



*Conferences that Inspire Solutions*

## **The Effects of Rapid Growth on our Local Workforce**

### **Key Takeaways from Zachary Kumler's Session**

Foxconn, the world's largest electronics manufacturer, has chosen to make Mount Pleasant the base of its U.S. operations. Given its impressive client roster, which includes iconic international brands like Apple, Toshiba, and Amazon, it's hard to overstate Foxconn's influence on the world of manufacturing. With an advanced manufacturing campus slated to open in just two short years, our community will soon be undergoing massive change in a number of key areas.

Foxconn is on its way, and with it come thousands of new job opportunities. A company of this scale setting up shop in Racine County will have a wide range of impacts, both immediate and long-term, on the community's workforce and legacy employers. In addition to fostering lasting growth, the arrival of a next-gen employer like Foxconn can provide improved quality of life for many residents and help Racine bolster its reputation as a hub for advanced manufacturing.

Youth retention is among the foremost perks of attracting companies like Foxconn. Even if young people are attached to an area, they'll have no choice but to leave if sustainable career opportunities are in low supply. Conversely, if Millennials are able to see Racine as a place where they can attain professional success, they're more likely to stay and find employment locally than move to areas where they'll be isolated from friends and family members.

Foxconn's presence will also help many residents make the jump from temp worker to full-time employee. In addition, it will provide the working poor with opportunities to enjoy a higher standard of living. For someone working multiple jobs and receiving no benefits, the chance to work a single job and receive full benefits is nothing short of a game-changer.

By providing training and offering tuition reimbursement, Foxconn can also entice unemployed and underemployed residents to reenter the workforce. Through educating

and improving its existing worker pool, the community can reduce the number of outside staff the company hires, potentially curbing the threat of a housing shortage. In working to prepare residents for careers in advanced manufacturing, training pathways are an absolute must. Partnering with local schools and staffing agencies enables employers to clearly communicate their needs and build the necessary pipelines to create a qualified workforce.

Of course, not every member of Racine's workforce is going to be employed by Foxconn. Even after the company's arrival, the county's legacy employers will continue to play an important role in keeping Racine at full employment. However, they're likely to experience setbacks as a result of the poaching that's bound to occur. When large companies put down roots in new communities, they often set their sights on managers and supervisors employed by local businesses, as well as instructors from nearby universities and technical colleges. In order to hang on to valuable team members and attract fresh talent, many legacy employers offer increased wages and comprehensive benefits packages. Alternatively, employers with limited resources have found success with offering schedule flexibility and shorter shifts. Since a sizable percentage of Millennials want to work in fields that serve the greater good, it's important for legacy employers to emphasize their companies' contributions to society in their recruitment efforts.

With Foxconn come big opportunities, and with big opportunities come big changes. Given the massive scope of this project, Foxconn has the power to reshape the local job market in just a few short years. To ensure that the company is greeted by a workforce that's well-versed in advanced manufacturing, employment services and educational institutions must make people aware of the unique opportunities that await them and put the appropriate training pathways in place. Similarly, legacy employers would be wise to expand their outreach to the younger generation and devise creative solutions for retaining existing team members.