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Chrysler Group's Award-Winning WCM Academy Now Has Wheels

- Academy's mobile unit will bring classes directly to the plants
- Former motorsports trailer repurposed to expand World Class Manufacturing knowledge
- Cutting-edge tools used to teach key WCM concepts
- Kokomo, Ind., first stop on tour

November 21, 2013, Auburn Hills, Mich. - Chrysler Group's award-winning World Class Manufacturing (WCM) Academy now has wheels and is hitting the road.

In an effort to bring the innovative training academy and the WCM methodology to more employees, Chrysler Group has created a mobile unit from a refurbished former motorsports trailer. Over a three month period, the trailer was converted into a state-of-the art rolling classroom that will travel to the Company's U.S. and Canadian manufacturing facilities to expand WCM knowledge and broaden implementation of its processes. Chrysler Group's four Kokomo, Ind., facilities were the first to fully utilize the mobile unit with a full series of classes during the week of Nov. 18, 2013.

"Now we can bring the academy directly to the plants," said Wendy Santure, Training and Development Lead, Chrysler Group's WCM Academy and Mobile Unit Lead. "This mobile unit will allow us to have an immediate effect on the plants by delivering key concepts and methods in a quick, concentrated way. By expanding WCM knowledge deeper into the plants, we can ensure all employees are using the methodology."

First implemented by Fiat in 2006 and introduced to Chrysler Group as part of the alliance between the two companies in June 2009, WCM is a methodology that focuses on reducing waste, increasing productivity, and improving quality and safety in a systematic and organized way. WCM engages the workforce to provide and implement suggestions on how to improve their jobs and their plants. WCM has become the driving force behind the improvements in all of Chrysler Group's manufacturing plants with four facilities achieving Bronze status, a significant milestone in the WCM process, in 2012.

While the Academy's mobile unit is on site, students will use cutting-edge tools like iPads, smart TVs and interactive teaching methods to learn about WCM methodology. Courses will initially focus on establishing and reinforcing WCM basics, such as understanding the 10 technical pillars that form the system's foundation, how to write a quick kaizen (a suggestion for improvement) and how to create sketches, which are an important component of an effective kaizen.

Students who attend the mobile unit's courses will participate in three rotations. During the rotations, 42 students will take classes inside the unit, as well as underneath a canopy attached to the trailer. A minimum of three academy staff members, including trainers and facilitators, will travel with the unit on each trip.

"By coming to the plants, we can increase the number of Chrysler Group employees who can call themselves 'students of the academy,'" said Santure. "The benefits of increasing WCM know-how are countless, and the mobile unit enables us to bring WCM knowledge to those who may not be able to travel to the academy on a regular basis."

In addition to the standard academy courses, future plans for the mobile unit include training in specialized topics and hosting validation events, the final step of verifying that lessons learned at the Academy have been applied properly to a plant project.

The WCM Academy opened its doors in January 2012 and occupies about 25,000-square-feet of the UAW-Chrysler Technology Training Center in Warren, Mich. The Academy was created to accelerate WCM implementation by combining classroom and laboratory sessions, with the emphasis on hands-on exercises in problem solving. With a mission to transfer WCM “know-how,” the Academy trained more than 3,400 workers from across the Company’s North American manufacturing facilities in its first year, far exceeding its goals. Those participating in Academy classes apply their learnings and begin making improvements as soon as they return to their plants, delivering real and measurable benefits for the Company.

In May, the WCM Academy received top honors in the 2013 Manufacturing Leadership 100 (ML100) Awards, being named a High Achiever in the New Workforce category. The High Achiever award recognized the Company for receiving the highest score in the category, which identifies companies that involve education and training, knowledge management and transfer, and collaboration with educational institutions as integral to the advancement of manufacturing.

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