



WISCONSIN
MFG
MONTH
October

PLANT TOUR GUIDE

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS,
COUNSELORS, PARENTS, MEDIA AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

WMC
FOUNDATION

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SHOWCASE YOUR PLANT, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, AND HELP STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS EXPLORE CAREERS: A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL PLANT TOURS

Conducting manufacturing plant visits for students, educators, parents, media, and elected officials is a good way to build relationships for your company, expose community members to high quality, good paying manufacturing careers, and educate people on the value of manufacturing.

More than anything else, plant tours educate the community on the importance of manufacturing's role in the economy and allow a first-hand look at how manufacturing has changed from most people's 1950s impression. These visits can provide excellent press opportunities for your company. Better yet, your neighbors will have a better appreciation for your role in your community.



This guide will help you plan, prepare for, and conduct a successful plant tour, as well as ensure your experience is as effective as possible. You will find a simple yet thorough checklist to follow to make sure your plant tour runs as smoothly as possible.

Plant tours paint the perfect picture of manufacturing at work.

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WMC would like to thank the National Association of Manufacturers for sharing the framework used to design this guide for Wisconsin manufacturers. Please visit www.nam.org to learn more about our nation's largest industrial trade association, representing small and large manufacturers in every industrial sector and in all 50 states.



SETTING UP THE PLANT TOUR

- ✓ Decide who to invite
- ✓ Send the invitation (see sample invite)
- ✓ Track and confirm RSVPs, follow up as necessary
- ✓ Coordinate length of event with key attendees
- ✓ Distribute memo of visit to employees

PLANNING FOR THE MEDIA

- ✓ Keep track of media participation/attendance
- ✓ Draft a media advisory, if desired (see sample advisory)
- ✓ Prepare area for news media
- ✓ Prepare a message from the CEO

ORGANIZING THE PLANT TOUR

- ✓ Put together internal planning group, if necessary
- ✓ Decide who will meet with the visitors
- ✓ Craft VIP introductions
- ✓ Establish look and feel of welcome area
- ✓ Create name badges for guests
- ✓ Determine required safety equipment
- ✓ Brief tour guide(s)
- ✓ Craft tour script
- ✓ Hire/designate photographer
- ✓ Prepare an information package
- ✓ Research talking points, your company story, current events, etc.
- ✓ Prepare a map of the tour route

PREPARING DISPLAYS & LITERATURE

- ✓ Determine product display, if applicable
- ✓ Gather company literature and background materials
- ✓ Provide list of attendees' names and companies

PREPARING FOR ARRIVAL

- ✓ Determine what machinery will be in operation
- ✓ Provide directions to the plant
- ✓ Welcome guests on arrival

CONDUCTING THE TOUR

- ✓ Provide safety equipment to tour guests, if applicable
- ✓ Show visitors how your production line works
- ✓ Let your visitor be an active participant
- ✓ Mention any prepared talking points during the tour

FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE TOUR

- ✓ Send thank you note to guest(s)
- ✓ Thank your own staff
- ✓ Send photos to schools, media, and your local chamber
- ✓ Tell Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) about the tour
- ✓ Provide press coverage
- ✓ Use social media to recap the tour
- ✓ Continue to communicate with visitors post-event





SETTING UP THE PLANT TOUR

- ❑ **Decide Who to Invite.** Consider starting with local school leaders, career and technical education faculty, and guidance counselors. Add local media, chamber of commerce executive, and elected officials.
- ❑ **Send the Invitation.** Send a letter explaining who you are and what you would like to showcase. Include directions to the plant, as well as a requested amount of time. Once a date is set, be prepared for last-minute schedule changes.
- ❑ **Track and Confirm RSVPs, and Follow Up as Necessary** Call the invitees to make sure the invitation has been received. Make follow-up phone calls. Be flexible and persistent.
- ❑ **Be Clear About the Length of the Event.** Make sure everyone knows the timetable for the tour and other events you have planned.
- ❑ **Distribute Memo of Visit to Employees.** Share the news with employees of the visitor's planned visit and encourage them to attend.

The ideal time to schedule a tour is during October, since it is Manufacturing Month. If you hold a tour at another time, some dates to keep in mind include:

- ✓ Martin Luther King, Jr., Day (mid-January)
- ✓ Presidents' Day (mid-February)
- ✓ Easter/Passover (March or April)
- ✓ Memorial Day (late May)
- ✓ Independence Day (July 4)
- ✓ Summer (June through the week after Labor Day)
- ✓ Rosh Hashanah (late September or early October)
- ✓ Yom Kippur (10 days after Rosh Hashanah)
- ✓ Columbus Day (early October)
- ✓ Veterans Day (early November)
- ✓ Thanksgiving (late November)
- ✓ Christmas (late December)
- ✓ New Year's Day (January 1)



PLANNING FOR THE MEDIA

- ❑ **Make attendees aware that media might be present.** Once the date and time are set, contact your local media outlets, including large daily newspapers, as well as local weeklies. Offer to send your own report and photos to the paper.
- ❑ **Draft a media advisory, if desired.** Once the date is set, draft a media advisory containing the date, time, specific location, parking accommodations, and lighting requirements, if any. Note whether the tour itself is open for press coverage. Give the location. E-mail the advisory along with a press kit and company information to everyone on your press list.
- ❑ **Prepare area for news media.** Arrange for an area outside of your facility for presentations, ribbon-cutting (if appropriate), and informal discussions with the news media. This area should be in front of your company's signage or logo.
- ❑ **Prepare a message from the CEO.** Prepare an "op-ed" or letter to the editor from your CEO to your local newspapers on an issue related to manufacturing and manufacturing careers. Better yet, arrange a meeting with the newspapers' editorial boards to discuss jobs in your facility. Reach out to local radio stations for an interview.



ORGANIZING THE PLANT TOUR

- ❑ **Put together internal planning group, if necessary.** The planning group should be responsible for organizing the logistics of the plant tour.
- ❑ **Decide who will meet with the visitors.** Your intent is to develop a good rapport with educators and others who may influence the future employees of your company and your industry.
- ❑ **Craft VIP introductions.** Decide who will provide remarks and the topics you want to cover in welcoming school leaders and others.
- ❑ **Establish look and feel of welcome area.** Determine how you want the entrance to your plant to appear when your guest arrives. Think about the type of signage you want to use and whether any displays will be set up here or somewhere else.
- ❑ **Reserve a room for school leaders to talk with your staff.** Determine the best room, set up a podium and microphone if necessary, and arrange seating. Determine if refreshments will be served.
- ❑ **Create name badges for guests and staff.** Name badges are a must for your plant tour. Create name badges for your guest and any staff that accompanies him or her, as well as employees of your plant.
- ❑ **Determine required safety equipment.** If your plant tour requires it, determine what safety equipment will be needed. These include construction helmets, safety glasses, gloves, etc.
- ❑ **Brief tour guide(s).** Inform your tour guide(s) of what the plant tour will entail (what machinery, if any, will be shown on the tour, who the guest will meet with and where, the length of the tour, etc.) A tour guide who can relate to young people is critical to a successful tour.
- ❑ **Craft tour script.** Write an outline of what you hope to cover during the plant tour.
- ❑ **Hire/designate photographer.** Have a photographer on hand to take pictures of your tour event. These photos are excellent opportunities to publicize the event.
- ❑ **Prepare an information package.** Prepare materials for your guests that emphasize the benefits good manufacturing jobs bring to workers, suppliers and your area's economy. Put together a one-pager that highlights your company's characteristics and accomplishments.
- ❑ **Research talking points, your company story, company employment needs, etc.** Educate visitors on the great things manufacturing does. Share your personal stories; don't just talk economic data or statistics.
- ❑ **Prepare a map of the tour route.** Consult with employees to determine a route for the tour, noting which areas contain top secret information or any safety hazards. These areas should be off-limits.

PREPARING DISPLAYS & LITERATURE

- ❑ **Determine product display, if applicable.** Proudly display your product for your visitor to see. A special exhibit, promotional materials, and company literature will enhance the visit.
- ❑ **Gather company literature and background materials.** This information helps tell the story of your business to your guest. Include the story on your company history, philanthropic efforts, employee team news, etc.
- ❑ **Display materials showing your commitment to education.** Displaying materials, literature, posters, etc. that show your commitment to training, your K-12 district, and technical college will serve as a reminder of your commitment to the future of manufacturing.
- ❑ **Provide list of attendees' names and companies.** This is great to have for networking opportunities and putting names with faces.



PREPARING FOR ARRIVAL

- ❑ **Designate a note taker.** Assign a team member to take notes on any discussions, if possible.
- ❑ **Determine what machinery will be in operation.** This is important, especially if you plan to highlight or show a particular piece of machinery during the tour.
- ❑ **Provide directions to the plant.** Ensure your guests know what entrance to use; reserve parking spaces for them.
- ❑ **Welcome guest on arrival.** Greet officials at designated area. In the event of rain, provide an umbrella if possible. Hand out name badges. Prepare guests for the possibility of going through security before entering the plant.

CONDUCTING THE TOUR

- ❑ **Provide safety equipment to tour guests, if applicable.** Provide your guest with any items necessary for a tour, such as a construction helmet, safety glasses, gloves, etc.
- ❑ **Show guests how your production line works.** Show your guest how your machinery works, how different items are put together, what new technologies are being used, and your workers' overall productivity.
- ❑ **Let your visitor be an active participant.** If feasible without shutting down production lines, offer your visitor the chance to address your entire workforce. Have the guests do something "physical," such as shake hands, participate in a ribbon-cutting, run a machine, examine your product, or look at a computer screen. These are prime photo opportunities.
- ❑ **Mention any prepared talking points during the tour.** You have an important story to tell, so prepare specific answers to expected questions, particularly about your company's impact on the region. When developing your presentation, work in the following information:
 - ✓ **Success stories.** Discuss how the plant has improved and contributed to the community. Inform visitors about your company's history, including total investment in facilities and equipment.
 - ✓ **Products manufactured.** Describe how the products are used and where they are sold. Include the value of products you export.
 - ✓ **Jobs.** Discuss the number of people employed in your plant and others around the state or country; labor unions represented in your plant; and worker health, safety, and training programs.
 - ✓ **Payroll and benefits.** Discuss wages and the types and value of employee benefits, including profit-sharing, recreational programs, voter registration activities, health or sports facilities, credit unions, child care, educational support and discount purchases of company products. (Remind your visitor that each wage dollar multiplies in the wage earner's community in the form of rent, food purchases, clothing purchases, medical expenses, etc. before it goes to out-of-town suppliers.)
 - ✓ **Community impact.** How much does your company pay in federal, state, and local taxes? What are your local expenditures to purchase supplies, materials, and services? Do you host town hall meetings? Does your company participate in community charities? What are you doing to support local education? Tell the guests about your active role as a good corporate citizen.

A plant tour enhances the mutual understanding between you and your community. To make certain that they remember your company, follow-up efforts are important.

- ❑ **Send thank you note to guest(s).** Write a thank you note reiterating any key issues discussed during the tour.
- ❑ **Thank your own staff.** Recognize employees who contributed their time and expertise to make the tour a success.
- ❑ **Send photos to attendees.** Many times photos you send to guests will show up in other periodicals.
- ❑ **Tell WMC about the tour.** To help WMC assist other companies, tell us how the tour went. Send us photos and press clippings. E-mail your information to Jim Morgan at jmorgan@wmc.org.
- ❑ **Provide press coverage.** Provide the school district, technical college, and local chamber of commerce with your company newsletter and other publicity the visit generated.
- ❑ **Use social media to recap the tour.** Publish photos, details, etc. on company social media platforms. Coordinate with WMC to post on any WMC platforms.
- ❑ **Continue to communicate with the guests post-event.** Keep them up-to-date on new activities at the company, and leave the door open for future visits.

SAMPLE INVITATION: VIPS

Date

VIP Name
Title
Company, Organization, School
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear VIP Name,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a plant tour here at [company name]. As part of October being Manufacturing Month, we encourage every educator and community leader to visit the plants of their local manufacturers for the opportunity to see why “Manufacturing Means Jobs!”

[Insert information describing your company in two to three sentences. Include the number of employees.]

This plant tour is an informal opportunity for you to see our plant and speak candidly with our employees. The format will include [provide timeline for the day]. The event will take place on:

Date
Time
Company
Address
City, State

We sincerely hope you will accept our invitation to participate. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you can attend by contacting me at [phone] or [email].

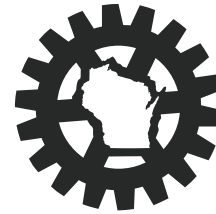
Thank you, and I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

**SEND
OR EMAIL**

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY: PLANT TOUR

NEWS ALERT



WISCONSIN
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October

[Alert Number]

NEWS CONTACT

[Company Contact] (XXX) XXX-XXXX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Advisory

[NAME OF COMPANY] PLANT TO HOST [NAME OF ANY VIPs] ON [DATE]

What: [Name of company, city, state] will host [VIP names] for a plant tour tomorrow morning as part of an effort to educate educators and community members on the benefits manufacturers bring to communities, careers in manufacturing, and the unprecedented challenges now facing America's manufacturing sector.

The attendees will observe the facility's production of [give a brief description of what they will see while on the plant tour] and offer brief remarks to gathering employees.

[Company name] is participating in Manufacturing Month in an effort to tell the story of Wisconsin manufacturers. The events are being coordinated by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC).

Who: [Name of VIPs]
[Company name]

Where: [Company name]
[Plant address]
[City, state, zip]

When: [Date and time]

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