowledgment: Passport cover and testimonial by Louisville Lumber are from Woodwork Career Alliance of North America. 2009–2011. <http://woodworkcareer.org/> (links: credentials/woodwork passport and partners/testimonials.) (2 June 2011). Used by permission.

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