

Influx of workers could support Foxconn factory, business leaders say

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An influx of workers from outside Wisconsin could help provide enough workers for the Taiwanese technology company Foxconn as it weighs building a factory in southeastern Wisconsin, several business leaders and observers say.

The deal, if it happens, would draw in engineers and automation workers from around the country while encouraging Wisconsin grads to stay in the state instead of heading elsewhere, they say. Look, for example, at the Madison-area health records company Epic, which started in 1979 and now has roughly 10,000 employees.

“They weren’t by any means all people who were already in Wisconsin,” said Tom Still, the president of the Wisconsin Technology Council, adding that the much younger software company JAMF is also bringing people into the Eau Claire area.

Foxconn is also eyeing other states for the development, though the Wall Street Journal reported recently the company is nearing a decision to invest in Wisconsin.

Business and political leaders have repeatedly cited a “skills gap” in Wisconsin as a major problem, where jobs in manufacturing and other sectors are open but there aren’t enough skilled workers to fill them. Gov. Scott Walker, for example, frequently points to the 90,000 or so jobs that are open on the Jobs Center of Wisconsin website.

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