



NJMEP

MANUFACTURING MATTERS

2023 | Issue #1

Helping New Jersey Manufacture Success

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MANUFACTURING MATTERS

New Jersey's manufacturing magazine, sharing the voice of the industry. Find the latest updates, resources, and trends shaping manufacturing and hear from the thought leaders driving the industry forward.



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Manufacturing Monthly Themes

What 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturers Need to Watch in 2023

Manufacturing is a complex and ever-evolving industry, and in recent years, several themes have emerged that are shaping the sector's development. These emerging trends are reviewed and dissected in every edition of Manufacturing Matters magazine. Economic uncertainty, continued supply chain disruptions, and Industry 4.0 are three of the most significant themes that manufacturers must navigate to stay competitive. In this issue, we will dive into these three trends and uncover why they will matter to manufacturers of all shapes and sizes as the industry makes its way into 2023.

Explore these themes to better understand today's business landscape. The more information manufacturing leaders can absorb, the better they can prepare their businesses for the future. There's no telling what this year has in store but the more resilient a manufacturer can be, the better they will fair no matter what disruptions come their way.

Economic Uncertainty

Economic uncertainty is a major challenge for manufacturers, as it can make it difficult to predict demand and plan for the future. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this challenge, as manufacturers must navigate shifting consumer behavior and volatile global markets. To address this challenge, manufacturers are turning to digital technologies and data analytics to help them better anticipate demand and respond more quickly to changes in the market.

Business leaders are faced with deciphering wavering statements about a future recession or a rebounding economy. Some reports indicate the economy may be rebalancing

after years of turmoil caused by the pandemic. The unemployment rate at the end of 2022 returned to 3.5%—back to early 2020 levels.¹

However, with the positive indications in the labor market, rising inflation is quickly sapping consumer and business cash reserves. People and businesses saved at record levels during the pandemic which has dampened the impact of rising costs. According to VOX, there are three routes the economy can take, and unfortunately, each of them makes it increasingly difficult for manufacturing businesses to plan for the future. They state we could either see a light recession or no recession, and a severe recession is not off the table.² With such a wide variety of possibilities, manufacturing leaders need to keep their ears to the ground and remain agile to take advantage of opportunities and avoid economic pitfalls.

Continued Supply Chain Disruptions

Supply chain disruptions are another major theme that manufacturers will continue to face in 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of global supply chains, and manufacturers are now looking for ways to make their supply chains more resilient. This includes diversifying their supplier base, implementing just-in-time inventory systems, and investing in logistics and transportation technologies.

Sourcing materials and components have become easier over the past two years but geopolitical turmoil and residual COVID-19 disruptions mean delays and unreliable lead times will

still be a variable for manufacturing businesses. Working on building out resilient supply chains and monitoring potentially disruptive global events will pay off massively.

Resiliency is always the goal when it comes to a manufacturer's supply chain. How a business can become resilient is the true challenge. It's a challenge because there are nearly limitless options on how to approach creating stronger supply networks that can either pivot if there's an issue or resists outside pressure. Whether it's training logistics professionals to be cognizant of the intricacies in the supply chain, becoming aware of outside and uncontrollable factors that can disrupt a supply chain, or incorporating new technologies that can analyze trends and monitor supply and demand in real-time—the options for manufacturers are endless.

Manufacturers in 2023 must be aware of the unique avenues they're able to explore to create resilient supply chains. Being open-minded to new ideas and new suppliers is going to be a necessity. Manufacturing businesses need to understand that supply chain woes are not behind them entirely. Maintaining an agile and strategic mindset will be key to succeeding in the new year.

Industry 4.0

Industry 4.0 is a theme that has been gaining traction in recent years, as manufacturers look to leverage advanced technologies to improve operations. Industry 4.0 technologies such as automation, robotics, 3D printing, and IoT are helping manufacturers to improve efficiency,

reduce costs, and increase flexibility. By adopting these technologies, manufacturers can increase productivity, reduce waste, and stay competitive in a rapidly changing market.

The industry has been speaking about Industry 4.0 for over a decade. Adoption is slow but becoming more readily available every single day. Technology costs continue to plummet, AI-driven systems are rapidly advancing, and real-world success stories are starting to become more prevalent. Furthermore, Industry 4.0 technologies can directly help manufacturers manage the two previous trends. By incorporating robotics and automated systems, utilizing artificial intelligence and predictive analytics, and increasing supply chain transparency, businesses will be able to mitigate any potentially damaging disruptions or economic downturns they might be forced to confront in the new year.

Economic uncertainty, continued supply chain disruptions, and Industry 4.0 are three major themes that will have a consistent presence throughout the year. Manufacturers must navigate these challenges to stay competitive. Actively working to monitor economic trends, taking a strategic approach to supply chains, and exploring Industry 4.0 technologies will be key factors in supporting the growth and resiliency of a manufacturing business in 2023. 

Follow the latest from New Jersey manufacturing by following @NJMEP on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Stay engaged all year long to help protect and support the industry.

2022

A Year in Review

By Mike Womack, Marketing & Communications Sr. Manager, NJMEP

The domestic manufacturing industry made more progress in 2023 than many thought would be possible. New Jersey manufacturing businesses were facing countless challenges following the pandemic, but their resilience and perseverance allowed many to overcome these disruptions and continue forward. NJMEP worked to ensure these businesses had access to the latest incentives, were able to speak up and help guide state decision-makers toward developing programs that would support their businesses, and created opportunities for businesses to engage, network, and access training and consulting resources to meet their needs.

The past year was filled with exciting updates and worrisome turmoil. As the new year progresses, it will be vital to look back, understand what momentum was generated, and plan how best to collaborate with NJMEP and industry partners to drive business forward even more in 2023. Uncertainty is the only certainty when looking at the economic and business landscape. Without a strong understanding of the progress being made, businesses could miss opportunities expected to arrive this year.

Tangible Progress in State Support

NJMEP is not a lobbying organization. Instead, NJMEP works through a public-private partnership with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to ensure domestic manufacturers in New Jersey are resilient, profitable, and continue to grow. This is achieved through workforce training and consulting projects, however, if the industry is forgotten by the state, manufacturers will be forced to relocate. To address this challenge, NJMEP creates opportunities for the industry's value to be seen and understood. One way this is achieved is through Manufacturing Caucus meetings, hosting the State-of-the-State of Manufacturing, supporting



Manufacturing Caucus held February 23, 2022 at Source Farmhouse Brewery in Colts Neck, NJ

local communities, and running the east coast's largest manufacturing networking event of the year—'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day.

Manufacturing Caucus Meeting

Breweries are facing an extraordinary amount of pressure, especially once the pandemic slowed down and consumers were again returning to their facilities. Unfair and overarching rules are hindering these manufacturers' ability to engage with their customers and conduct business. A set of rules released as a response to the pandemic, specifically the home delivery of their product was about to sunset. To address these concerns, NJMEP invited the Manufacturing Caucus and New Jersey 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Business leaders to have a conversation about the most damaging rules holding their businesses back—potentially forcing them to consider moving out of state. These conversations helped highlight some of the issues that can be tackled immediately, and progress is already starting to take place. The most immediate win for local New Jersey breweries was in a press release on March 30th, 2022 where Gov. Murphy allowed these businesses to continue making home deliveries, but progress

doesn't stop there. Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin is looking at additional rules that impede growth and Senator Testa is standing behind breweries, pushing new legislation to counter rules set by New Jersey's Division of Alcoholic Beverage Controls.

State-of-the-State of Manufacturing

New Jersey manufacturing is an incredibly diverse industry. From heavy industrial to revolutionary pharmaceuticals, 'MADE in NJ' manufacturers span the gamut. State-of-the-State of Manufacturing is an event designed to take concerns from specific industries like those discussed at Manufacturing Caucus Meetings and amplify them by putting the entire force of the New Jersey industry behind each challenge. This event allows manufacturers of all kinds to submit the greatest disruptions they face from working in New Jersey, and it provides these individuals the opportunity to address issues directly with members of the state legislature.

In 2022, topics included Workforce Development, Diversity, Public Perception of industrial Careers, and Overbearing Regulation. Over 20 legislators participated, 2 dozen manufacturers took the stage, and

over 500 manufacturing leaders were in attendance to provide support. The manufacturers on the stage were chosen on the basis that their questions represented the hundreds of questions that were submitted. The conversations that took place between state decision-makers and business leaders that were brave enough to stand up and ensure their concerns were heard, became a catalyst for newly developed incentive programs and newfound state support.

The day included keynote speeches by industry leaders Alexandra Groezinger, President of Groezinger Provisions, Co-CEO Mari Kovach of General Technical Services, Michele Siekerka of NJBIA, Luis De La Hoz of SHCCNJ, Tim Sullivan of the NJEDA, and many more. These individuals shared their own experiences and highlighted the successes and challenges of their business or members, and helped drive home to the state legislature that manufacturing is still very much a part of the New Jersey economy, and will continue to be a massive contributor to the GDP. Having business leaders share their own stories is only one aspect of State-of-the-State of Manufacturing. To highlight the true scale and scope of the industry, a massive 'MADE in New Jersey' display was developed to give all federal and state decision-makers on-site a tangible way to



Senator Linda R. Greenstein (D) speaks at the first 2022 Manufacturing Caucus meeting.



Senator Edward Durr (R) answers questions posed by manufacturers at State-of-the-State of Manufacturing.



Manufacturers posing questions to legislators during the State-of-the-State of Manufacturing at the Trenton War Memorial.

see the industry in action. Having the 'MADE in New Jersey' display at State-of-the-State showed other New Jersey manufacturers that they are not alone as well.

Manufacturing Industry Progress

Progress takes place when the industry comes together. This can be seen from the developments that have unfolded over the last year. New Jersey set aside \$35 million to fund Manufacturing Initiatives, the largest contribution in decades. A portion of those funds is being used to support the New Jersey Manufacturing Voucher Program (NJMVP), initiated by the NJEDA. More on the NJMVP can be found on PAGE 38. The state is working to support the development of the Offshore Wind project as well. New Jersey is developing ways to ensure there is a reliable workforce here in the state. NJMEP is collaborating closely with manufacturing leaders to support the development of a New Jersey Offshore Wind supply chain to ensure most of the economic impact stays within the state. Part of this work dovetails from the CHIPS Act. A portion of the CHIPS Act focuses on developing a Supply Chain Database to avoid damaging supply chain breakdowns in the case of another global pandemic

or disruption of any kind. Not only will this supply chain database ensure the nation can continue forward despite any unforeseen catastrophe, but it will provide better insight for state and federal policymakers into the current state of domestic manufacturing and its capabilities.

Without engaging in events like State-of-the-State of Manufacturing, Manufacturing Caucus hearings, and, of course, 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day, this progress would not be taking place.

Jersey Guys Annual Golf Outing and Manufacturing Cares

Community development is a priority at NJMEP and the feeling is shared throughout the manufacturing community. The annual Jersey Guys Golf Outing broke records once again in 2022 and raised over \$33,000 for scholarships and community food banks.

The Annual golf outing brought together over 140 golfers and over 2 dozen sponsors in support of this incredible cause. Every dollar generated from the golf outing gets reinvested into young adults' educations and donated to help the food insecure. 17 young adults were awarded scholarships

from the money raised at the 8th annual Jersey Guys. The scholarships supported through Jersey Guys can be found below:

- **LEDR-Ship Grants for NJMEP Interns**
- **Bob Beaman Scholarship**
- **Tony DeSantis Scholarship**
- **Chris Depace Scholarship**
- **Ladies in STEM**

Jersey Guys is only one way the manufacturing industry supports the 'Manufacturing Cares' initiative. 'Manufacturing Cares' is a program developed to help the entire New Jersey manufacturing industry create the largest possible impact on local communities. It encompasses the Golf Outing, the Morris Habitat for Humanity, FIRST Mid-Atlantic Robots, and the 'Manufacturing Cares' Food Drive. Last year alone, the Food Drive raised over \$14,00 for the food insecure. 'Manufacturing Cares' is nearing its 2 millionth meal donated to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and Fulfill New Jersey!

'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day

Over 1,000 industry leaders came out to support manufacturing on October 7th, 2022. This past 'MADE in NJ'



State-of-the-State of Manufacturing -Trenton War Memorial, May 5, 2022



Jersey Guys Golf Outing - Minebrook Golf Club, July 22, 2022



'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day - The Event Center @IPA, October 7, 2022

Manufacturing Day was the biggest, yet! It has turned into the largest manufacturing networking event on the east coast hosted right here in New Jersey. As the industry continues to fight for the recognition it deserves, 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day has given manufacturers a way to validate each other's efforts but more importantly demand attention from the public and the state. This year's event was supported by over 48 sponsors, it included keynote speakers such as Representative Mikie Sherrill, and gave the industry a rare opportunity to connect, engage, and highlight their massive achievements over the past year.

'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day is the industry's cornerstone event. It brings the entire New Jersey manufacturing community together, recognizes them for their efforts and success, and exposes business leaders to exciting new developments and workforce programs that could revolutionize the future of domestic manufacturing.

'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day is made up of industry-critical breakout sessions, robotics showcases from local high school students, food, drinks, and, of course, the Manufacturer of the Year awards!

This year's Manufacturer of the Year titles were presented to manufacturers in three separate categories: Small-Size Manufacturer – Prince Sterilization Services; Medium-Size Manufacturers – IPAK; and Large-Size Manufacturer – Marotta Controls. Intelligent Material Solutions, Inc. (IMS) took home the title of Innovator of the Year. The first-ever Rising Star Award winner is Ellen Pietrowitz-Phillips, President of L-E-M Plastics & Supplies, Inc.

2022 was dubbed the 'Year of Women in Manufacturing.' This event was the perfect way to celebrate all the progress made in supporting women industry leaders over the year. A new award has been added to the event to ensure these incredible business leaders are continually represented year in and year out, while also giving them a platform to inspire the next generation of young women in manufacturing. The 'Rising Stars' award will now live on as a way for manufacturing businesses to recognize their women's talent and give these individuals the opportunity to engage and encourage more women to explore the industry.

To see and learn more about 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day, take a look through the complete recap on PAGE 8.

2022 was a challenging, yet critically important year for the manufacturing industry. Without taking the time to engage and collaborate with business leaders, state decision-makers, and industry partners, momentum will be lost. 2023 will be a pivotal year of domestic manufacturing. Further success or regression will depend on whether the industry will step up and be heard. Only if manufacturing leaders build on the progress of the past few years can domestic businesses once again thrive from New Jersey to California. 🌐



Ellen Pietrowitz-Phillips, President, LEM Plastics (Left), Kristi D'Angeli Telschow, CEO, Jersey Staffing Solutions, LLC (Right Center) Casey Muench, President, GEMCO (Left Center), Micaela Brandy Alvarez, Director of Ops & Engineering, Universal Nutrition (Right)



Howard McIlvane, NJMEP Board Chairman (Pictured Left) and Pete Connolly, NJMEP COO (Pictured Right) present John W. Kennedy (Center) with a custom Challenge Coin commemorating his 12 years of service at NJMEP.



Mike Womack, Sr. Marketing & Communications Manager, NJMEP addressing the crowd of 1,000+ manufacturing professionals.



Another Successful 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day

Industry Comes Together in Largest Celebration Yet

The 10th Annual 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day was a huge success as approximately 1,000 attendees from the manufacturing community joined the festivities on October 7th at iPlay America in Freehold, NJ. This year's celebration broke previous attendance records, nearly doubling last year's total. Manufacturing, legislative, educational, and community organization leaders throughout the Garden State joined NJMEP for this annual event. 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day is more than a networking event, it features educational discussions, works to change the public's perception of manufacturing, and celebrates the Manufacturer of the Year award winners.

This is the state's largest manufacturing networking event of the year and has recently been referred to as the largest on the East Coast. With the event's growing popularity, it was held at a much roomier venue that can fit 1,000+ attendees.

Five manufacturing businesses and one standout woman leader were recognized for their incredible achievements at this year's 'MADE in New Jersey' awards ceremony. This year's winners introduced two new categories – the Rising Star and the Leader in Life Science awards. Ellen Pietrowitz-Phillips, President of L-E-M Plastics & Supplies, Inc. was presented with the Rising Star award given to a standout woman leader in the industry. Celularity was presented with the other first for the Leader in Life Science award given to an outstanding company in the life sciences field. Both awards recognize two areas that need to be highlighted for their value to New Jersey's manufacturing industry—women in manufacturing and the life sciences field.

This year's Manufacturer of the Year titles were presented to manufacturers in three separate categories: Small-Size Manufacturer – Prince Sterilization Services; Medium-Size Manufacturers – IPAK; and Large-Size Manufacturer – Marotta Controls. The final award went to Intelligent Material Solutions, Inc. (IMS) who took home the title of Innovator of the Year. ►

MADE IN NEW JERSEY MANUFACTURING DAY

This annual celebration is a rare opportunity for the manufacturing industry to network while working to change the public's perception and providing invaluable knowledge and resources to help strengthen the businesses that participate. The industry is currently facing countless challenges hindering its ability to grow both in the state and nation. Throughout 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day, 8 separate breakout sessions were held to address these concerning topics, ranging from supply chain disruptions to workforce development. Attendees packed each room to participate in the breakout sessions while finding solutions that can help both their business and the industry thrive. Some of the notable breakout panelists included Sen. Linda Greenstein, NJMEP CEO John Kennedy, and Rising Star winner, Ellen Pietrowitz-Phillips. During a session, Sen. Greenstein presented Kennedy and NJMEP with special proclamations for their contributions to industry and to the state.

Breakout sessions were offered on a wide range of topics:

- **Mitigating Supply Chain Disruptions – Strategies, Tactics, Real-world Examples**
- **'Year of Women in Manufacturing' Collaborating to Drive Forward Progress**
- **Bridging the Divide Connecting Manufacturers**
- **Cybersecurity Made Simple the Threats and How to Avoid Them**
- **Strategies for Manufacturers to Improve Cashflow**
- **Reaching More Customers and New Markets**
- **Best Ways to Retain Your Current Workforce**
- **How Manufacturers Can Rebuild the Talent Pipeline**

Celebrating The Year of Women in Manufacturing

The 'Year of Women in Manufacturing' breakout session was of particular interest to guests this year as it coincides with this year's largest theme of the same name, focusing on the women leaders in the industry. Guests listened to the five women panelists discuss their experiences working in the manufacturing sector, with leadership, and providing advice to other women in the industry. The panelists fielded questions for women interested in exploring industrial careers and helped guide those just

starting their journey in the manufacturing industry.

Women play an integral part in the manufacturing industry. Thirty percent of the active workforce is made up of women, and that number is expected to rise annually. However, there is still a huge gender gap, particularly at the management and executive levels. Women make up 9% of CEOs in the manufacturing sector, according to the World Manufacturing Foundation. Events like 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day provide women with a large platform to be recognized, heard, and offers them a chance to inspire the next generation of women manufacturers. This celebration also encourages companies to look to women when it comes to addressing their workforce challenges.

NJMEP's CEO, John Kennedy is a huge advocate for women in manufacturing and strongly believes 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day is an opportunity to highlight the contributions of women and the value they add to the industry. To commemorate the 'Year of Women in Manufacturing' theme, Kennedy invited a local all-girls Robotics Team to lead the festivities with a 'Pledge of Allegiance'

"The 'Year of Women in Manufacturing' was built into this annual celebration as a primary theme. With new awards, and an emphasis on sharing just how many incredible women leaders are already in the industry, 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day gave these spectacular people a platform to tell their story and inspire the next generation," John W Kennedy, CEO (NJMEP) stated.



The first-ever Rising Star Award winner – Ellen Pietrowitz-Phillips (second to left), President of L-E-M Plastics & Supplies, Inc.

Highlighting Workforce Solutions, Robotics and New Jersey Made

A workforce development panel was held on stage in front of nearly 1,000 attendees. Panelists from local organizations

that work with underrepresented communities—such as military veterans and the neurodiverse community—held a discussion on restoring the workforce pipeline with members from these groups. During the conversation, these panelists expressed the readiness and skillset that members from these overlooked communities offer as an invaluable addition to the workforce for an industry desperately seeking talent.

Another exciting aspect of the event was the addition of New Jersey high school robotics teams participating in a robotics competition which took place in the expo room. A robotics version of basketball took place, with robots shooting balls into a giant hoop while hundreds of attendees watched. The robotics demonstration showed the industry that the talent pipeline is being rejuvenated and more students are being exposed to the manufacturing field.



Crowds gathered to watch NJ's top high school teams compete in the Robotics Competition during 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day

'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day wouldn't be complete without the exhibit booths from supporting businesses, including hands-on demonstrations with the latest workforce training technology. This year the expo room was even bigger with over 48 sponsors exhibiting. Beyond the expo room, the 'MADE in New Jersey' room was back and bigger than ever. The 'MADE in New Jersey' showcase highlighted dozens and dozens of the state's manufacturers and people could walk around the display to see all the incredible products that are manufactured right here in the garden state. One of the most unique products displayed was a custom NJMEP chair made and donated by GAR Products.

To top things off, there was an endless supply of food and drinks being served during the event. Each year, 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day serves breakfast, lunch, and a specialty drink from a local winery or distillery. This year's wine was produced and provided by Old York Cellars out of



The robotics competition was one of the top highlights during 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day

Ringoes, NJ. The bottles featuring the 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day logo were not only popular with guests, but it also helps promote a New Jersey business as well as the state's wineries, breweries, and distilleries. Two signature cocktails, Lairds Apple Jack and Blue Rascal, were also served during the festivities by Laird & Company of Eatontown, NJ and Blue Rascal Distillery of Hammonton, NJ, respectively.

Welcoming the Newest 'MADE in New Jersey' Honor Roll Members

Every year, NJMEP honors standout supporters of the industry by inducting them into the 'Manufacturing Honor Roll.' These individuals can be industry professionals, legislators, organizations, or anyone else who is an advocate for manufacturing in the state. This year, eight new names have been added to the prestigious Manufacturing Honor Roll.

The latest members are:

- **First Lady of New Jersey – Tammy Snyder Murphy**
- **Congresswoman Rebecca Michelle "Mikie" Sherrill**
- **Congresswoman Bonnie M. Watson Coleman**
- **NJ Assemblywoman Nancy F. Munoz**
- **Carroll A. Thomas – Former NIST-MEP Director**
- **Debbie Hart, MS, CAE, APR – BioNJ, President/CEO**
- **Senator Ronald L. Rice**
- **John W. Kennedy, Ph.D. – NJMEP, Chief Executive Officer**

Rep. Sherrill, a strong advocate for domestic manufacturing, was one of the legislators in attendance. She was among the many notable individuals on this year's list, including NJMEP's CEO, John Kennedy.



NJMEP CEO, John Kennedy (center) became one of the select individuals to be on the prestigious 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Honor Roll

"I am honored to have been voted onto the 2022 NJMEP Made in NJ Honor Roll by the members of the manufacturing industry, especially as we celebrated the first 'Year of Women in Manufacturing,'" said Rep. Sherrill. "The 10th annual 'Made in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day showcased the talent and the innovative spirit that has long driven our state's economy. New Jersey is a hub of advanced manufacturing and high-tech industries due to our best-in-the-nation workforce, and I am committed to working on your behalf to keep our state at the top of those industries. Thanks to NJMEP for your advocacy and partnership!"

'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day shines a light on the value of domestic manufacturing and its contributions to the Garden State and the nation. It also shows students the true face of manufacturing and the opportunity that exists in the field. The celebration provides manufacturers and STEM companies the chance to address their workforce challenges and collaborate to find solutions to their largest challenges. Having this annual celebration is vital to help companies network, learn, and grow so the industry can thrive in New Jersey.

Thank You to All These Amazing Manufacturing Supporters

This year's celebration was made possible only with the help of countless businesses that sponsored this grand spectacle. Each of these sponsors listed below provided an essential role in making the Garden State's largest networking event of the year possible.

PLATINUM



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Speak
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STATE-OF-THE-STATE MANUFACTURING NG

MAY 4, 2023 | TRENTON WAR MEMORIAL

find out more at njmep.org/sots





*New Jersey manufacturing is
Built to Last. Come discover some of the
featured manufacturers in this edition of
*Manufacturing Matters.**

Catbridge Machinery & Kinetics Industries Inc.

Catbridge Machinery

Catbridge Machinery has been operating in New Jersey for over 20 years. Founded in 2022 and located in Montville New Jersey, they manufacture slitter rewinders and web-converting systems for countless industries. They are a beautiful example of a 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing business, investing in their people and process, while at the same time maintaining a state-of-the-art organized facility. Becoming an industry leader didn't happen by accident. Leadership utilizes their decades of precision engineering and machine building expertise to produce the highest quality converting machinery to meet their customers' specific needs.

The entire organization prides itself and is dedicated to producing durable machines with faster cycle times, reducing set-up time, mitigating waste, and of course, minimizing defects. All this effort ensures the customer will have a machine that produces better quality products. Achieving this kind of quality requires Catbridge to make a substantial investment in Research and Development. Pushing the boundaries of what is possible is not free. However, the benefit of their progress means the manufacturers that use their machinery gain from reducing waste, lessen their environmental impact, and can produce parts and products more efficiently. Manufacturers like Catbridge Machinery are rewarded when investing in R&D. Read the full success story on PAGE 16 to see how they gained from exploring R&D Tax Credits.

Kinetics Industries Inc.

Kinetics Industries Inc. has a long history in New Jersey, stretching back to 1939. They are based in Trenton NJ and are a leader in the production of SCR-regulated and diode line-regulated power rectifiers, industrial DC power supplies, fuseless bolted fault rated magnet rectifiers, flux forcing magnet rectifiers, crane rectifiers, DC substations, synchronous motor field, generator excitation systems, and power conversion solutions. This 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturer brings together a diverse staff of engineering and technical experts to design and manufacture industrial, commercial, utility, and military application power conversion products.

The organization is always working to expand its client base and reach new markets. During the COVID pandemic, they were approached by a new customer to fulfill a significant order. This new client required a specific certification Kinetics Industry didn't have. They needed a partner to help them secure this new customer, one that understood the complexity of their business and the magnitude of this contract. See how they overcame this challenge and secured an ISO 9001: 2015-2021 certification seamlessly by turning to PAGE 18.

New Jersey manufacturing is Built to Last. These businesses and the employees that make it all possible are truly, 'Unsung Heroes.'

Check back in Manufacturing Matters every quarter to see the Built to Last manufacturing list.

To be included, contact Mike Womack at mwomack@njmep.org and show the world your company is Built to Last.

Catbridge Machinery Benefits from Qualified R & D Tax Credits

Background

Catbridge Machinery is a 'MADE in New Jersey' company that designs and manufactures high-performance web converting machinery. Founded in 1999, this Montville, NJ manufacturer provides slitter rewinders and web converting systems for countless industries to help customers succeed in today's dynamic global markets.

This industry leader utilizes decades of precision engineering and machine building experience to make top-quality converting machinery for their customers' specific needs. They take pride in their commitment to producing durable machines with faster cycle times, less set up, less waste, and fewer operator errors, giving customers better results.

A company like Catbridge Machinery is the perfect example of an organization that constantly innovates and one that should be able to benefit from this investment and effort.

Challenge

Manufacturing companies are eligible to apply for certain types of tax credits but oftentimes aren't aware of the credits or are unsure how to apply for them. New Jersey is an expensive state to do business. Every single business can benefit from tax incentives for the contributions to their industry, their local community, and the nation. Tax credits can reduce the amount of taxes companies owe to the federal or state governments or can increase a return, but are generally complex and require the combined expertise of engineering and financial professionals. Smaller manufacturers don't have the staff or the knowledge to understand what credits they may be entitled to receive.

Catbridge Machinery was looking to see if they could take advantage of specific R & D tax credits and leadership was referred to NJMEP by several of their peers. Catbridge's leadership consists of individuals with engineering backgrounds but they needed additional support to ensure they were in compliance and would receive the largest tax credit possible. They needed to enlist NJMEP's team of experts to see how they qualify for the tax year 2020 credits.

Solution

From positive experiences of working with NJMEP on past tax credits, Catbridge Machinery turned to NJMEP's account manager, Jeff Meister, for help once again. Catbridge has had lots of success with NJMEP's services in the past and has credited NJMEP with helping their business grow substantially from a \$4 million company to a \$34 million business since 2006. Jeff, who has had years of experience working with manufacturers attempting to qualify for tax credit, worked with NJMEP's R&D resource to review Catbridge's operations and discovered they qualified for the R&D Tax Credit TY2020.

Through examining each of Catbridge's research and development activities, NJMEP's team was able to identify which ones qualified. A list and documentation were compiled of all these qualified R&D activities to calculate the tax credits.

"We talked to [NJMEP] about helping initially with some hiring and then we found out about the tax credit. I'm an engineer. I'm not a finance guy, but I talked to some people and they're like, 'Oh you got to do the R&D tax credit because you guys do a ton of that stuff,' and then I really learned about it through our rep at NJMEP. There's always challenges to it," Catbridge Machinery Vice President, William Christman explained. "We're two engineers that ran the company. So we always like to take on the challenges, and that's also what's made the R&D tax credit a little bit more challenging for us, was being able to collect all our thoughts, all the data to back it up, and then compile all that information and get it all into one coherent analysis."

The following steps were taken:

1. A summary of the qualified research expenditures (QREs) incurred by Catbridge Machinery for the tax year
2. Calculations of Federal and State tax credits for the tax year in a format suitable for easily transferring the figures to the appropriate Federal and State tax forms
3. A table summarizing the qualifying research activities carried out by Catbridge Machinery during the tax year
4. A detailed description and sample contemporaneous



SUCCESS STORY: INNOVATION & GROWTH

documentation (if provided) pertaining to one or more representative project(s) to demonstrate the company's process of experimentation and how the research activities meet the IRS guidelines

5. A company profile containing general information about Catbridge Machinery, its products and/or manufacturing processes, and its need for carrying out research activities
6. A review of IRS criteria for identifying qualified research activities and expenditures, together with demonstrations as to how the company's activities and expenses satisfy these criteria
7. A description of Catbridge Machinery's overall approach to research and development, including how various personnel are involved in research activities and the types of contemporaneous documentation that are maintained

Each of the points above requires multiple individual steps and documentation to finish. Qualifying for R&D tax credits is long and complex without the right support and partner. Having an R&D professional with experience compile a report after identifying all the activities, documents, and familiarity in Federal and state tax credits ensures that Catbridge has everything needed to qualify.

"It's a lot of work and I really appreciate the engineers and the technical people that we work with, both on the accounting side and the technical side. I know everything, but just getting it out sometimes can be a challenge because there's so many things that I have to sort through in my head to get it all collectively out in a coherent way, and that seems to be one of the great skills that the NJMEP team has while working through the R&D tax credit process," Christman said.

Results

GTS completed its CMMC requirements and have fulfilled the Cybersecurity requirements to secure future contracts and have options on current contracts exercised. Through the support of NJMEP and their Cybersecurity service provider, GTS was able to quickly and efficiently meet their contractual requirements and stands ready for inspection and audit. Without reaching the correct CMMC level, they could be at risk of losing business. The below results reflect the impact GTS experienced while engaging with NJMEP over the past 12 months:

- ✓ **Estimated Qualified Research Expenditures: \$2,900,187**
- ✓ **Estimated IRS Credit: \$218,830**
- ✓ **Estimated IRS Cash Benefit: \$172,875**

"We've always been satisfied. There were some changes that the original consultant that we worked with at NJMEP connected us with had changed. They were able to maintain some continuity for us which was nice because I think normally, had we been using them on our own without NJMEP as the intermediary, we may have just kind of lost a connection completely and had to go out somewhere else. It's nice to have that because NJMEP is familiar with our business, and they have a good idea on how to approach the analysis going into it. It makes the process very easy for us."

William Christman, Catbridge Machinery, Vice President

Kinetics Industries Benefits from Their ISO 9001 Certification Journey

Background

Kinetics Industries Inc. has been in operation since 1939. This Trenton, NJ-based manufacturer is a leader in producing highly reliable and durable SCR regulated and diode line-regulated power rectifiers, industrial DC power supplies, fuseless bolted fault rated magnet rectifiers, flux forcing magnet rectifiers, crane rectifiers, DC substations, synchronous motor field and generator excitation systems, and power conversion solutions.

Their staff of world-diverse, engineering and technical staff design and manufactures industrial, commercial, utility, and military application power conversion products to the highest domestic and international standards. Dry type transformers, enclosure and panel fabrication, digital and analog electronic circuitry, and power semi-conductor assemblies are among Kinetics Industries' design and manufacturing capacities.

Kinetics Industries already delivers top quality products, but they were looking to expand their client base and require specific certifications to break into this new market.

Challenge

Countless manufacturers across the country were impacted because of the COVID pandemic. Like many manufacturers impacted at the height of the pandemic, Kinetics Industries' sales and work were affected due to the limitations enacted by the state and federal government. They were offered a substantial order from a client for work in Saudia Arabia during the pandemic when significant size orders were limited due to COVID restrictions, but the client required an ISO 9001: 2015-2021 certification.

Kinetics Industries needed help to be ISO 9001: 2015-2021 compliant and secure the contract. They were scrambling to find an ISO expert for help. Through a recommendation, they reached out to NJMEP for support. Kinetics Industries' workforce also needed additional training since ISO 9001 addresses certain aspects of quality management. They were running out of time to complete the contract and enlisted

NJMEP's expertise to help them receive ISO 9001:2015-2021 certification and to upskill their staff to ensure continued compliance.

"Because we had already made a substantial engineering investment, we had to get this done. It was just a win-win all the way around. The project is immediately addressing the challenges with the workforce. Then you throw in ISO which is all about engagement and commitment, attention to detail, following rules," Kinetics Industries Inc. President, Keith Secrest explained. "We knew nothing else about ISO 9001 so we needed a consultant and we needed to get ourselves organized. Bringing someone in that was very knowledgeable and was able to get us up to the point where we could secure the certification in a quick period of time because our customer was asking us for a cert right away was key."

Solution

After speaking with NJMEP at the recommendation of the Mercer County Workforce Development Board, NJMEP created a plan to help Kinetics Industries achieve ISO certification. With their NJMEP account manager's help, their knowledge of ISO 2001: 2015-2021, and all the resources NJMEP provides, Kinetics Industries was able to receive their ISO certification quickly.

Through their account manager's suggestion, it was recommended the project be split into two phases: ISO virtual training, to save travel time and as a direct result of the state's pandemic guidelines, and additional training to ensure they received certification in the time needed. This helped Kinetic Industries secure the required training to be certified.

"Having the resources and the expedited process, that was just huge. Here you are given a project and this black cloud of COVID is hanging over us. I don't know how we would have really done it without the help of New Jersey MEP. It brought so many resources to bear in a very tumultuous time," Secrest stated. "It made us look at our process. It empowered me as a manager, because now I had a program and a process and



SUCCESS STORY: INNOVATION & GROWTH

a documentation of the structure that we could refer to. It was a good force in the long run, even if we don't need it for customers. We need it for ourselves."

The following steps were taken:

Phase I - Virtual Training-ISO 9001: 2015:

- Module 1: Awareness Session/Overview(4 Hrs)
- Module 2: Gap Analysis (4 Hrs)
- Module 3: Identification of key business processes aligned with the business model of the company (4 hrs)
- Module 4: Quality Policy/Quality Objectives(4 hrs)
- Module 5: Risk Analysis/Assessments (4 hrs)

Phase II – Additional ISO Training 36 Hours

- Management Overview 6.0 Hours
- Documentation Review and Development 8.0 Hours
- Risks and Opportunities 6.0 Hours
- Internal Auditor Training and Audit Mentoring 10.0 Hours
- Assessment Preparation 6.0 Hours

Each of these phases above requires multiple individual steps and documentation to complete. The ISO 9001: 2015-2021 training and certification process can be long and complex without a fully knowledgeable partner. Working with an experienced team of ISO specialists to identify their needs

for improvement allowed Kinetic Industries to be certified, receive CARES funding, and secure a massive contract with their client.

Secrest explained, "Half of the problem is really identifying the problem. Is the problem just a micro or is it macro? I think that's how NJMEP really helps you to find out you're not alone!"

Results

Kinetics Industries secured their contract with the client after completing ISO 9001:2015-2021 training and receiving certification from the certifying body and accreditation firm, SAI Global. NJMEP offered and executed an expedition action plan; this, combined with financial assistance via a grant, worked successfully for both Kinetics and their customer. The results below reflect the impact Kinetics Industries experienced while engaging with NJMEP:

- ✓ **Retained Sales: \$100,000**
- ✓ **New Sales: \$20,000**
- ✓ **New Jobs: 2**
- ✓ **Retained Jobs: 2**
- ✓ **New Investment in Workforce: \$10,000**

"ISO helped because it enabled us to keep people focused on a project and a thing that was really on a workplace floor. It tremendously helped our quality! It made everything very visible. Yes [I'd recommend NJMEP to other manufacturers] because you're not reinventing the wheel. This is something you guys do day-in and day-out. You have the resources to be able to go and get it done. You go through New Jersey MEP, they looked at resources that are out there through grants or funding. That's part of their mission"

Keith Secrest, Kinetics Industries Inc. President



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*New Jersey manufacturing is
Built to Last. Come discover some of the
featured manufacturers in this edition of
*Manufacturing Matters.**

Century Service Affiliates, Inc. & NutraStar

Century Service Affiliates, Inc.

Family owned and operated for over 30 years, Century Service Affiliates, Inc. Is an excellent example of a 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing business. Based in Paterson, New Jersey, they manufacture custom foam case solutions for a variety of clients. They approach each client differently. Their 30 employees working out of their 39,000 square-foot Paterson facility allows them to remain agile and tackle each custom order with the highest level of care. The nature of their business creates some interesting challenges that Century Service Affiliates, Inc. Is equipped to manage.

All this custom work and the development of processes to create a smoother-running manufacturing operation can be costly. Small New Jersey manufacturers need to contain costs as much as possible while also ensuring they can continuously improve presses and develop better products. Leadership understood there are programs available to help small businesses to secure tax credits as an incentive for all their R&D work but needed support to ensure they receive all the credits they were due. See for yourself how they accomplished this goal by reading the full success story on PAGE 22.

NutraStar

New Jersey is known as the medicine chest of the world and that reputation is partially due to the contributions of life sciences companies like NutraStar. This specialty manufacturer produces custom-formulated tablets, capsules, and powders for nutraceutical brands out of their Farmingdale, NJ facility. 250 employees work out of their 60,000-square-foot facility where 10 million capsules, 100,000 bottles, and 10,000kg of custom-formulated powder are produced per day. Many might underestimate 'MADE in NJ' manufacturers, but the number of products produced per day and their utilization of the most technologically sophisticated encapsulation machinery on the market, their attention to quality, and their capabilities have made them an industry leader.

Manufacturers that produce products for human consumption need to comply with FDA's latest food defense requirements. NutraStar was expecting their usual FDA audit to ensure they remain in good standing with a host of regulatory bodies. These audits are not a process to take lightly and leadership wanted to ensure they were ready to pass with flying colors. Explore how NutraStar was able to quickly comply with these new food defense requirements by reading the success story on PAGE 24.

New Jersey manufacturing is Built to Last. These businesses and the employees that make it all possible are truly, 'Unsung Heroes.'

**Check back in Manufacturing Matters every quarter to see the Built to Last manufacturing list.
To be included, contact Mike Womack at mwomack@njmep.org and show the world your company is Built to Last.**

Century Service Affiliates, Inc. Experiences Growth Using R&D Tax Credits

Background

Century Service Affiliates, Inc. is a family-owned business that specializes in providing custom foam and case solutions for every type of need imaginable. This Paterson, NJ-based custom foam fabricator has been calling New Jersey home for over 30 years. Century Service Affiliates manufactures all types of carry cases including: blow molded plastic cases, injection molded cases, all-weather cases, and shipping cases. They are fully staffed and manufacture their products completely in-house at their 39,000 square foot New Jersey facility.

Their Pro-Design team works with customers to create the perfect custom case solution for their items by creating and producing custom foam inserts or a case with precut foam. Their cases come from all major manufacturers, including Pelican, Doro, SKB, Seahorse, Nanuk, Flambeau, and HPRC.

Challenge

Small and medium-sized manufacturers can be eligible for R&D Tax Credits, but need the right kind of expertise to navigate through all the documentation. NJMEP account manager Stacy Cooke informed Century Service Affiliates they could apply for the R&D Tax Credit for Tax Year 2020.

Century Service Affiliates looked into the tax credits and noticed their work qualifies as R&D. This tax credit was particularly important because they were conducting R&D work on their printing foam and print builder at the height of the COVID pandemic. They needed support from an expert to identify ways to optimize their R&D tax credit. Without the tax credit, they couldn't stay competitive or purchase the machinery needed to produce their new products.

"We looked into it. We saw that what we're doing is R&D and we would be eligible for the credits," explained Century Service Affiliates Inc. Owner & President, Steve Holand. "We're changing things, doing things, and 2020 was specifically the year that we started our research and development on our printing foam and our print builder."

Solution

Century Service Affiliates enlisted NJMEP to help them after prior positive experiences with earning the R&D tax credits dating back to 2018. Through their past project successes, and after being informed of the tax credit for 2020, they enlisted Stacy's help. Stacy, who has years of experience working with businesses to qualify for tax credits, walked Century Service's team through all the steps.

She helped ensure they understood the tax credit process, and provided the information needed to move forward. Through examination, verification, and staff interviews of all of Century Service Affiliates' projects and activities for 2020, the team put together documentation that ensured Century Service Affiliates qualified for the credits.

"Stacy put us in the right direction. She was there the whole time, holding our hand and making sure that we understood it and making sure that we got the most out of it. We worked hand in hand with Stacy and she helped us and provided us the information that we needed to move forward," stated Holand.

The following steps were taken:

1. Century Service Affiliates enlisted NJMEP to help them after prior positive experiences with earning the R&D tax credits, dating back to 2018. Through their past project successes and after being informed of the tax credit for 2020, they enlisted Stacy's help. Stacy, who has years of experience working with businesses to qualify for tax credits, walked Century Services' team through all the steps.
2. She helped ensure they understood the tax credit process, and provided the information needed to move forward. Through examination, verification, and staff interviews of all of Century Service Affiliates' projects and activities for 2020, the team put together documentation that ensured Century Service Affiliates qualified for the credits.



SUCCESS STORY: INNOVATION & GROWTH

Results

Century Service Affiliates was able to meet all the R&D Tax Credit TY 2020 requirements while saving time and the extra work of putting all the information together. They expressed interest in continuing NJMEP's service for the next tax credit. Below is the reported impact from engaging with NJMEP:

- ✓ **Increased Sales: \$150,000**
- ✓ **Retained Sales: \$200,000**
- ✓ **Employees Retained: 5**
- ✓ **Jobs Created: 2**
- ✓ **Cost Savings: \$50,000**

3. "Stacy put us in the right direction. She was there the whole time, holding our hand and making sure that we understood it and making sure that we got the most out of it. We worked hand in hand with Stacy and she helped us and provided us the information that we needed to move forward," stated Holand.
4. Each of the points above requires multiple individual steps and documentation to finish. Without the right support and partner, qualifying for R&D tax credits is a long and complex process. Having an R&D professional with experience put together a report after identifying all the activities, documents, and familiarity in Federal and state tax credits ensures Catbridge has everything needed to qualify.

"We're doing R&D to fill the business and be competitive. That's always something that we did. We just didn't know there was help available for it to absolutely take that and move it up to the next level because with the tax credits it allows us to reclaim funds that we were paying for the R&D and use it in other places in our business. NJMEP held our hands the whole time. We did have to send information to them about what research and development we've done, but basically, they handled all the rest of it. Really, it was very easy! "

Steve Holand, Century Service Affiliates, Inc. Owner & President

NutraStar Secures Valuable Food Defense Certification and Engages Workforce with NJMEP's Help

Background

NutraStar is a local manufacturer that specializes in producing custom formulated tablets, capsules, and powders for nutraceutical brands. Located in Farmingdale, NJ, NutraStar has a staff over 250 employees on-site and they manufacture 10 million capsules, 100,000 bottles, and 10,000 kg of custom formulated powder per day, all out of their 60,000 square foot production facility. They are one of the top contract manufacturers for leading supplement brands. NutraStar manufactures their custom formulations using the highest-quality raw materials.

Their products, especially capsules, provide quick and efficient doses for supplement consumers. They have some of the most technologically sophisticated encapsulation machinery available on the market and deliver their products within industry-leading turnaround times.

Challenge

The FDA requires food manufacturers to comply with the latest food defense requirements. NutraStar needed to ensure its workforce was trained on the proper food defense strategies before the FDA's next visit. In addition, NutraStar understood they needed to take this training seriously and maintain their food defense practices after its FDA audit to remain in good standing with the global safety science organization, UL Solutions. The UL helps companies to demonstrate safety, enhance sustainability, strengthen security, deliver quality, manage risk, and achieve regulatory compliance. The audit encompasses all GMP regulations.

NutraStar was looking for a partner that can help them remain compliant with both the UL and FDA. The FDA recently started requiring food manufacturers to follow the food defense regulations to be considered compliant and receive their GMP certification. Without the GMP certification, it would be difficult for them to continue operating. Customers have requested that NutraStar have the certification before continuing business with them. Customers will check for the certification on a third-party database.

"We knew that if we weren't compliant and we did not follow through with the full process, there's no way we would get that certificate and we wouldn't be able to show it to our customers," explained NutraStar Director of Quality, Sam Brownstein. "They have a way of looking us up in a database. They know that even if we say we're working on it, and we've gotten an extension, but if that deadline had come and we didn't have an audit, we would not be in the third party's database. That would be a major loss of customers. We needed to comply, and we needed to have training, and we needed our staff to have an understanding of what the requirements are."

Solution

NutraStar explored options to upskill their staff and become certified by the FDA's upcoming deadline, and discovered NJMEP has the expertise that would address all their needs. They reached out to NJMEP for help and explained their challenge to the NJMEP account manager.

Their account manager is familiar with the regulations, the timeframe needed for preparation, and its importance. The account manager knew they didn't have much time to prepare so he worked with NutraStar's team to quickly develop a plan. A plan was created immediately after the account manager surveyed their facility and staff and saw how much time they would need for food defense training and certification.

"Within a couple of weeks, the trainer was here. It was a very good experience. The trainer was very hands-on and got everybody involved. Everybody was really able to walk away after that and write their own program for this food defense, which was quite unique," Brownstein said. "The trainees, and everybody on the team that was trained, came back and told me it was interactive, it was fun, and it was something that they would do again with this trainer. That was like a game changer to me."



SUCCESS STORY: FOOD MANUFACTURING

Results

The key topics that were discussed:

- Understanding the importance of a food defense and training
- Explaining actionable process steps (APS), mitigation strategies
- Describe ways to protect food from intentional adulteration
- Understanding how to recognize and report suspicious activity
- Review FDA Employee FIRST Learning Objectives
- Review employees, role in preventing intentional adulteration

Training took a total of 12 hours to complete, including the eight hours of on-site training and four hours of training customization. The training's focus was on the physical structure for food defense elements to help better explain 21 CFR 121 regulations. Working with a knowledgeable consultant to come up with a quick plan allowed NutraStar to have food defense certification before the deadline, become GMP certified, and ultimately continue their business with customers.

NutraStar's staff received their certification after completing the food defense training, and they completed all the requirements in time for their next audits with the FDA and UL. They also received a perfect audit score of 100 as a result of the training provided by NJMEP's team. This in turn drew more interest from customers who specifically look at audit scores before continuing business.

The results below reflect the impact NutraStar experienced while engaging with NJMEP:

- ✓ **Retained Sales: \$10,000,000**
- ✓ **New Sales: \$2,000,000**
- ✓ **Retained Jobs: 2**
- ✓ **New Jobs: 2**
- ✓ **Cost Savings: \$20,000**

"Our customers ask us, 'What was your score from your last audit?' When it's a hundred, a certain level of interest and business goes to a whole new level. They look at us differently and, in general, the market would look at us differently, because they see that we're taking our quality very, very seriously and we are sincere about what we do and what products we make and how we make those products. NJMEP played a vital role in that. Our customers are happy and it made our employees happy because everybody now feels a part of an organization that prides over their quality. Prides over how they manufacture our products. So, it was a win-win for employees and for customers."

Sam Brownstein, NutraStar Director of Quality



Manufacturing is a critical part of the New Jersey economy.

These businesses play a vital role in their local community and have proven to be essential to the state and nation. 'MADE in New Jersey' is a complimentary program that helps highlight these businesses which are incredible economic stimulators and providers of competitive employment opportunities. With over 11,000 manufacturers that make their products right here in New Jersey, be sure to check back every week for the latest 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturer shoutouts!

Celebrating 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing

Highlighting Essential 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturers That Drive NJ Forward



BOTANICAL EARTH Dr. Dolly set out to make it easier for people to get their daily intake of fruits and vegetables. The Garden State is known for its produce, but often the food manufacturing industry is overlooked. Botanical Earth is a prime example of a small 'MADE in NJ' manufacturing operation that is working to make the world a better and healthier place.



CHELTON HOUSE PRODUCTS This 'MADE in NJ' manufacturing operation is a four generation-strong family run business. Chelton House Products has become a leader in the premium food manufacturing and distribution space for over 70 years. Founded in the 1940s, it was America's first importer and distributor of high-quality foods, selling directly to delis and gourmet stores in Philadelphia. Health-conscious consumer trends have led to the company more than quadrupling the size of its main facility over the past 10 years. This business exudes innovation and has since its inception.



CONTRACTOR SERVICE Contractor Service has been a distributor and supplier of construction and industrial products and equipment since 1986. Located in Camden, NJ, this 'MADE in NJ' manufacturing business is a versatile supplier providing a range of safety equipment, tools, machines, and materials. Not only do they supply brand-name tools, but their specialty products range from generators to shipping containers and massive material handling equipment. Contractor Service is willing and able to support any manufacturing or construction business with their every day or not-so-common needs.



EAT CLEAN BRO Founded in 2013 this 'MADE in NJ' manufacturing business was formed to make eating healthier easier. People are busier than ever and the opportunity to cook a healthy meal is becoming increasingly more difficult to achieve. Eat Clean Bro set out on a mission to create a convenient service that brings chef-prepared meals right to an individual's front door. There are no processed foods, chemicals, or preservatives and their meals use all-natural ingredients. 'MADE in NJ' manufacturers continue to innovate and solve problems.



ID SOLUTIONS, A DIVISION OF ARCH CROWN This 'MADE in NJ' manufacturer has been providing electronic labeling and bar-coding solutions for over 30 years. Their patent revolutionized the industry by introducing an affordable, portable printing option. Service and Support is the mission of Arch Crown and the ID Solutions Division. Headquartered in Hillside, New Jersey, ID Solutions is a fantastic example of the diversity of manufacturing businesses here in the Garden State.

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A Brief History

of Manufacturing in New Jersey from the Colonial to Modern Eras

continues...

By Ken Schwemmer, Advocacy and Operations Support, NJMEP

The Singer Sewing Company is probably one of the most famous manufacturing companies to operate in New Jersey. In 1873, Singer moved its New York factory to Elizabeth due to the increasing demand for their products.¹ Despite some setbacks with trying to make improvements to their factory processes, the company doubled production within the first years of opening the Elizabeth factory, and eventually, more than half of the company's sewing machines were being produced in the Elizabeth factory.² The company's Elizabeth plant became so successful that by the mid-1880s it was producing six to seven thousand sewing machines a week and employed around three thousand workers.³ This multinational firm, which had numerous factories around the world, wound up having New Jersey supply a good portion of their sewing machines to the world.

Besides Singer, there were other New Jersey-based manufacturers that had a major impact on America and its landscape, such as Roebling. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Roebling was one of the most famous steel cable manufacturers in the world and located in the Trenton area of New Jersey. Founded in 1841 by John A. Roebling, a German immigrant, who was able to patent his process for manufacturing wire rope, Roebling would go on to be part of numerous bridge projects as early as the 1840s.⁴ Though Roebling worked on a variety of projects before the Second Industrial Revolution, one of the most famous projects the company completed was the Brooklyn Bridge. John Roebling was contracted to be the chief engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1867, but due to a work accident, that also caused a tetanus infection, John Roebling died on June 6, 1869.⁵ This forced John Roebling's son, Washington Augustus, to take over the project and he started the construction of the bridge on January 3, 1870. After thirteen years, Washington Roebling completed the bridge that his father, John Roebling, had envisioned so many years before.⁶ This was all done by a New Jersey manufacturing company, and it produced one of the greatest bridges ever to be seen by that point.

The success of the Brooklyn Bridge project helped contribute to Roebling's further success and growth. The company continued to grow and become one of the biggest manufacturers of wire cables. Though the original Trenton location for Roebling had been successful, the company needed to find a new location by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷ Charles Roebling, the youngest son of

John, decided to buy up 240 acres of land in central New Jersey in 1904 and created a new factory site for the company.⁸ This led to the creation of a workers' village called Roebling, which was one of the many factory towns that New Jersey would have.⁹ Roebling's manufacturing operations had been moved and this is where most of their wire cables would come from, and these manufactured wire cables would be used for a variety of projects—from elevators to the construction of the George Washington Bridge and Golden Gate Bridge.¹⁰ By the twentieth century, Roebling had emerged as one of New Jersey's most successful manufacturing companies in New Jersey and had become a major supplier to the country for wire cables.

The previous examples were of how New Jersey was able to utilize innovations to improve existing manufacturing industries. However, there were also new manufacturing industries that emerged in New Jersey, such as oil refineries.

to be continued...again...

¹ Israel, "The Garden State Becomes an Industrial Power," 180

² Israel, "The Garden State Becomes an Industrial Power," 181

³ Israel, "The Garden State Becomes an Industrial Power," 182

⁴ Tadaki Kawada, *History of the Modern Suspension Bridge: Solving the Dilemma Between Economy and Stiffness* (Reston: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2010), 82.

⁵ Kawada, 89.

⁶ Kawada, 89.

⁷ Laura Kiniry, "Made of Steel: How a New Jersey Town Rewired History," BBC Travel (BBC, February 12, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20180211-made-of-steel-how-a-new-jersey-town-rewired-history>.

⁸ Kiniry, "Made of Steel: How a New Jersey Town Rewired History."

⁹ Kiniry, "Made of Steel: How a New Jersey Town Rewired History."

¹⁰ Lucy D. Rosenfeld and Marina Harrison, *History Walks in New Jersey: Exploring the Heritage of the Garden State* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 170.



Trenton Manufacturer SWITLIK Dedicated to Growing in New Jersey

Aviation, marine, and military safety and survival product leader, **SWITLIK** is committed to keeping their business local.

The Central New Jersey manufacturer recently announced they broke ground on a new expansion for their facility in Trenton, NJ. This new project is a testament to SWITLIK's continued growth and their dedication to the local community.

SWITLIK has called Trenton home since 1920 while mostly employing residents in both Trenton and neighboring Hamilton for the last 100+ years. This company is proof that New Jersey manufacturing can thrive by investing in the community and in their workforce. One truly unique quality about SWITLIK, which makes them stand out in the industry, is their products are completely hand sewn by staff. They've become an industry leader because they can produce top-quality products with a personal touch, and don't rely on outsourced production.

Expanding Facility Leads to New Opportunities

This soon-to-be 20,000 square foot building will provide SWITLIK with much-needed space to expand their product offerings and encourage new innovative ideas to meet customer demands. The new building is expected to be completed by June 2023 and will become operational shortly thereafter. It will be used as both a warehouse and manufacturing space.

The expansion allows SWITLIK to focus on and retain their current workforce. They currently have close to 150 employees and will look to grow soon. Most of the team currently reside in the area with the rest of their staff living in other parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Even though they are focusing on their current staff, they are ready to accept more people onto the team. SWITLIK is always seeking workers with experience in light manufacturing,

sewing, and textiles. In a rare industry move, they are open to hiring entry-level employees and training them for successful careers.

They're a tremendous example for 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturers that are willing to explore new ideas which lead to growth. By diversifying their products and markets, and having a willingness to adapt to the current times, it ensures that SWITLIK continues to be an industry-leading US manufacturer.

"We're thrilled to get moving on this project which will ultimately provide the residents of Trenton and Hamilton with new job opportunities and help those employed continue succeeding. For 102 years, SWITLIK has been saving lives worldwide, providing jobs locally," SWITLIK CEO, Stanley Switlik II enthusiastically explained.

The new state-of-the-art warehouse will enhance their ability to expand their current product lines, lead to the creation of new features, and further product enhancements. Their mission is to design, manufacture, and sell technical textile product solutions while maintaining the highest possible quality. This new building allows them to continue fulfilling their mission each day.

"The expansion is pivotal for us," SWITLIK COO, Sarah Switlik stated. "It allows us a lot of opportunity as we look towards the next generation at SWITLIK"

Countless manufacturers continue to relocate to other cities, states, or countries for many reasons. A primary cause for the move is a labor shortage. SWITLIK is a tremendous example of a local business that invests heavily in their local community and supports their people's professional development. By investing in their infrastructure and upskilling their staff, it addresses many of the current workforce challenges and allows their business to grow. Companies should look at SWITLIK as an incredible example of how to maintain a local, reliable workforce.



Today's Manufacturing: Not Your Grandfather's Widget Factory

The Way We Were

Back in the day, manufacturing had the reputation of being a "dirty" industry known for poor working conditions, low pay, lack of opportunity, and overall, low prestige. In short, unless you were the owner, nobody aspired to it as a career choice. It was simply a means to an end—a job that put food on the table and paid the rent. Much was written about the downside of the industry—such as novels like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which depicted the exploitation of immigrants.

Much has changed over the years. Between the efforts of social reformers, journalists, and the labor movement, the very face of manufacturing changed dramatically during the 20th century. But not until the nearly cataclysmic changes of the 21st century did the industry morph into an entirely different category of business. So, what changed?

The Way We Are Today

Today's manufacturing is often clean—sometimes to an extreme. Witness the pharmaceutical clean rooms where the most critical level of cleanliness is achieved. Many of today's manufacturing plants offer spacious, well-lit, well ventilated, low noise environments. Their physical plants have undergone a drastic makeover. They are pleasant places to work. Many are eco-friendly facilities striving to reduce their carbon footprint. They often use eco-friendly materials and processes, as well as producing environmentally friendly products.

Without question, today's manufacturing is no longer just nuts and bolts and heavy machinery. It is hi-tech in every sense of the word. Manufacturing runs on technology in a big way. Many of the systems are automated; many of the processes require technical knowledge, and the digital era is having a marked effect on how manufacturing is moving to the future.

This year, factories and manufacturing are trending rapidly towards smart factory adoption, advancing from occasional implementation of smart equipment to complete facility systems using data analytics and communication between machinery. As newer machinery finds its way into facilities, it comes equipped with digital pathways using technology to work at greater efficiency and efficacy; better active maintenance, greater process efficiency, and reduced operating costs. Many businesses are already enjoying these benefits with others rushing to keep up with their competition as smart factory hardware and software costs continue to drop.

Supply chain disruptions of the past have created a new-found recognition of how important maintaining optimized functionality without interruptions is for all sized businesses. The supply chain will hold a prominent requirement for continual improvement in years to come. The digital toolkit for monitoring and improving is becoming paramount in efforts to analyze and manage supply chain effectiveness, with facilities seeking creative ways to add liveness and reliability while also retaining value. Data analysis is being used to adjust to any unpredictability in the chain allowing for greater adaptation towards minimizing interruption and, in the end, assuring steadiness and fulfillment.

AI Technologies are developing into a key resource helping manufacturers monitor operations remotely. This provides both 24-hour access to machining for long projects, as well as greater safety for operators.

Manufacturing companies must be more efficient and defter than ever to gap and labor shortages, providing front-line technical training to meet demands. Technical know-how is provided by manufacturers through custom-developed training programs (both legacy and digital) and apprenticeships, some of

which are subsidized by the government. As a result of skills training, advancement opportunities increase. Providing career paths is one of the best ways to entice employees to work for a manufacturing company. Though they may start at lower levels of pay, they have a pathway to growth that other lower-paying jobs lack. Many families and individuals have been able to thrive in this welcoming community.

Manufacturing companies of today are progressive enterprises on the cutting edge of more than just technology. Their efforts contribute to building a better workforce that can bring more to the American economy. In today's manufacturing industry, companies are often leaders in their community and are socially conscious. Many times, the company is among the first to support local charities. Younger workers are discovering that joining the manufacturing community offers a chance to make an impact. Perhaps a small component they manufacture ends up in a space launch, or perhaps in a hospital or rehabilitation facility, helping a disabled veteran walk again. They may create a medical diagnostic tool that could save lives.

That is today's manufacturing. It is principle-centered, progressive, ever-evolving, and has heart. Think about it. Are you treating your employees (and your customers) the way you want to be treated?

Paul K. Steck is the President of Exothermic Molding, Inc. in Kenilworth, NJ, a third-generation family-owned plastics molding firm serving a variety of industries.

Visit www.exothermic.com



NJMEP is inviting veterans, veterans' family members, and New Jersey manufacturers to become part of the NJ Defense Manufacturing Community.

The mission is to ensure the Department of Defense Supply Chain grows locally while utilizing the talent the armed forces develops once they leave the service.



The community is built up of both manufacturers and job seekers.

➤ **To join the community or learn more, visit NJMEP.org/njdmcc!**



NJMEP

Helping New Jersey Manufacture Success

NJMEP.org | info@njmep.org | (973) 998-9801 |



Local Manufacturing Leaders Join Rep. Malinowski for Conversation on Strengthening Domestic Manufacturing

The current supply chain disruptions and workforce challenges are wearing down manufacturers in New Jersey and nationwide. Manufacturers need support from both public and private partners to weather this storm. On October 13th a select group of manufacturing leaders in New Jersey had an in-person roundtable discussion on this topic with Rep. Tom Malinowski and US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. Participants shared their experiences and perspectives with the legislators to help inform these policymakers on the real-world challenges the industry continues to face.

NJMEP COO, Peter Connolly joined local industry leaders - Hialeah, US Commercial Supply Chain and Logistics Lead, Deborah Egan; Intertek Labs President, Mary La Bella; Peraton Labs President, Dr. Petros Mouchtaris; and Precision Graphics Inc. CEO, Alec Weissman in the October 13th conversation in Westfield, NJ. These local manufacturing leaders are highlighting the true impact of supply chain disruptions on local businesses and how these interruptions create a chain reaction nationwide. They discussed local manufacturing, solutions for strengthening the domestic supply chain, and creating more industrial career opportunities for local communities during the discussion.

Forward Progress in Domestic Manufacturing

Policies like the CHIPS and Science Act and Inflation Reduction Act give a boost to domestic manufacturing while strengthening the economy, but more work needs to be done to move the industry forward. Legislation is included in the CHIPS Act that aims to establish a national supply chain database for domestic manufacturers. NJMEP has been working with legislators like Sen. Bob Menendez to get a jump-start on building a national supply chain database and has been instrumental in developing this section of the CHIPS Act. Having NJMEP participate in this roundtable was invaluable to ensure the voice of the domestic manufacturer is heard, the supply chain becomes more resilient, and the talent pipeline is restored.

"Supply chain and workforce issues have changed drastically over the last few years and have applied pressure on U.S. manufacturing firms. In addition to disruptions in the supply chain, and the higher cost of materials, we are also experiencing a reduction in our entire workforce due to retirements. The Department of Commerce, through the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP), is developing a National Supply Chain Database capable of providing a transparent view of the national supply chain to determine, in near real-time, the United States manufacturing capabilities for critical products, including defense supplies, food, and medical devices," said Peter Connolly,

COO of New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program.

Rep. Malinowski has been a proponent of New Jersey's manufacturing industry. He authored part of the America COMPETES Act, which invests in innovation through research and development that improves the competitiveness of US manufacturing globally. Rep. Malinowski and US Secretary of Commerce Raimondo wanted to hear about the challenges and solutions directly from the manufacturing leaders in an effort to develop policy that will best help mitigate the impending supply chain disruptions and address the industry's workforce challenges.

"New Jersey companies are poised to lead America in making the technologies of the future." Rep. Tom Malinowski

We must build on the CHIPS Act to bring home supply chains for advanced manufacturing so that our businesses can thrive, costs for consumers can decrease, and our dependence on adversaries for critical goods comes to an end."

Conversations are needed to strengthen our supply chain and improve workforce opportunities for both New Jersey and nationally. Having this discussion shows the importance of dialogue between manufacturing leaders and legislators intent on finding a solution for the supply chain challenges. Improving the national supply chain, restoring the manufacturing pipelines, and relying less on foreign production boosts US manufacturing, businesses, the economy, and most importantly, increases career opportunities for New Jersey's residents. 🍷

CELEBRATING

The Year of Women
in MANUFACTURING

Year of Women in Manufacturing Scholarship Helps Micaela Alvarez Advance Her Education and Career

The Year of Women in Manufacturing of 2022 was the foundational initiative to highlight women who are truly making a difference in the industry—and Micaela Alvarez is a perfect example. She's incredibly accomplished and a tremendous role model for women in the manufacturing field. Micaela has countless impressive accolades that truly make her stand out, including being named as a 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day Rising Star award finalist. She currently works full-time at Universal Nutrition, while also enrolling in classes at MIT to advance her manufacturing career. NJMEP recently awarded her a scholarship to help further her education. The education Micaela's receiving at MIT will help both her career and her company's growth.

She became the first-ever NJMEP 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day - Year of Women in Manufacturing Scholarship recipient. The scholarship was established by NJMEP's CEO, John Kennedy, and given to an individual in the manufacturing field looking to pursue higher education to further their career. This scholarship is an award for Micaela's passion and determination to further her contributions to the industry. NJMEP presented her with an amount of \$5,000 to help offset her MIT tuition.

These studies will help her become an industry leader. Micaela expressed her gratitude with becoming the inaugural recipient of the scholarship, "[I'm] humbled, honored, thrilled, enthralled and incredibly grateful!"

Example of Excellence – Manufacturing Leadership

Dedication is one of the best words to describe Micaela. She spends the beginning of her week working full time as Director of Operations at Universal Nutrition—a leader in sports nutrition products and supplements located in New Brunswick, NJ—and the rest of her week commuting from her New Jersey home to MIT's Sloan School of Management in Cambridge, MA, where she is enrolled in their prestigious Executive Education Program.

For those unfamiliar with MIT's Executive Education program, it is a rigorous program that helps individuals advance their career through cutting-edge leadership, strategy and innovation, and technology and operations training. MIT's Sloan seeks students whose personal characteristics demonstrate they will make the most of their incredible opportunities made available throughout the curriculum.

MIT's Sloan School of Management's mission is to "develop principled, innovative leaders who improve the World and to generate ideas that advance management practices." Micaela embodies their mission. In her current role, she has an array of responsibilities including automation, innovation, capital projects, process engineering, maintenance, and training. These studies will give her the skills and hands-on experience needed to help her effectively lead these diverse projects.

Micaela can pursue her studies with the encouragement and support of both NJMEP and Universal Nutrition's COO, Chad Lewis. "I am proud and surprised! It was really thrilling and invigorating to see that you (NJMEP) are standing behind the messages that you are putting behind your conferences," Lewis stated enthusiastically.

She was among the selected finalists for the Rising Star award due to her demonstrated leadership and ability to ensure everyone understands the opportunities for growth within her team and with the other departments working alongside her team.

She is excited to share encouraging words of advice with women who are exploring a manufacturing career path. "Go for it! It is more fun than you may think. You get to build, create, and invent," said Micaela. "It is super satisfying to physically see what you created or helped build at the end of the day or on store shelves. For the younger ones, I'd say, you get to be a self-rescuing princess!"

As more women look towards manufacturing careers, they will need a female role model to look up to. Seeing women leaders in manufacturing, especially someone such as accomplished as Micaela, has a huge impact. Her commitment to further her career through continuous education is a testament that women can truly thrive with support from both the employer and industry. This scholarship will help her achieve success.

CELEBRATING

The Year of Women
in MANUFACTURING

Intertek President is an Inspiration to Women Professionals

Hear Her Story and How She Approaches Workforce Retention

Mary La Bella is an inspiration for women looking to explore the manufacturing and STEM fields, especially those who may not have originally considered this career path. Mary originally had aspirations to become an artist before coming to the realization that a sustainable career in manufacturing was her future. La Bella, like many other women in the industry, didn't have a female role model to look to for guidance while exploring these career options post-college. Mary has been with Intertek Laboratories, Inc. since 1996 and became President 10 years ago. Her story and experience should be heard as they're a fantastic way to show more people what is possible when they become part of the manufacturing industry.

Intertek is a privately-owned small business that provides innovative services and products, and comprehensive solutions that begin with an initial requirement and end with fielded products. This small business operates out of Stirling, NJ, and has been calling the state home for nearly 38 years. They are a leader in the US defense industry with countless clients in major military sectors, including the US Army, Navy, and Airforce.

'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Leader Reimagines Employee Retention

La Bella has been credited as a major reason for the business' growing success. While countless companies are experiencing challenges to attract new talent and retain current staff, she understands that having a friendly work environment is key to keeping her team together. Manufacturers can look to her as an example of an industry

leader who knows how to retain long-term talent. Her philosophy of treating employees as family and making Intertek a comfortable place to work is why many of her staff members have been with the company for 20+ years. Before Intertek, she felt there wasn't a work-life balance that allowed time for her family. She now understands family is an important priority for her staff.

As someone who has been in the Department of Defense (DoD) supply chain for nearly 26 years, La Bella credits her mentors and experienced colleagues at Intertek for shaping her career today. The manufacturing sector didn't cross her mind as a career option until she graduated high school explored the product development field. That journey took La Bella to her current role leading Intertek.

Growing up, La Bella didn't exactly have an industry leader to look up to. By working with her grandmother during her childhood and being encouraged to pursue any occupation, La Bella kept an open mind when it came to her career path. She's now running an entire company successfully. As President, she's now at the helm of a successful, industry-leading DoD supplier, and is a role model for countless women who, are not only interested in exploring manufacturing as a career, but are looking for direction.

La Bella's Story

NJMEP recently had the incredible opportunity to listen to La Bella's inspirational journey about how she became President of Intertek. She shared her experience and professional advice for women and young adults interested in exploring the manufacturing field.

What might people find interesting about the work conducted by Intertek?

MLB : We're not just a manufacturer. Everyone that works here, from mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, to my production floor, plays a role in everything from inception to actually bringing that product to production—and we do it all here.

A unique thing with our company, which makes us stand apart from other contract manufacturers, is that Intertek will work with somebody on their ideas, put it on paper, draw it up, make the prototypes, and then we have the capabilities to bring those prototypes to production. I don't think you get that in your typical manufacturing company. They don't necessarily have the engineers that we have here along with the facility to go ahead and make stuff. That makes us unique compared to other companies and I hope it makes us stand out, because we're kind of like a one-stop place to go—and you don't have to come to us with that finished design. You come to us from the beginning but if you come to us with a finished design, that's not a problem either. We'll take that. A lot of times, what our customers want is 'Not only are you making this for me,' but they also want our suggestions. How can we make this better? How can we make it more manufacturing friendly? What are your thoughts on this? What can we improve? That's where I find my uniqueness as a company lies.

What is your role within the organization?

I'm the president. In a small business, right now we don't have more than 20 employees. I like to think that I'm able to retain employees because of the type of employer we are. We have a friendly workplace. I like to say that it's comfortable here. I feel the people that are here and stay here kind of feel that family atmosphere that you get. Some of my people have been with me for over 20 years, which is saying a lot for a small business.

Did you have a role model growing up that pointed you toward the defense industry?

That was something that I fell into. In my mind growing up, I didn't say, 'Oh, I want to go into manufacturing'—that wasn't something that I did. I did want to go into product development, but I had no idea what I was going to be producing.

Did you have a role model that steered you towards that direction?

I was brought up and guided that you could do anything. I went to work with my grandmother and watched them. Everyone worked—you just grow up with that. There's not a question of what you're going to do or anyone's going to keep you down. You can do whatever you want.

Can you give me some examples of hurdles you had to overcome personally and professionally?

Not so much true at Intertek, but my prior life, the work-life balance was not good. Twenty-something years, you weren't allowed to say your family is your first priority. Back then if you said that, you didn't necessarily



get the next bump up in promotion or go further in the company. One of the things here at Intertek, and I try to make this a priority for all my employees, is that family is first! If there's something that you have to do that involves your family, your children—whatever loved ones—that comes first. Work is the secondary there, and that's something that I did get to experience at Intertek and make sure that that continues for my employees.

What advice would you give to young women that are currently exploring career opportunities?

You can do it! Just keep going for it.

Would you have any words of wisdom to share about entering the defense industry for young women that may look up to you as their role model?

I find it hard to be anyone's role model. That's a hard question for me because I feel that no matter what, you're always struggling to do better. The only advice that I can give is don't give up. You can do it. It's culturally a little bit different. I never felt like because I was a woman, things were different. It's not until now that maybe I'm starting to see some things might be a little bit different and I think it's just because

there's more emphasis on it, and I don't necessarily agree with that because I've been successful in what I'm doing for so long that I don't see those hurdles.

As President of Intertek. Do you have any advice for women looking to start or build their business?

You need to network. Just keep building that network. Keep reaching out to people, and I have to keep instilling that in myself. That's the one thing that I would tell people. Step outside your comfort zone and go for it! Reach out. Have the courage to do it.

In your opinion and from your experience. What other ways can an organization benefit from diversity?

Having a diverse workforce broadens your horizons. Especially when you have an emphasis on small business and employees that you want to make feel comfortable or want to come to work. Allowing that diversity or meshing that diversity allows people to get ideas of what someone else might be experiencing or feeling, or how they can do it. I always tell employees when they come on board, 'Ask everyone questions.' There's some people that have been in this industry forever. Get their opinions. Learn from them. Absorb as much as you can.

Society has put a huge emphasis on earning a degree and pursuing a white-collar career. Countless young adults are steered towards the belief that college is the only way to achieve success. Many young adults, particularly women, aren't encouraged to explore alternative career paths

like the manufacturing sector. She encouraged her daughter to explore all career avenues, including those in the manufacturing space. One way La Bella did this was having her daughter shadow her at work.

To me, I would like to do that for younger people. I have a daughter myself and she's in a totally different career. She came to work with me. I also worked with my mother in the summers. My employees, when they see my grown daughter now, they're like, 'Oh, but wait, I remember her when she was this big!'—because she was coming here since she was two. My daughter knows everything of what to do on my manufacturing floor, as well as what to do in my office. God forbid if something was to happen to me, she could come in and do it if she had to, and she worked here summers. 🧩

2022 was NJMEP's 'Year of Women in Manufacturing' for a reason. Stories like the one shared here are instrumental in encouraging more young women to explore fruitful careers in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) space. Even though the official 'Year of Women in Manufacturing' is over, that doesn't mean the initiative will stop. Throughout 2023 New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) will continue to connect and engage with more women business leaders and offer them a platform to share their experiences and to shine a light on these incredible individuals through articles and speaking events.

Call for Sponsorships

for Two International Manufacturing Conferences at Rutgers | School of Engineering | New Brunswick, NJ

Rutgers University is pleased to announce that two international manufacturing-related conferences will be held in New Brunswick, New Jersey in May and June, respectively. The Organizing Committee of each conference is actively looking for sponsors/exhibitors for the two prestigious conferences, which will bring thousands of academic researchers, industry representatives, and governmental officers to present cutting-edge research results, demonstrate use cases, promote translation of research to practices, exchange ideas, and discuss future directions. There will be a fantastic industrial manufacturing festival for the NJ manufacturing community to attend hundreds of technical sessions, federal/academia/industry panels, exhibitions & posters, women in advanced manufacturing forum, manufacturing design competition, blue sky competition, and industry tours. The two conferences and call for Sponsorships are introduced as follows.

International Advanced Manufacturing Conference June 12-16, 2023

New Brunswick, New Jersey

The International Advanced Manufacturing Conference (NAMRC/MSEC/LEM&P) 2023 is a joint conference of the 51st Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME)'s North American Manufacturing Research Conference (NAMRC51), the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)'s International Manufacturing Science and Engineering Conference (MSEC 2023), and the Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers (JSME)'s International Conference on Leading Edge Manufacturing/Materials & Processing (LEM&P 2023). The last time that NAMRC/MSEC was held on the East Coast was at Columbia University in 2005. The conference theme will be AI Manufacturing/Smart Manufacturing/Industry 4.0.

For Sponsorship & Exhibitor info, visit
<https://msec-namrc2023.rutgers.edu/sponsorship>



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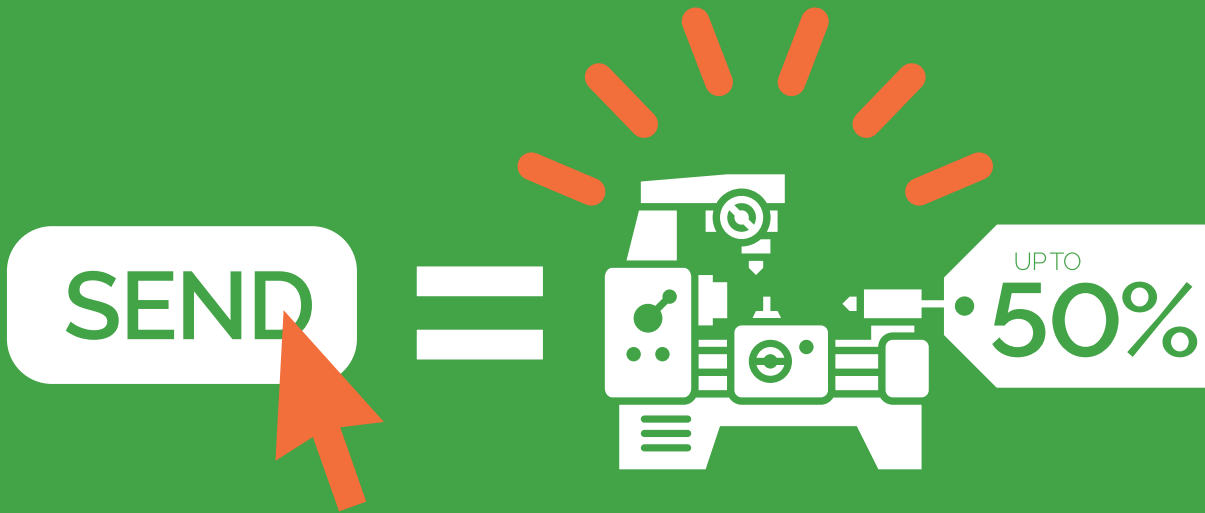
The 30th CIRP Life Cycle Engineering Conference (LCE2023)

May 15-17, 2023

New Brunswick, New Jersey

The 30th CIRP (The International Academy for Production Engineering) LCE Conference will be hosted by Rutgers University-New Brunswick. This is the third time for the US to host the prestigious sustainable manufacturing conference (1st time in Berkeley CA in 2012 and 2nd time in West Lafayette, IN in 2019). This time our theme, enabling absolute sustainability and the circular economy, focuses on the opportunities provided by new technologies, e.g., data analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI), to minimize the energy/materials use and recycling in various industrial processes, machines, and systems. These cutting-edge research results will enable a systems-level perspective needed to harmonize industrial manufacturing, society, and the environment. We look forward to continuing a tradition of providing an international forum for many disciplines to address the challenges and review the latest innovations across a range of industry sectors to promote life cycle engineering in production.

For Sponsorship & Exhibitor info, visit
<https://lce2023.rutgers.edu/sponsorship>



New Jersey Manufacturers Have Access to Funding for New Equipment

NJEDA's New Jersey Manufacturing Voucher Program (NJMVP) is Here

The state of New Jersey has allotted an unprecedented amount of money to be used specifically to support the 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing industry. Some of these funds were used to develop the New Jersey Manufacturing Voucher Program. \$20 million was set aside to

fuel this pilot grant program to assist NJ manufacturing businesses with securing new advanced manufacturing equipment. The goal of the New Jersey Manufacturing Voucher Program (NJMVP) is to have these businesses invest in themselves to help create a more competitive domestic manufacturing base here in the Garden State.

Through close collaboration between the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program, Inc. (NJMEP) and the NJEDA, the program was developed to overcome one of the largest hurdles in the manufacturing space—acquiring new advanced equipment.

NJMVP Program Overview

NJMVP aims to provide equipment grants to manufacturers that are purchasing eligible equipment. The grant can cover anywhere from 30%-50% of the cost, depending on a variety of factors. The award amount will be capped at \$250,000. Funding can only be

used for the purchase and installation of new and/or used equipment in the manufacturing process. This can include production equipment on the shop floor or digital technologies that aid in the production process. Technologically advanced equipment, production/operating systems, robotics, additive manufacturing, hardware or software for digital twinning, advanced sensor or control systems, IIoT, and even systems related to security can all be eligible under the NJMVP program.

Manufacturers can receive bonus awards to offset the cost of new equipment by up to 50%. Every manufacturer that applies and is awarded a grant will start with a 30% voucher. Stackable 5% bonuses are available for each of the qualifying areas listed below:

- ✓ **Equipment is installed in a location within an Opportunity Zone Eligible Census Tract**
- ✓ **The NJEDA provides a tool to track locations (<https://njeda.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html>)**
- ✓ **A business is a Certified Woman, Minority, or Veteran Owned Business**
- ✓ **Has at least one Collective Bargaining Agreement in place**

An additional 10% bonus is available if the equipment is purchased from a New Jersey manufacturer. The equipment needs to be manufactured and/or assembled in the state. NJMEP is working to secure a list of suppliers that can provide equipment. If any businesses are looking to source new equipment from New Jersey or would like to be added to the list of

New Jersey manufacturing equipment providers, please contact info@njmep.org.

What Manufacturers Need to Know

Nearly any kind of manufacturer will be eligible for the NJMVP program if they are purchasing manufacturing equipment that improves the production process. The only businesses that are ineligible to receive a voucher are those that are based out of the home.

The equipment being purchased must also be located and installed in a New Jersey location. If a business is headquartered in New Jersey but wants to install equipment out of state, it will not qualify for funding. Additionally, both for-profit and not-for-profit companies will be eligible.

Manufacturers must also be aware that if they leave the state in any tax period within the first 3 years of the grant being executed there will be a scaled recapture of the award based on the below criteria:

- ⊗ **100% recapture of funds if a company moves out within 1 year**
- ⊗ **60% recapture of funds if a company moves out within 2 years**
- ⊗ **30% recapture of funds if a company moves out within 3 years**

As of January 19th, the pre-qualification process is closed but applications are being accepted on a rolling basis, and the program will remain open until all funds are used. To track the application process and to find any answers to frequently asked questions, visit NJEDA.com/NJMVP.

With all the intricacies involved and the risk of investing in new equipment and technologies, businesses must work with a trusted partner to ensure their investment doesn't go to waste. New Jersey Manufacturers will face certain challenges when considering the best technology they can purchase, that will ideally offer the highest ROI, and they must also consider how to place that equipment to ensure production benefits as much as possible. NJMEP is helping to connect manufacturers with equipment suppliers, to study their plant layout, to offer expert solutions to help get the most out of every square foot, and also to run ROI studies in an effort to assist New Jersey manufacturers with this exciting journey.

This is a massive step forward for the New Jersey manufacturing industry. One program or grant won't solve every challenge the domestic industry is facing, however, the NJMVP program is a testament that the voice of manufacturing is being heard. Manufacturers have been offered the opportunity to stand up and speak out at events like NJMEP's State-of-the-State of Manufacturing, and that effort is paying off. Both state and federal governments are starting to realize the true scope and scale of the domestic manufacturing industry and, more importantly, understand why it is a vital industry. As businesses continue to stand up to educate policymakers on the state of the industry and what support is needed, more of these programs will continue to make their way to 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing businesses.

TRENTON



TALK

'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing has taken tremendous strides forward in the past 5 years. These businesses are garnering more attention from state and federal policymakers and their impact during the COVID-19 crisis underscored their value to the nation. The delegates and industry thought leaders that contribute to the Trenton Talk section of Manufacturing Matters are a fantastic example of how this industry is beginning to be recognized on a greater scale. Decisionmakers and industry leaders put their time, attention, legislation and lobbying power to making domestic manufacturing stronger and at the same time incentivizing these companies to remain in New Jersey and grow. This can be seen from the \$35 million set aside in the 2023 state budget to support "Manufacturing Initiatives." As New Jersey manufacturers continue to engage with their peers, state and federal leadership, Chambers of Commerce, Associations, and Industry Partners, more support will continue to rise to the surface.

The Legislative Manufacturing Caucus: An Update from Trenton

A new year is a time for new beginnings. As the New Jersey State Legislature begins 2023, all 120 elected Senators and Assembly Members will reflect on their priorities for the year ahead. What will be their focus in the coming year, which issues will they try to address, and which problems will they try to solve? When we, as co-chairs of the Legislative Manufacturing Caucus, consider our legislative priorities, the health of the State's manufacturing industry is always at the front of our minds. We are committed to continuing our efforts to support the manufacturing industry, which serves as the foundation of New Jersey's economy.

Before we continue to explain what we aim to do this year for manufacturers, we thought it may be prudent to reintroduce ourselves and the Caucus. The Legislative Manufacturing Caucus is a bipartisan group of members of the New Jersey Legislature, from both the State Senate and the General Assembly, who have joined together with the goal of supporting manufacturers in the Garden State.

We hold hearings, host roundtable discussions, and work with NJMEP to find out how New Jersey can become a friendlier place for the manufacturing community. Together, we represent the Caucus at events and speak with manufacturers around the State in order to truly understand the best ways to help our manufacturing industry. One of our key priorities is to create a more attractive and friendly environment for manufacturers. To achieve this, we have been actively working on a number of initiatives, including legislation.

One bill which we have spent the last two years fine-tuning is S659, the

“Manufacturing in Higher Education Act.” One of the most common comments we get from manufacturers is that there is no pipeline—young adults are pushed to apply to four-year colleges and away from careers in the trades. This bill would create numerous workforce development opportunities in vocational schools, county colleges, and four-year institutions across New Jersey to help prepare young adults for careers in advanced manufacturing. S659 has already passed the Senate unanimously. We hope to see it move quickly through the Assembly and, ultimately, to the Governor’s desk.

Another piece of legislation that we have been working on is S2707, which increases the qualified research expenses tax credit for corporation business taxpayers engaged in targeted industries, increases the basic research payment tax credit, and allows the research tax credit to be refundable. We believe that this legislation will help to foster innovation and growth in targeted industries, including the brewery industry, which has been facing challenges due to the new restrictions exacerbated by the pandemic.

Recently, the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) imposed strict guidelines on New Jersey craft brewers, significantly impeding their ability to continue to manufacture and sell craft beer. We have been heavily engaged in the ongoing discourse surrounding this issue for over a year. We have sought input from brewery owners, craft brewers and other stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive policy solution that addresses the concerns of all parties. As a state, we recognize the significant contributions and economic impact of the brewery industry in New



Jersey, and are dedicated to enacting legislation that supports and sustains our local breweries.

As we approach the third anniversary of the stay-at-home order, the Manufacturing Caucus will be holding a hearing this spring to review the State’s response to COVID-19. How well were we able to respond to sector disruption during the pandemic? How well were we able to identify ways to support supply chains and production networks that needed to withstand the pressures of lockdowns and other safety protocols—including product and workforce shortages? What can we learn from the last three years? As we examine the State’s response to the pandemic, it’s also crucial to consider ongoing efforts to support and strengthen the manufacturing sector beyond the current crisis. One of the ways we do this is through budget initiatives.

Outside of legislation and public hearings, the Caucus advocates for manufacturers during budget season. We are proud to report that we have been able to secure NJMEP an ever-increasing line item in the State budget. In FY2023, a historic \$35 million was allocated for the manufacturing industry, including \$20 million towards the newly established NJMVP program. This program aims to assist manufacturers

in upgrading, modernizing, and obtaining new equipment, thereby increasing their competitiveness in the marketplace. As we approach budget season again this spring, know that New Jersey’s manufacturers continue to be a priority for us.

We want to assure you that as long as we are members of the Legislature, the manufacturing community will always have a strong voice in Trenton. We are happy to hear from any and all members of New Jersey’s manufacturing industry. If you are interested in getting in contact with us, you can reach out to our offices via email (Senator Greenstein – SenGreenstein@njleg.org, Senator Testa – SenTesta@njleg.org).

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to more impactful work in 2023, to make New Jersey a better place to be a manufacturer.



**CAUCUS CO-CHAIRS
SENATOR LINDA GREENSTEIN
AND SENATOR MICHAEL TESTA**



Legislative Update from CIANJ President

Happy New Year! The year is well underway and we are all wondering what Trenton has planned for 2023? For starters, it should be noted that both the Senate and Assembly are up for re-election in November, so that will be a factor as legislation is considered. Of course, the main event will be the State Budget for the upcoming fiscal year. What will the Governor propose when he delivers his budget address in March? Governor Murphy provided a glimpse of what he plans to do when he delivered his State of the State Address. He would like to establish a Boardwalk Fund for shore towns in need of renovations and repairs to their boardwalks. Governor Murphy also wants to provide incentives to companies allowing remote work and companies that establish green spaces. New Jersey's liquor license laws will also be a focus.

One fact is undeniable and that is New Jersey is flush with cash. According to the Governor's Disaster Recovery Office, New Jersey collected \$118 billion in federal funds

since the start of the pandemic through the various laws that were passed in Washington. To date, approximately \$107 billion has been spent on various programs including schools, rental assistance, health testing, and business assistance. Once the Governor proposes his budget, the Legislature will hold hearings with the goal of finalizing a budget by July 1st.

In addition to the budget, we can expect to see more on the climate change/energy policy front, both from a regulatory and legislative perspective. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) recently proposed a rule dealing with inland flooding, which will impact construction and development in the floodplain. We will also see legislation dealing with plastic recycling and the electrification of new buildings and vehicles.

“ If there is one message to the business community—it is get involved! Your opinions and views on these issues matter, so don't [just] sit back—become an advocate for what you believe in, and for your business. ”



ANTHONY RUSSO
PRESIDENT, CIANJ / PUBLISHER
AND CEO OF COMMERCE MAGAZINE

South Jersey Industry Update from CCSNJ President

South Jersey is perfectly positioned for continued economic growth in 2023, even as threats of a recession loom. The region is more affordable than other areas of the state, with lower property taxes and lower overall cost of living than our northern brethren. Additionally, South Jersey has something critical that the north does not have—land for businesses to relocate, expand, or set up satellite locations. The potential for economic growth, especially growth in the manufacturing industry that often requires significant acreage to accommodate all aspects of operations, is high.

Geography also matters. With the southern region easily accessible to the Philadelphia, Delaware, and a short ride up the New Jersey Turnpike to New York, business and industry could not ask for a more accessible or affordable location in-state to house their business operations and to export their products outside of New Jersey.

“ The region has exciting growth opportunities as well. South Jersey is primed for development specific to two new industries—wind energy and cannabis. ”

Much has been written about the budding wind energy industry and Governor Murphy's commitment to 100% clean energy by 2050. With the steps the Murphy Administration has taken to support the growth of wind energy, combined with enthusiastic support from Washington D.C., New Jersey (and specifically South Jersey) is primed to be the wind capital of the Northeast. Also, the legalization of recreational marijuana and hemp has endless possibilities for the southern region of New Jersey, which is heavily agricultural. Innovation in cannabis cultivation facilities, as well as new retail cannabis businesses, are taking a hard look at the southern portion of the state as cannabis regulations continue



to rollout from Trenton. Both of these new industries present unique opportunities for manufacturers to explore and can only boost the regional economic landscape below I-195.

However, even with new industries being welcomed in South Jersey, the standard-bearer's still rule the region: casino gaming (along with sports betting), hospitality and tourism, food and glass manufacturing, nuclear energy, and South Jersey's ed's and med's corridors. Between the combination of the opportunities associated with new industries, continued opportunities with South Jersey's longtime economic anchors, and all of the regional assets associated with affordability and geography, the region is getting attention from business and industry leaders that it never did before—and we welcome them to South Jersey with open arms.



CHRISTINA M. RENNA
PRESIDENT & CEO AT THE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY



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Chambers of commerce are supporting your business

What is a chamber of commerce?

When it comes to advocating for manufacturers, businesses, corporations and nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce play a huge role. These advocacy organizations provide protection, exposure, and opportunities for organizations of all varieties. How might they do this? ►

Chambers of commerce provide a safe, common space for all leaders and professionals to meet and build a network in order to share interests, experiences, strengths, weaknesses, lessons learned, and support systems—among many others.

Manufacturers and professionals are able to build a name for themselves, as well as shed light on their products or services when working with local chambers. .

There are many ways that chambers of commerce pursue this idea of support and strength. They include but are not limited to the following six ways:

1 Networking

Networking is a big deal for chambers of commerce. Chambers of commerce provide an abundance of opportunities for organizations to network with fellow business and nonprofit leaders, giving them the abilities to speak for their products or services. Along with promoting their offerings, they also get to meet other leaders who possess similar passions in career path or business ideologies. On the contrary, they will also get to network with others who have contrasting goals and ideas, providing exposure to new and unique perspectives. Networking has the capability to affect each person differently, through both direct and indirect forms.

“When networking, you have the opportunity to build a working relationship with someone new. That relationship could lead to direct business opportunities, or it can add another close contact to your sphere of influence that is willing to help you develop business opportunities,” shares

Jim Kirkos, CEO of the Meadowlands Chamber.

Sometimes, networking works so naturally that it may have a huge impact on us, and we don’t even realize it!

There is no specific place where networking works its magic—it can occur in a wide array of settings, ranging from networking events to seminars and business learning sessions.

“The calendar of events at the Meadowlands Chamber (MC) is designed to ensure all levels of business owners and executives across many industry sectors have the opportunity to meet and strengthen relationships,” says Jim Kirkos to give insight into the possibilities at the Meadowlands Chamber.

2 Media

The media plays a huge role in the chambers’ support for local businesses. Chambers use the media to educate and inform business professionals about various topics and events. Along with this, chambers also use their media publications as an opportunity for their members to gain some exposure on their products or services. This is done through ad purchases as well as storyline spots in magazine issues.

Speaking for the Meadowlands Chamber, Joe Garavente says, “Meadowlands Media serves as a vital resource for various types of businesses, including manufacturers. Meadowlands Magazine, for example, offers the latest news, business intelligence, and thought leadership perspectives that can help businesses

make more informed decisions about their operations.”

Fortunately, there are numerous electronic methods to utilize these media publications. However, if you’re still into the old-school paper copy, Joe Garavente lets us know that, “The Meadowlands Media print and digital products offer prime opportunities for businesses to showcase their products and services to a targeted audience of leading decision-makers across the region.”

Chambers offer various ways of connecting with their media in order to be inclusive for all groups of people with different desires.

3 Specialized business intelligence

CEO of the Meadowlands Chamber, Jim Kirkos, envisions specialized business intelligence: “When a member of the MC gains knowledge of local or regional happenings, they can then provide access to these opportunities earlier in the process, prior to it being reported in the media.”

Therefore, specialized business intelligence establishes the idea of finding out about news or events via word-of-mouth, before the mainstream media gets wind of the information and disseminates it to a larger audience.

4 Public policy advocacy

Public policy advocacy, in short, is the act of influencing a specific policy or practice for the greater good or benefit of a membership. Elements include: influence, lobbying, public education, public awareness, and coalition building.

Meadowlands Chambers' Michael Knauss shares that, "The most crucial part of public policy advocacy is being able to bring public awareness and education to a topic that needs to be spoken on, for the sake of our members at the Meadowlands Chamber."

Fulfilling the duties of public policy advocacy ensures that chambers can provide hope and aspiration for business leaders.

"You know you've done the job when you're able to provide a voice to the voiceless in a world that may feel their issues are too insignificant," says Knauss.

With this, chambers of commerce are never advocating on the same redundant issues. Advocacy is needed in every sector of the business world, which is why chambers cover all the bases!

5 Economic development

Economic development, as it states, is the process of developing the economy. With this, economic development-based projects are created with the intention of creating jobs, providing essential services, increasing attraction to the area, promoting recreation and increasing spending dollars—all in an effort to benefit local businesses.

Kelsey Sarro shares valuable information regarding economic development in the chambers' pursuit to support local businesses. She says, "A major tool for chambers of commerce is hosting events in the area to attract visitors who would be curious to explore the region and its opportunities."

Different areas meet different needs and desires for varieties of individuals. When an individual figures out their way of life, they will stumble upon an area that wakes up their inner excitement. This is where their desire to stay builds up and their search for local jobs comes into the picture. The purpose of a chamber of commerce is to assist in this process and to help individuals become attracted to the region that meets their needs. Therefore, chambers are supporting both these individual people as well as local businesses by sending job-seeking people in the direction of a job that captures their purposes. It's a win-win!

6 Increase purchasing power locally through discounts

There are many different methods to increase purchasing power locally through discounts, such as health benefits programs and other similar initiatives. This is vital in assisting businesses with retaining their costs as much as possible as well as benefiting the local economy by connecting, those who purchase with those who offer the incentives.

Increasing purchasing power benefits both worlds. Lisa Trenchel shares that, "These discounts not only attract businesses but also consumers to their business, which indirectly attracts them to other area businesses."

Chambers of commerce show their support for local businesses by offering several incentive programs to help businesses in the area. For example, they may partner with other organizations to come up with a health

benefits program for their members to enroll.

Lisa Trenchel informs us that, "When local businesses thrive, the local economy benefits, therefore benefitting the chamber by attracting new members and retaining current members."

Join in on the encouragement

Deciding if you want to become a member of a chamber of commerce is simple. Now you know that chambers are here for you, and they want you to thrive. It's important to find a safe, reassuring environment that supports you yet still drives healthy competition to make you stronger.

"There's no better feeling than when someone says, 'I don't know what I'd do without you, thanks for all your help,'" shares Michael Knauss.

With the turmoil our society has gone through, we must find a way to unite and become empathetic for the sake of ourselves and each other.

Jim Kirkos says, "Especially in this post pandemic era, people want to be a part of something meaningful."

Brianne Hailey Killeen works as a Media & Editorial Production Coordinator at the Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce. Brianne can be reached at bkilleen@meadowlands.org or (201) 939-0707 ext. 2947

Giving Back to Those Who Served

Through programs and development opportunities, the NJMEP team is dedicated to helping New Jersey's veterans adapt to civilian life **by connecting them with stable careers** that utilize the skills they gained in the military.



For four generations, from his grandfather to his son, Lance Lopez and his family have served their country by answering the U.S. military's call to action in the Air Force, Army, and Marines.

Today, the project manager, veterans and community recruitment, for New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) uses not only his firsthand knowledge of what it's like transitioning from active duty back into civilian life but also his lifelong passion for helping our nation's veterans and their families.

"I have always been a supporter of the armed forces," Lopez affirms. "I think we all— in some way, shape or form— have a responsibility to our country. We all do it in our own ways: Some people can serve, and others can help in other ways, like supporting our military people. Whichever way we can best help our country, we take those avenues."

Lopez's desire to give back to those who risked their lives in the military extends to supporting them as they find both their place in the world and meaningful employment once their active-duty days are behind them. That's a big reason why he's such an ardent advocate for all the ways NJMEP is dedicated to working with those servicemen, servicewomen, and their families, helping them transfer the skills they developed during their military careers into a new or lateral field.

With everything from career training, professional development opportunities, community programs, NJMEP has a wealth of opportunities to help veterans find their place in the manufacturing sector's vast array of jobs. One is the New Jersey Defense Manufacturing Community Consortium (NJDMCC), a twofold endeavor that's both a training program for veterans and their family members and a way for interested manufacturers to connect with the well-trained individuals once they graduate. To further eliminate as many barriers to employment as possible, there is no charge for veterans and even their families to participate in NJDMCC.

Lopez also highlights this grant NJMEP received from the Department of Defense, giving the program \$5 million across five years to upskill 240 individuals annually throughout the funding's duration: 120 veterans, their family members and military service members a year, and another 120 individuals through the County College of

Morris—an initiative that Lopez says "we're very, very excited about."

"These manufacturers need good-quality, upskilled individuals who are willing, able and want to work, and we just want to be the catalyst and provide the tools to make that happen," he explains. And, befitting how both the industry's and military's technology have evolved tremendously to provide engaging, advanced and hands-on work. NJMEP underscores how sustainable, secure and satisfying manufacturing careers can be, especially since employment in New Jersey's sector averages more than a \$97,000 annual salary.

While companies that tap into the rich talent pool of the region's veteran population can help retired military members find their footing in a new role while building upon the strong foundation of skills, ability, and knowledge they gained from their service, the benefits of hiring employees with military experience are inarguably mutual.

"The initial benefit is you have a disciplined workforce," Lopez explains. "It's difficult sometimes for employers to give an employee a task to do and that employee follows through on that task, whereas veterans are trained to complete their missions and move onto the next one. And I think that's what employers see now when they hire veterans."



He notes, however, that retired military personnel tend to regard programs touting the quality of their veteran support with a learned suspicion. But NJMEP's proven track record, Lopez's own military background and thoughtful efforts to make personal connections have all helped its programs establish a stellar reputation among the veterans community.

"There's so many organizations out here who talk about what they do and how they help veterans, and veterans are typically skeptical about those programs," Lopez explains. "I think it's all about the outreach: Person-to-person emails work because people need that direct connectivity. When they speak to our veteran service members, I think they know they have connected with someone who will do what they pledged to do for them.

It's all part of NJMEP's effort to connect the veterans who call New Jersey home with the employers that want to help them find meaningful work while also reaping the benefits of bringing hardworking and reliable members onto their teams.

"It's a gift back to our veterans," Lopez says. "New Jersey MEP has shown that they care enough about our veterans and our manufacturing partners in the state, where we want to upskill these veterans and their family members to actually take on these manufacturing jobs that are so-well deserved by the veterans and the manufacturers."



MADELEINE MACCAR
EXECUTIVE MANAGING EDITOR
SOUTH JERSEY BIZ

Purpose and Fulfillment Through Employment

By Christina Grzybowski, Development Associate, Spectrum Works

Over a decade ago, when volunteering in New York City, Ann Marie Sullivan—CEO of Spectrum Works—saw firsthand that autistic individuals have the ability to work in corporate America, and heard the amazing stories of how being employed changed these individuals' lives. She later researched "autism and employment" and found an imbalance between the growing population of autistic people and the low percentage of those individuals that are employed. She decided then to use her years of entrepreneurial experience to do something about it by developing a new solution.

Spectrum Works' unique job training and employment program incorporates integrated on-the-job training, classroom-based learning, and competitive employment opportunities (via partnerships with local companies), offering young autistic adults the skills and real-life job experiences they need to get and to keep a job.

Green Distribution, a leading custom heat transfer and apparel decoration manufacturer (now named FM) was Spectrum Works' first ever partner company. Over the past ten years, the program has flourished at their Secaucus location, seeing over 500 interns gain experience in the workplace, and later resulting in the hiring of many former program trainees. They also found that the Spectrum Works model not only improved the lives of their autistic trainees, but it had a noticeably positive effect on the neurotypical employees at FM, who embraced the concept of a truly inclusive workplace. After seeing the impact of the pilot program, Spectrum Works began implementation at other companies, and currently partners with seven New Jersey companies.

The program allows young autistic adults to enter the workplace as paid trainees, work alongside neurotypical coworkers in an inclusive and supportive environment, and gain the skills and confidence needed to be outstanding employees. This is extremely evident in the story of former Spectrum Works trainee, and current FM Production Artist, Tavon. Tavon began attending Spectrum Works through the Division of Developmental Disabilities program, and he has now been employed by FM for two and a half years! As an art processing employee, Tavon takes the digital art files for clothing from clients, including Universal Music, Harley Davidson, and Hard Rock Café, and modifies them in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. Once he has prepared the files and corresponding documentation, he sends these off to be printed on their respective garments. Although Tavon has always had the determination to succeed, he also credits some of his skill development to Spectrum Works saying, "This is a good program, because before I was just jumping from program to program, trying to find work. But when I came to Spectrum Works, they took the time to help develop my skills in graphic design, help with resume building, and editing video skills." While still pursuing other artistic passions in his free time, Tavon is happy to be earning a living in a digital art profession and is proud to be a contributing member of his company.



As Spectrum Works celebrates 10 years of providing services this year, they look forward to creating more success stories like Tavon's.



Top 7 Reasons Hiring Veterans is a Fantastic Strategy for Modern Manufacturers

Countless veterans are ready and willing to work once they transition back to the civilian world.

Many understand what it means to put in a hard day's work, which makes the transition to a manufacturing environment easy. This largely ignored workforce could fill the skills gap currently impacting manufacturers in New Jersey and across the nation. Employers that do hire veterans find that they often end up as long-term, dedicated employees who developed valuable teamwork, leadership, and relevant skills during their service. These are qualities that manufacturers want from their staff and are certain to find with a veteran workforce.

US military veterans bring a wealth of skills and strengths to the workplace. A lot of this experience is credited to their cross-training in multiple skills and from balancing multiple tasks and responsibilities while in the military. This flexibility translates well to the manufacturing field, making them invaluable employees for any kind of manufacturing business.

Now let's dive in deeper to the top 7 reasons why hiring veterans is a sound strategy for today's modern manufacturing business:

1 A Strong Work Ethic

Veterans learn hard work and use determination to achieve their goals when entering the armed forces. They work well on a team and are focused on completing tasks while working in uncomfortable and challenging situations that make them well-prepared to work in a manufacturing environment.

2 Proven Leadership Skills

Veterans are used to taking on a swath of responsibilities and assuming leadership roles due to the hierarchical structure of the armed forces. They experience different leadership styles from their commanding officers and must be ready to take on a leadership position, which gives them the ability to make strategic decisions and manage a team.

3 Veterans Are Tech Savy

Veterans don't fear utilizing and exploring advanced technology. Veterans train using some of the most sophisticated technology available, and using technology in the manufacturing environment is no different. Advanced technology is incredibly prevalent in the modern manufacturing industry to speed up production. The skills veterans gain during service can be applied to their new career in manufacturing, and can lead to an easy transition into any facility.

4 Employers Receive a Variety of Incentives for Hiring Veterans

There are plenty of incentives to encourage manufacturing businesses to hire veterans. Manufacturers would qualify for tax credits, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a deduction business owners can receive from hiring specific groups, including veterans. According to Indeed, companies can also receive salary subsidies during training, assistance, and accessibility modifications—just for hiring veterans. Manufacturing-specific programs like the New Jersey Defense Manufacturing Community are designed to train veterans for

manufacturing careers through integrated certification and career-readiness training.

5 The Military Mindset

Cultural similarities between the manufacturing field and military service make the transition smoother for veterans exploring the industry. Veterans can apply many of the skills they learned from serving in the military to their manufacturing jobs. Even with advanced technology being used by manufacturing businesses, hard work is still required.

This doesn't only apply to non-disabled veterans. Disabled veterans who are able-bodied individuals, and whose disabilities don't hinder their ability to work, are just as capable of performing their duties on the job. Many want to work and have the discipline and skillset to be successful employees. Both non-disabled and disabled veterans struggle to find work.

6 Veterans Bring a Unique Skill Set

Not only do veterans possess such traits as loyalty, integrity, honesty, and a work ethic that makes them valuable long-term employees, they also have the motivation to succeed in their roles. Most of our veterans want to work and they have highly sought-after soft skills, along with an unmatched work ethic that makes them tremendous employees in the manufacturing sector—they just need to be given an opportunity. By hiring veterans, manufacturing businesses would show their appreciation for veterans' service, they'd receive great publicity, they'd qualify for benefits, and congruently address their workforce needs.

7 Nearly 200,000 Veterans Are Actively Seeking Employment

Workforce challenges top the list for many manufacturing businesses in New Jersey as they are seeking talent to fill the workforce gap left open by a retiring workforce. There currently isn't a large enough conventional pipeline to fill current open positions. Veterans make up a largely untapped group, eagerly seeking employment opportunities. This is evident with the nearly 200,000 veterans actively looking for careers each year. Only one in four veterans have a job lined up once they complete service. Hiring veterans would certainly contribute to restoring the manufacturing talent pipeline.

Veterans Closing the Manufacturing Skills Gap

Veterans make tremendous employees for manufacturing businesses and there is a plethora of advantages to hiring them. They bring an amazing work ethic and investing in this talent pool will help close the manufacturing skills gap. While the industry is experiencing challenges finding and retaining talent, veterans want to work. Our veterans proudly served this country, and they are prepared to do the same for the manufacturing industry. Manufacturers need to give them a chance. It will not only address the talent gap, but it is a fantastic way to show appreciation for those who served in the armed forces.



The CFO's Role in Supply Chain Management

Many CFOs are reluctant to get involved in the supply chain management process, leaving that area to the COO and their team of experts. In the current environment, it should be all-hands-on-deck as businesses continue to grapple with supply chain disruption and the uncertainty it brings.

Best practices for a manufacturer are different than those for a distributor, and both are different than those for a retailer. The challenge of finding the right best practices is that many manufacturing businesses now overlap all three categories. In today's world of migrating away from brick-and-mortar shops, the online fulfillment process places many companies in the position of operating as manufacturer, distributor, and retailer.

This migration, combined with the rollercoaster of on-again, off-again demand caused by COVID and post-COVID environments, leaves supply chains snarled. The shift toward flexible work-from-home arrangements further complicates the issue, straining every function and process in an organization.

Fortunately, there are best practices in risk management that can help any CFO better support the supply chain management process.

Risk Management Essentials

Risk management for a CFO takes on new challenges in this ever-changing environment. Internal controls, remote procedures, and the need for accurate forecasts all force a CFO to reach beyond the normal four walls of the company to manage supply chain relationships and soften the blow caused by the pendulum swing of demand.

Visibility into "sell-through" data is essential for manufacturers to navigate these changes. Best practices would have companies monitoring everything from customer inventory and supply availability to scheduled delivery dates from critical suppliers.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) throughout an organization take on new meaning in this context. At a minimum, make sure you are tracking forecast accuracy, on-time delivery, unit throughput, average days in work in process, yield, scrap, order fulfillment rates, workstation efficiency, and lead times. In this environment, a yield loss on one manufactured part can hold up an entire shipment—just look at the impact of semiconductor availability on the auto industry.

This data combined with another best practice—communicating and working with customers and distributors to modulate inventory levels—enables a company to proactively mitigate as much risk as possible.

Evaluating internal controls is an essential best practice in any economy, but especially in today's risky environment. Remote workforces and reduced

headcount leave companies especially vulnerable to gaps in supply management controls. Everything from an initial requisition to the positive pay upload and bank reconciliation need to be executed with a proper segregation of duties within a system of KPIs. The CFO needs to elevate visibility into internal control operation from a background process to a monitored system.

In remote work environments, Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings are typically focused on a limited number of issues. The visibility into the connection between various supply chain issues becomes blurred. Critical KPIs and vigilant controls are the guiderails that keep these connections at the forefront and create a clearer roadmap to delivering exceptional value to customers.



Anthony D'Agostino, CPA is a Consulting Principal in the Manufacturing & Distribution practice at Grassi, one of the nation's largest accounting and advisory firms. He has more than 40 years of experience in CFO, COO, auditor and consultant roles and specializes in financial and operational strategies for manufacturers and distributors of all sizes. Anthony can be reached at adagostino@grassicpas.com.

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