



Rebuilding Industry Capability

The printing industry did not lose its need for technical training. It lost much of the infrastructure that once delivered it.

For decades, vocational programs, technical education, and hands-on manufacturing exposure helped introduce people to production careers and build foundational industry knowledge early. As educational priorities shifted toward traditional four-year degree pathways, many of those systems gradually disappeared.

The operational need did not disappear with them.

Today's production environments require employees to understand workflows, automation, substrates, finishing, quality control, troubleshooting, and interconnected systems — not simply operate a single piece of equipment. At the same time, many companies are operating with leaner teams, compressed onboarding timelines, and fewer opportunities for one-on-one training.

Many organizations are hiring individuals with strong potential but limited exposure to print production fundamentals. Training often happens while production is already moving. Experienced employees remain one of the industry's greatest assets, but many companies no longer have the bandwidth to rely solely on informal shadowing and tribal knowledge transfer.

At the same time, the industry can no longer assume exposure to print simply happens naturally.

Many individuals interested in manufacturing, design, packaging, communications, or production careers have little understanding of how modern print environments operate or what career pathways exist within the industry. Today's production roles often require a blend of mechanical understanding, digital workflows, troubleshooting, process thinking, and adaptability. The skillsets are broader than many people outside the industry realize — which is exactly why foundational training matters more than ever.

PIA MidAmerica recognized the gap and chose to build.

Over the past year, PIA MidAmerica has been developing a structured vocational training platform focused on foundational print and

production knowledge. The program includes approximately 144 hours of online learning delivered through Canvas, supported by textbooks, guided coursework, and curriculum aligned with nationally recognized industry competencies and certification standards.

Importantly, this initiative is distinct from MidAmerica University. While MidAmerica U focuses on continuing education and professional development, this vocational platform is designed specifically to provide structured foundational training for individuals entering the industry or looking to strengthen their production knowledge and advance more quickly within their organizations.

This is not a collection of videos uploaded to a learning portal.

The curriculum has been intentionally designed as scalable workforce infrastructure that member companies can integrate into onboarding, workforce development, and internal training strategies. The platform was built to provide consistency, accessibility, and flexibility while maintaining the structure and rigor needed for meaningful skill development.

The goal is practical: help individuals build foundational knowledge faster while helping companies create more consistent development pathways for their teams.

The companies that build stronger onboarding and development systems today will be better positioned to adapt, retain talent, and scale operationally tomorrow. Workforce development can no longer be treated as separate from operational strategy. It is part of operational resilience.

We're ready. With scholarship opportunities available for qualifying participants and multiple pathways for member company participation, companies interested in strengthening onboarding, workforce development, and foundational production training are encouraged to connect with the PIA MidAmerica team.

Email us at info@piamidam.org to learn more.