

What is the connection between musicians and manufacturing?

By Rick Plympton, CEO, Optimax

Hear a perspective from Optimax CEO Rick Plympton on insights of the correlation between musicians and manufacturing he has experienced developing a start-up into a successful business. He'll also explain how this translated into hiring practices that focus on skills and attitude instead of experience

The Optimax workforce has always included many musicians. This is something that we recognized in the early days when we were trying to figure out who we were and what we wanted to become. We didn't plan this, it just happened.

We were a small startup company leveraging computer numerically controlled (CNC) machining technology in a way that reduced manufacturing time by a factor of 10 for precision optical components. Our musically inclined team members, many of them Grateful Dead followers (Deadheads) regularly wore tie dye. As it turned out, the symbolism of the deadhead attire matched our operating philosophy of minimal structure and high reliance on individual passion and talent. Similar to the Grateful Dead lyrics from *Truckin'* "together – more or less in line". As time went on, tie dye t-shirts evolved to become our corporate uniform. Today it is symbolic of our transparency through open book and self-management practices.

So what is behind this connection between musicians and Optimax?

Here are just a few of the correlations and skills that musicians have that make them a great fit for the manufacturing environment:

- Musicians often learn how to play an instrument while thinking of other things, like singing or adjusting the audio controls – the ability to multitask.
- Developing dexterity and a sense of tempo; dexterity is critical for handling delicate optical materials and their inherent sense of time is beneficial in maintaining flow in manufacturing.
- Listening and touch skills that enable them to sense things, like optimal machine operation... or misalignment/malfunction of a process.
- Playing in a band, you develop an ability to work in a team.
- Most musicians have worked with electronic instruments, soundboards and computers, which means they are not afraid of computers. In a modern manufacturing environment people will be working with computer controlled machines and instruments, so the ability to learn CNC machining and metrology without too much difficulty and adapt to new software to leverage the latest technologies is essential to success.
- Practice makes perfect, and musicians are accustomed to having to repeat the same verses repeatedly to achieve perfection or at least satisfaction. They strive to deliver their best and have fun doing it!
- College educated musicians have taken calculus, physics and have learned wave theory – all of this is fundamental to understanding light and optical systems.

- Being able to read music also lends itself to having greater blue print reading acuity, ability to distinguish patterns and solve equations.
- Learn quickly how to manage their time effectively.
- Those that write music or lyrics are putting context where there was none are individuals that may be good candidates for planning activities like team leadership or production planning.

In an era of low unemployment, when it is difficult to find candidates to maintain or grow workforce, there are opportunities to find new employees in non-traditional places. Prior experience in precision optics manufacturing can be good, but this population is very small – even in Rochester, NY the home of Kodak and Bausch & Lomb. Instead, we seek individuals with natural/fundamental skills and a desire to learn and create value.

Want to learn more about Optimax?

Culture/Team Empowerment

- Self-management – come in and do what you know needs to get done to create value
- Wholeness – be yourself at work
- Evolutionary Purpose – working for something bigger than yourself, responding to the needs of the world

Employee Perks

- 25% monthly profit sharing
- Benefits package – including insurances for medical, dental, vision, short/long-term care
 - 401K plan
- Patitude – employees can donate time off to another team member in need
- Tuition assistance: \$5000 per employee per year
- Beach Club – Condo in Cocoa Beach

For more information regarding employment at Optimax and our unique corporate culture please visit our [Careers webpage](#).