

KATIE HOPPER
Sales Director
ARC Industries, Inc.



ARC Industries Inc. is a contract fulfillment company that provides a valuable labor resource pool to other public- and private-sector businesses. ARC Industries employees exclusively adults with developmental disabilities.

As a part of the adult services division of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, which serves all of Franklin County, ARC Industries serves adults with disabilities seeking opportunities to earn a paycheck and be productive. Its goal is to make corporate connections and find both facility-based work and community-based employment for its employees. ARC credits itself to having one of the finest programs in the country. It helps 1,500 adults every day find work or try to find work. In addition, there have been 400 adults who have been placed in the community with individual employers.

WHY THE COLUMBUS CHAMBER?

ARC is an active member of the Columbus Chamber. According to Katie Hopper, sales director, ARC Industries, ARC's Chamber membership is two-fold. Firstly, membership gives ARC the opportunity for visibility with potential corporate customers. Secondly, membership allows ARC to raise awareness of the overall profile of adults with disabilities and what they are capable of accomplishing, if given a chance.

"We feel we have a compelling story to tell," Hopper said. "We're a phenomenal resource for commercial, retail, and business enterprises here in Columbus that, in the past, have been underutilized." ARC credits the Chamber for being the largest venue to spread its message and promote the talents of its employees.

Hopper said that one of the barriers to utilization is a lack of understanding about disabilities and people with disabilities. "It's not deliberate; it's just simply a lack of exposure," she said.



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-Katie Hopper

ARC also values its membership because of the Chamber's advocacy efforts. The Chamber advocates for business-friendly policies that have an impact on ARC's employees. When legislative issues arise, such as minimum wage and workers' compensation legislation, ARC looks to the Chamber to advocate on its behalf.

THE RESULTS

ARC appreciates its Chamber membership for the variety of resources it provides. The Chamber offers networking events for its members; linking businesses to the resources and people they need to grow and continue to thrive. In the past, ARC has attended and been an exhibitor at the Chamber's Business2Business Network Expo.

"In the first year, I must've made three solid contacts that I followed through with that actually resulted in something productive," Hopper said. "That to me is a tremendously successful expo." In addition to the Business2Business Network Expo, ARC participates in the Chamber's Annual Clambake, which Hopper described as one of the Chamber's "premier events" to attend. The Clambake provides a venue for ARC's employees and ambassadors to mingle with executive level decision makers.

"We find a higher level of management at the Clambake," Hopper said. "We try to network in that fashion, at that level."

The Chamber also presents its members with the opportunity to market themselves through sponsorships and testimonials. ARC has taken advantage of these opportunities in order to increase its visibility and purpose. For example, each week the Chamber puts the focus on its member organizations by spotlighting one on the Chamber blog. In August 2010, ARC Industries, Inc. was chosen to be a Chamber member spotlight.

Through the Chamber member spotlight, ARC was able to inform other Chamber members about what they do and how other businesses could benefit from their services.

"I can't buy that kind of media exposure," Hopper said. "It was an opportunity to tell our story."

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ADVICE

From advocacy, to networking events, to brand and company awareness, being a member of the Chamber has proved beneficial for ARC Industries, Inc.

“The resources of the Columbus Chamber—the business expo; the opportunity at the Clambake to mix with some of the executive level decision makers; its legislative arm that will be involved if we need lobbying on behalf of the business community—all make the Columbus Chamber an important resource for me,” Hopper said.

Hopper describes the Chamber’s relationship with ARC as a mutually beneficial support system. “Even though we are a not-for-profit, I do believe that we have a civic responsibility to support agencies like the Chamber that exist on our behalf,” she said. “As much as the Chamber does for me, I hope in turn, we can sometimes do for the Chamber.” Hopper encourages other members to go online and explore the Chamber’s website or talk to a member services representative and find out what resources the Chamber makes available for its members to take advantage of.

“There is no other single source of business resources under one roof such as the Columbus Chamber,” she said. “I’m not obviously doing my best job of managing my budget and my account if I’m not getting the full benefit of my membership,” Hopper said. “I’m remiss in my duties by not making myself familiar.”

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