



GAME TIME

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VOLKSWAGEN DEALERSHIP RELISHES IN GRADUATES

Schmelz Countryside Volkswagen in St. Paul, Minnesota, has had a lot of luck hiring graduates from CTG's Volkswagen Academy Technician Recruitment Program (VATRP). As a third generation family-owned dealership, they began hiring from VATRP in 2002 seeking graduates with the right technical skills to fit into their family culture. Since the partnership with CTG began, they have hired 13 technicians from the program – averaging nearly two a year – and their retention of these technicians is exceptional as well.

Chris Wilke is the Service Manager who has hired many of these technicians after graduation and has played a big role in why they have stayed.

"We've never actually had a retention issue here," he commented. "I hear other dealer-

ships have that problem, but we have been very fortunate. I think one of the reasons for our success is the way our shop is structured. Obviously, we want all of our technicians to advance to the Journeyman level because those technicians are the most respected and well paid, but we don't put a specific timeframe on their advancement.

With no set timeline, we operate with more flexibility and focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each employee. This approach appears to give our technicians more confidence. By allowing the dealership to focus on quality versus quantity gives Schmelz a distinct difference, and that's why I think we've been so successful."

From the technician side, this approach seems to be working. Jose Giron was the first CTG hire for Schmelz in early 2002. He reached his seven-year anniversary last month and says the reason he's been happy there for so many years is how he's been treated.

"The biggest factor in a job is how you're treated and it's such a big family and team here at Schmelz. Our Service Manger always wants to be involved in fixing the problem

made friends, got married and made a life here. Sure, it takes time to adjust, but you're never alone and my dealership really supported me."

Lance Seibert graduated from the Volkswagen Academy in May 2007, and is one of the technicians who has been making an impact at Schmelz since he was hired there two years ago. "Seeing the other CTG and Volkswagen Academy graduates move up in the organization is a big part of keeping me here," said Lance. "Plus, the atmosphere here is to work hard and have fun too. We socialize outside of the shop and there's a lot to do in the Twin Cities area."

By the sound of it, these technicians are in for the long haul at Schmelz and that's good news considering the number of Volkswagen dealerships and the number of vehicles on the road far exceeds other popular European brands. It's also good news for Chris who sees first hand the contributions Academy graduates make at the dealership.

"Beyond great technical service and great customer service, these technicians have an impact on all areas of the dealership," said Chris. "They have the right quality and education skills to fix things right the first time. That helps keep our dealership in the top 25% of CSI scores nationally. Plus, the industry is changing so much that the knowledge these young technicians have rival technicians with more years of experience." ●

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Chris Wilke // Service Manager

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cars and he works with all the technicians rather than against them. We're also one of the biggest volume dealers in the country and there's always lots of work. I know that I've found a good place to call home."

Speaking of home, Jose now lives over five hours from where he grew up. And he adjusted to being in a new city quite well. "I





ITEP

ITEP GRADUATES EXCEL AFTER SWITCHING GEARS

Some students enter the International Technician Education Program (ITEP) without ever planning on it. But, boy, are they glad they did.

That was the case for James Von Dorsten. He always thought he would work in construction after high school or perhaps attend a junior college. But when a CTG recruiter attended his high school woodshop class, he decided to give automotive training a try.

He had originally planned to apply for an automotive MSAT program after his CTG education, but found he had a natural understanding of the material in his diesel classes. So he took a closer look at the ITEP program, switched gears, and as they say, the rest is history.

With his ITEP training under his belt, James became the first ITEP graduate to be hired by Riverview International Trucks in West Sacramento, California in 2004.

Today, he is working on medium-duty tractors, trailers and trucks and fully enjoying the career he stumbled upon.

"My diesel instructors made the classes awesome. They really helped me discover the fundamentals of working on trucks. I have a great career path and I'm so thankful to CTG for helping me find it," said James.

The same can be said for Jorge Rivera. During high school, he was more interested in problem solving skills than cars and trucks and was expected to pursue a career in engineering.

But, a presentation from a CTG recruiter sparked his interest in diesel training. He chose the ITEP program over other manufacturer advanced training degrees because he felt he could work anywhere.

"In addition to truck dealerships, there are so many other places where diesel engines can be found," explained Jorge. "Hospitals all have generators that run on diesel engines,

as well as boats. Diesel engines are everywhere and so are the opportunities."

After graduation, Jorge took a job at Wallace International Trucks in Fort Myers, Florida, a family-run business that has had one owner and one location for over 35 years. He's been there since 2005 and enjoys the family-like atmosphere more than anything else.

"We laugh and have fun at work. I'm learning something new every day. There's nothing better than making money and having fun at the same time," he said.

Finding good technicians like Jorge is worth the effort to Jim Boncosky, Wallace service manager. "For us, the successful hires are people who aren't afraid to relocate, want to enjoy the best climate in North America and come here to change their lives. When we get our hands on the right ITEP graduates, they step right up to the plate and are ready to work on International trucks because they have the right training and education," he said.

Both James and Jorge traveled to Glendale Heights for their 14-week ITEP training. And although James is now back at home in California, Jorge is working and living apart from his family in Texas.

"At first, the relocation is hard. But in the long-run, it's so worth it," said Jorge. "My friends back home can't believe what I'm earning so early in my career. I can afford so much more now.

I'm able to travel, eat out, go to the mall and buy what I want without worrying so much about a budget. It's really allowing me to enjoy life."

Adds James, "Don't lose sight of what you came to school for. There's a lot of money out there if you stay driven and don't get upset about relocation." ●

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GOT GAME?

If you're interested in being accepted into an MSAT program, then remember GAME – the four key areas for students to focus on:

- GRADES OR GRADE POINT AVERAGE
- ATTENDANCE
- MOTOR VEHICLE RECORD
- EXAM

In addition to good GAME scores, dealers want to hire graduates who are willing to commit to employment, have a positive attitude, some industry/related experience, and a strong work ethic. Remember, only students who "Got GAME" get to play. By following the GAME play-book, you can be on the fast-track to success.

FOR MORE INFO: www.ISCTG.com

If you are interested in learning more about manufacturer specific advanced training programs, please visit our website at www.isctg.com.

GAME Time is a publication for students and instructors interested in programs offered by the Custom Training Group, a division of UTI, Inc. If you have a news item, question or comment, please contact us:

Chris McWaters | Executive Editor
cmcwaters@uticorp.com

