Industry Leader Lunch Series 2011-12

The Need: To Offer Local Industry Leaders an Opportunity for Networking
While human resource directors, plant managers, and supervisors who work in Clinton County are located near to each other (mostly in the State Road 28 industrial park area), they tend to be so focused on their own business operations they pay little attention to the others around them. However, these industry leaders have a common need for professional development, community information, and networking. They also have a need to become organized as a group to take advantage of county and regional economic and development opportunities that may arise. By meeting monthly, industry leaders can keep each other up-to-date on local happenings and communicate important news to their colleagues. Several years ago, the Chamber of Commerce had organized these industry leaders to meet quarterly, but in the recent past no efforts had been made to unify the group. Following an Economic Development course run by Ball State, Chamber officials agreed to co-host the lunches with Purdue Extension.

The Response: Industry Leader Lunches Sponsored by Purdue Extension
Starting in August 2011, Purdue Extension’s Learning Network of Clinton County reached out to industry leaders—those previously involved in the group as well as those new to the group—to meet on the last Friday of each month. A speaker from Indiana Wesleyan’s adult continuing education classes launched the Industry Leaders Lunch series in September 2011. In October 2011, ACHEIVE Clinton County/Healthy Communities of Clinton County explained employee wellness plan options. No meeting was held in November, but in December 2011 the group was treated to a presentation by Manpower and free "holiday" massages from a new local massage therapy business. Participants responded positively to the idea of touring of each other’s industries, so Cintas hosted the first tour in January 2012. In February 2012, an ergonomist from Purdue’s Agrability explained how to “Work Smarter, Not Harder.” In April 2012, the group toured DSM and learned about safety, and in May 2012, the group toured a local ag co-op, Co-Alliance.

After one year of consistently offering the Industry Leader Lunches and recruiting new corporate entities and small businesses to join, a group of 25 regular attenders have emerged; they are the industry leaders (human resource directors, plant managers, and supervisors) who have attended the majority of the eight “lunch-n-learn” meetings, resulting in 200 direct educational contacts. Thirty-six percent of the industry leaders completed an end-of-series survey in May 2012.

1) **Of those who responded: 25% said that before the lunches, they were “not at all familiar,” 63 said they were “somewhat familiar” and 13% said they were “on a first-name basis” with other industry leaders in Clinton County. After the first year of lunches, 78% of participants said they either agree or strongly agree that the lunches “have been a valuable social networking tool” and/or “have been a valuable professional development tool for me.”

2) **Of those who responded: 78% said they were “satisfied with the content presented” and with the “style/approach of the presenter’s delivery,” and 89% said they were satisfied with the schedule.

3) Three articles in the local newspaper, The Frankfort Times, familiarized (at least) 4,500 Clinton County residents (as indirect educational contacts) with the successes and challenges of local industries that drive the economy of their community.