

Be a Hero and Help Solve a Super Problem

I...am...IRON...MAN...

I am also Tony Stark, CEO of Stark Industries, and when I'm not doing superhero stuff in my Iron Man getup, I'm running a business. Unlike my fellow superheroes, such as Spider-Man and Captain America, I have to deal with making payroll, keeping customers happy, maintaining production quality, and paying taxes. (I don't think the Hulk has filed a tax return for years. The IRS makes him ANGRY, if you know what I mean.)

The technical standards, certifications, and educational programs of AWS have been crucial to my business, but if you don't believe me (since I'm a fictional character), believe the real companies that depend on these AWS programs to stay competitive. These companies thank the Society and its members on a daily basis, I'm sure.

I am writing today to express my thanks to AWS for sponsoring the latest *Iron Man* comic book from Marvel Comics, being distributed now in conjunction with the premiere of the *Iron Man* movie.

The new *Iron Man* comic book (or "graphic novel," as I prefer to call it) tells the story of three teenage welding students who save me from an attack by a pair of supervillains: Spymaster and that lightweight flunky Titanium Man. And they use their welding skills to do it. (You gotta love that SENSE program.)

These brave students — Heather, Sam, and Josh — will go on to find rewarding careers in welding, thanks in no small part to their dedicated welding instructor. And Heather has received a college scholarship from the AWS Foundation. I'd hire all three of them myself — but they have a world of opportunities to choose from, just like the comic book says.

The best part of the *Iron Man* comic book is that it invites young readers to order the free AWS career guide, *Your Career in Welding*. This 32-page booklet dramatizes the many career choices available — from sales to teaching to inspection — for any student who is interested in the welding industry, and why — right now — as the world faces a dire shortage of skilled welders and technicians, those choices can be so financially rewarding.

The free comic book and career guide are just the most visible components of the Society's efforts to reverse the skilled welder shortage. A campaign using video, the Internet, and other media is under development, and the AWS Foundation is deploying a mobile "SOS" (Solutions Opportunity Squad) team in the field to find real-world solutions, by connecting educators, employers, and local governments so their efforts can be coordinated to solve this problem.

The welding industry is responding to the Foundation's "Welding for the Strength of America" capital campaign. The campaign continues to focus on pledges to support scholarships, but a major new emphasis is the Welder Workforce Development Program. The focus is on building the welder workforce in the United States from "recruitment to retirement" to help solve the anticipated shortage of 200,000 welders by 2010. The welding industry has responded generously by pledging more than a million dollars. You can help, too. Donors have the ability to specify how they want their dollars used; for example, contributions are being earmarked for welding camps, a celebrity spokesman campaign, and a career Web site.

I hope you enjoy the *Iron Man* movie (in which I use welding to escape from terrorist kidnapers) as well as the *Iron Man* comic book. The comics are being distributed through AWS Section leaders, so contact them for your copy. Copies of *Your Career in Welding* can be ordered online at www.aws.org/career. If you're in a position to encourage young people (or even older folks) to pursue a career in the welding industry, please order some copies and pass them on.

You'll be helping solve the skilled welder shortage and you'll be doing someone a great favor. They'll think of you as a hero, and AWS will think of you as super!



Iron Man
AKA Tony Stark, Stark Industries

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