



AMSEC, LLC. Apprentice Profile: Anthony Bushlow

Anthony Bushlow knows a thing or two about ships. He was a Gunners' Mate in the U.S. Navy for 20 years and was working at St. Julien's Creek Annex of the Norfolk Naval Shipyard's Ship Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) in Norfolk, Virginia before retiring. He met fellow forklift drivers employed by AMSEC while working at SIMA and decided to join the firm in 2001 after leaving the service. Today Bushlow works in ASMEC's ESU (Elevator Support Unit). The ESU supports the Navy and private companies with repair and maintenance work "mostly on elevators, conveyors, and dumbwaiters," he explains.



Bushlow views his work as an important way of supporting the U.S. Navy. "The Navy has to do continuous training for sailors, whereas we have an extensive knowledge-base and can respond quickly when a ship encounters a problem. When jobs are too big for sailors to do out at sea or they don't have the equipment, they do the best temporary job possible and then get the ship back to us for a complete repair."

The Navy has changed over the years and Bushlow has seen it first-hand. "It used to be that you could drop out of high school, enlist, and get some basic training to maintain equipment. It's completely different now. The equipment is more sophisticated and the Navy needs more outside repair and maintenance support to enable sailors to focus on their main jobs. AMSEC's apprenticeship program keeps us on the leading edge," said Bushlow.

AMSEC's Apprenticeship Program has changed the lives of our employees and our company," said Brad Mason, Director of Operations at AMSEC LLC. He explained why he championed establishment of the company's Apprenticeship Program in 2009. "In this business you need to continue growing your workforce – it's essential for survival. If you're not helping your employees grow and learn more you won't have a competitive advantage in the marketplace." Mason encourages all apprentices to get their Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Maritime Technology from the firm's educational partner, Tidewater Community College (TCC). "We want them to take the required coursework and then go back and fill in any classes they may need to get both their journeyman's card (a national, portable credential) and their degree."

Bushlow enjoys having the opportunity to learn new things through the program. "Going back to school as an older adult is great because we've already done our jobs for years. We know what we can do and we have a strong background to bring to the subjects we're studying."

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Calling himself a “somewhat professional student” Bushlow appreciates how his company and TCC work together to create the right environment for AMSEC apprentices. “I enjoy taking classes in things I’m interested in, but then you have to make your life fit the course schedule. Through the Apprenticeship Program, the folks at TCC and AMSEC work together to figure out what we need to learn and then make arrangements to have the best professors come in to teach us, at the same time, to accommodate our work schedules. The classes not only make us better workers, but they enable us to earn a journeyman’s card, which makes us more skillful and marketable employees.”

Ross Leach, Training Manager and Apprentice School Coordinator at AMSEC, explains that having more highly educated, skilled, and certified employees also benefits the company. “When the government puts out a bid for work we have to meet certain employee qualifications. Because our apprentices have more experience, certification, and degrees than employees from our competitors, we have a greater chance of winning projects we bid on.”

Leach also hopes the apprenticeship program will motivate employees to grow into the company’s future leaders. “By providing them with an opportunity to get both experience and an education we hope that our apprentices will go on to become supervisors, project or program managers. When we look at promoting people from within we look at an apprentice grad and say ‘they made the effort and sacrifice to complete the program, get their certificate or degree, and maintain their onsite work performance at the same time.’ That’s the type of person we want to promote and retain.”

Bushlow explains what is required to succeed in the apprenticeship program. “You’ve got to have the drive to do this program,” he says. “It’s not just about going to school a few nights a week. It’s homework, studying during lunch breaks, and rearranging your family’s schedule to meet your class requirements. You’ve got to be committed to self-improvement.”

In the end the sacrifice required to be an apprentice is worth it. “Good companies know the value of their employees. Great companies invest in them. The apprenticeship program shows you what kind of company AMSEC is,” says Bushlow.



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