

Character, Not Aptitude: ADTC Study Confirms What Predicts Whether Technicians Stay, Perform, and Advance

ADTC: Solutions for Skilled Trades Study Confirms: Character — Not Technical Aptitude — Predicts Whether Entry-Level Technicians Stay, Perform, and Advance

COLUMBUS, OH, UNITED STATES, March 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ADTC: Solutions for Skilled Trades (adtc.co) today released findings from a multi-year study of nearly 500 zero-experience technicians trained and placed through its A.M.R.U. (Actively Market and Rapidly Upskill) programs across the diesel, HVAC, and critical infrastructure industries. The data, drawn from multiple employer partners and cohorts recruited and trained between 2021 and 2026, in accelerated 200-hour programs, validates a counterintuitive conclusion: work ethic and attitude predict retention and promotion far more reliably than mechanical aptitude — and ADTC's system measures both before a technician's first day on the job.

"Everyone assumes it's technical aptitude," said Tim Spurlock, CEO of ADTC. "The data says otherwise. Work ethic and attitude are the dominant predictors of retention and promotion. Raw mechanical ability barely registers by comparison."

The Core Finding

Across three technician populations totaling nearly 500 individuals, ADTC identified a validated retention threshold: technicians scoring at or below 7.5 out of 10 on work ethic or attitude during training departed at dramatically higher rates than those above it. Promotion rates showed a threefold increase between technicians below 7.5 and those above 8.5 in work ethic. The threshold held consistently across cohorts and industries.

The most recent cohort produced the strongest outcomes in ADTC's history: an average matrix score of 745.4 out of 810, an average work ethic of 8.93, an average attitude of 9.24, and 0% of students triggering the validated retention risk threshold — compared to 60.8% in the earliest dataset. Every student completed ADTC's adaptive learning curriculum at 100% Conscious Competence. Fourteen of fifteen earned the highest available industry certification.

The Measurement System

ADTC evaluates every student through two tools. The A.M.R.U. Matrix scores nine behavioral and technical dimensions, with work ethic, attitude, attendance, and safety being weighted the

highest because they predict outcomes most reliably. ADTC Learn, powered by Area9 Rhapsode's adaptive learning platform, measures not just what students know but whether they accurately know what they don't know — identifying and eliminating hidden misconceptions before a technician touches live equipment.

"Virtually all training and educational programs tell you what a student scored on a test," said Spurlock. "It's the wrong metric. Skilled trades work is fundamentally different. Will you go to work when it's freezing cold or hot outside? Can you handle a physically demanding job? We tell you whether a student knows the limits of their own knowledge and whether they have the mental and character makeup to do the work. That distinction is everything when a technician is on a job site."

From Training to Outcomes

In a longitudinal analysis with a major national fleet partner, ADTC graduates were benchmarked directly against technicians from traditional training pathways. By month three, there was no statistically significant difference in repair efficiency. By month five, ADTC graduates were performing preventive maintenance at higher quality scores than their counterparts. The median ADTC graduate achieved full qualification in 26.5 days. Over 175 graduates have received title and responsibility promotions.

"We are not just filling positions," said Spurlock. "We are changing the economic trajectory of people who had no clear path into a skilled trade. The employers get a retained, performing workforce. The technicians get a career in 10% of the time it takes the traditional system. They also get paid to train. Years ago, we identified the two biggest barriers to increasing the number of skilled trades workers. The time and financial cost required by the legacy U.S. educational system."

About ADTC

ADTC: Solutions for Skilled Trades (adtc.co) is a national accelerated workforce infrastructure company, focusing on skilled trades and field service verticals. Through its A.M.R.U. programs, ADTC recruits zero-experience candidates, evaluates them using a validated behavioral and cognitive framework, and trains them to job-ready proficiency in a fraction of the time required by traditional programs. To date, ADTC has produced technicians in more than 271 cities across the United States.

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