



# Technology Drives Changes for SEPTA

EDSI and the Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Transportation Authority (SEPTA) first crossed paths in 2002 as part of a state-funded training effort for public transit maintenance.

John Buckner, SEPTA's Manager of Technical Training since 1996, explains, "Technology in the transit industry was on a steady incline, and the training and skills of the workforce were staying plateaued. In order to keep the work in-house, our workforce needed the right training to enhance their skills."

SEPTA started a process to identify partners to assess the current skill levels of its workforce, identify current and future skill gaps and assist in curriculum development. EDSI was selected as the partner for this initiative.

Buckner continues, "We didn't really have a process to get the work done. That's what EDSI offered, the right process. We had the need, but we didn't know where to go, what should be done, and ultimately how to get it done. EDSI came in and got the ball rolling."

Working closely with both SEPTA management and the local unions was crucial to the project's success. Buckner shares, "Having been a trainer for many years, I appreciated the fact that EDSI was very organized and professional. They were able to not only address the needs of SEPTA management, but also the needs of the unions. EDSI did a great job working with the unions to explain the intent of the process and the data collection to ensure that we received good inputs on self-assessments, ultimately ensuring we could provide the best, and most needed training."

Utilizing the Skilldex system, EDSI collected and analyzed data to help SEPTA make informed decisions. "The biggest impact of the project was that we now had the data to support training needs in what had been areas of concern all along.

I had never really been involved with a gap analysis to that level, and when the skill gap reports came out, we were able to identify clear targets to up-skill our workforce," Buckner shares.

In 2008, an opportunity presented itself for EDSI and SEPTA to reconnect on another initiative. SEPTA's incoming fleet of regional rail cars represented a 40-year leap in technology, and EDSI was engaged to perform a "Predictive Job Task Analysis" to understand how the responsibilities and distribution of work would change as the fleet turned over.

Buckner recalls, "The experience and reputation of EDSI in working with SEPTA and union partners on previous projects was invaluable, as this project engaged 13 union partners. We needed to find out where our skills were and where they needed to be with the new fleet." This proactive effort led to a detailed training plan to effectively prepare the workforce for the new vehicle's arrival.

Buckner has been part of several national committees in various roles for bus maintenance, rail vehicle maintenance, and elevator-escalator maintenance; where EDSI has been engaged in developing national maintenance training standards, certification programs, approved courseware packages, and/or apprenticeship and curriculum programs.

John Buckner: "The benefits of the whole process, and what was done, have really changed things here at SEPTA considerably. I believe enough in the whole process and saw enough of the advantages here in Philadelphia to push it across the country."



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