Summary of Initiative
In 2011, International Paper’s (IP) manufacturing leadership identified a future challenge of unprecedented attrition. As a result, next-generation IP team members would be required to advance into top positions in maintenance and operations three to four times faster than their predecessors. The company’s Global Manufacturing Training Initiative (GMTI) was implemented to identify best practices and skills requirements inside and outside of IP and to develop the model operations and maintenance employee needed by 2020. GMTI is a challenging learning system designed to develop our highly trained workforce of tomorrow.

The Need
IP will lose 51 percent of our operations and maintenance employees from 2011 to 2026. The upcoming departures of these long-service, experienced employees represent 72 percent of the years of experience in our company. More than 161,000 years of experience will leave IP through operations and maintenance attrition during this 15-year period and will be replaced by new hires that will advance through these positions in one-third of the time. Employees with less than 20 percent of their predecessors’ experience will have to meet and exceed the business expectations needed by our company to ensure our success.

The Solution
GMTI is the company’s proactive manufacturing strategy to implement a new learning system for IP’s manufacturing facilities. This standardized learning system created a common set of detailed position profiles and curriculum across IP’s pulp and paper manufacturing facilities. Learning best practices from our 43 mills across the globe and external best practices were leveraged to transform a decentralized learning system for operators and mechanics into one standardized model. This set the foundation for the four key pillars of GMTI: Recruitment and Selection, Training Systems, Qualifications and Performance, and Organizational Development.

Partnerships and Enabling Public Policies
IP’s GMTI is the result of an extensive benchmarking process with companies like Nucor Steel, Mercedes and DuPont. IP has also developed relationships with colleges, vocational technical schools and community colleges. The company is exploring joint partnerships to establish training curricula and procure equipment that is utilized by others in the community. IP is active on the Human Capital Management Business Advisory Board.

Outcomes/Benefits
IP has seen a number of positive results based on our GMTI. During a recent period of 30 percent attrition and a 41 percent loss of experience, IP exceeded our safety and cash cost savings goals by 2 percent. Each year since 2013, the company’s mill maintenance reliability performance measured by unplanned downtime has improved by 11 percent. IP received a “preferred quality supplier” status from several key companies in 2016, with training as a strong driver behind this designation. Improved training has also enhanced IP’s Life-changing Injury & Fatality Elimination (LIFE) safety program. In 2016, for the first time in IP’s history, no employee or contractor lost his or her life performing work for IP. This safety milestone is the most critical success to build on with our next-generation employees.

Mark Sutton
Chairman and CEO
International Paper

“International Paper is seizing the opportunity to reinvent our workforce for the future. Our Global Manufacturing Training Initiative is preparing the next generation of IP team members that are critical to the company’s success.”