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STATE-OF-THE-STATE MANUFACTURING

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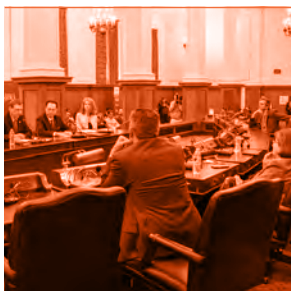
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MANUFACTURING MATTERS

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 Trends to Watch

What 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturers Need to Know

The 2024 Industry Report was published and released at this year's **State-of-the-State of Manufacturing**. NJMEP passed the reins to NJBIA who held the event at the State House to ensure the voice of manufacturing was heard and the faces of these businesses were seen by their representatives. Along with the information in that report, the themes here were discussed and the manufacturers in attendance were keenly aware of the rapid progress taking place in the industry. Technological, geopolitical, and societal developments are reshaping the face of manufacturing. New Jersey manufacturers must understand the impact of each of these themes outlined in this year's Industry Report. ***To download the full report, visit NJMEP.org***

Safety and Training

Safety will always be vital in manufacturing. Training is crucial, and innovative solutions like the Workforce Training Room in Cedar Knolls, New Jersey, offer access to advanced manufacturing technologies alongside conventional tools. Programs like the New Jersey Defense Manufacturing Community Consortium (NJDMCC) assist manufacturers in offsetting training costs for veteran employees. Mobile training labs provide offsite training options, equipped with the same advanced equipment as the Cedar Knolls facility, ensuring uninterrupted production while facilitating professional oversight.

Offshore Wind

The landscape of offshore wind energy in New Jersey undergoes a significant shift in 2024 with Ørsted's withdrawal from the project. However, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) awarded a combined 3,742 MW of offshore wind capacity to Invenergy and energyRE's Leading Light Wind Project and Attentive Energy LLC's Attentive Energy Two Project. These two projects are in addition to the



Atlantic Shores 1,509.6 MW project. This move accelerates the state's progress towards a 100% clean energy economy by 2035. Notably, the developers are partnering with the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) to ensure robust engagement with local manufacturing businesses. This collaboration presents a substantial opportunity for New Jersey manufacturers to contribute to and benefit from the burgeoning offshore wind industry.

Supply Chain

The impact of COVID-19 on the supply chain is beginning to subside, but new challenges emerge in 2024 driven by geopolitical tensions such as the Ukraine/Russian war and escalating issues in international trade due to new unrest in the Middle East. Manufacturers must pivot from mitigating supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19 to addressing a fresh set of global challenges. Just as manufacturers adapted to pandemic-related disruptions, business leaders now need to apply the lessons learned to navigate these geopolitical uncertainties. Staying informed about the latest international and local

interruptions while looking for local suppliers and partners to maintain resiliency will be critical.

Economic Turbulence

The U.S. economy faced unprecedented challenges in recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic triggering a brief yet severe recession in 2020. As the economy rebounded, soaring consumer demand outpaced supply, resulting in a surge in inflation, peaking at over 9% in mid-2022. The Federal Reserve has continued to increase federal funds targeting interest rates. While inflation has been easing globally, hopes for a soft landing in 2024 persist. However, core services prices remain elevated, and labor markets remain tight.

The lingering effects of inflation continue to weigh on manufacturing businesses and consumers alike. Companies that weathered the worst of the storm must maintain resilience for the uncertain economic future ahead.

Cybersecurity

The cybersecurity landscape in manufacturing undergoes a notable shift in 2025, particularly regarding the Department of Defense (DoD)

Supply Chain. It is expected that CMMC 2.0 compliance will be a contractual requirement by Q1 2025, potentially disrupting non-compliant businesses. Manufacturers must stay vigilant amidst evolving requirements, especially since implementation can take up to 18 months.

General businesses must integrate cybersecurity into their plans due to changing cyber insurance coverage premiums and provided coverage while cyberattacks become more sophisticated. A proactive approach is vital for mitigating risks and protecting against potential threats.

Domestic Semiconductor Industry

The U.S. is heightening its focus on semiconductor manufacturing with the CHIPS Act, which allocates nearly \$280 billion to enhance domestic capabilities, including \$53 billion specifically for research, development, and production. New Jersey is positioning itself to capitalize on this investment. The NJEDA advocates for strategic state contributions of \$250 million to \$400 million to augment the \$55 million already invested in the state's

Manufacturing Voucher Program. These efforts aim to prioritize New Jersey for CHIPS funding, with NJMEP ensuring federal agencies recognize the state's robust manufacturing infrastructure. This proactive approach is designed to secure New Jersey's leadership in the national semiconductor initiative, enabling manufacturers to upskill, retool, and expand their roles in the semiconductor supply chain.

Sustainability

Manufacturers in 2024 continue to prioritize the economic benefits of sustainable manufacturing techniques by embracing technologies to increase efficiency and shifting mindsets towards implementing solutions to both lower operating costs and reduce carbon footprints. This dual benefit underscores the importance of sustainability in modern manufacturing strategies.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations will remain in 2024 and beyond. In the U.S., the implementation of The Environmental, Social, and Governance Law (2024) signifies a significant shift in the regulatory landscape. At one time it was voluntary, but now sustainability reporting is mandatory, requiring detailed disclosure of environmental, social, and governance practices. This regulatory change highlights the growing importance of ESG factors in the manufacturing industry and underscores the need for transparent and responsible business practices.

Workforce

For two decades, workforce challenges have been an unavoidable topic in

manufacturing. Manufacturers have struggled to find qualified candidates but now the focus is shifting towards Generation Z's growing preference for trades over traditional college degrees. A survey revealed that two-thirds of high school graduates not pursuing college would have considered alternatives like industry certifications, licenses, and apprenticeships if they had access to information about these opportunities. In response, NJMEP and the NJEDA's Future Makers and Creators Tour is actively visiting schools in all 21 counties, providing immersive, hands-on experiences with modern manufacturing technologies to demystify and promote the real benefits of advanced manufacturing careers. Additionally, the New Jersey Defense Manufacturing Community Consortium (NJDMCC) remains vital in developing and upskilling workers. Emphasizing these educational pathways is crucial as manufacturing returns to the U.S., and projects like Offshore Wind escalate the demand for skilled labor.

AI, Automation, Advanced MFG

As the manufacturing workforce evolves, U.S. companies are continuing to invest in automation to enhance productivity. In 2023, installations of industrial robots rose by 12% predominantly led by the automotive and electronics sectors, as reported by the International Federation of Robotics (IFR).

Simultaneously, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing manufacturing operations. According to Capgemini, over half of European manufacturers (51%) have implemented AI

solutions, with Japan (30%) and the U.S. (28%) also adopting this technology extensively. The primary AI applications focus on improving maintenance, which accounts for 29% of manufacturing AI use cases, and enhancing quality control, which makes up 27%. These technological advancements are designed not only to optimize production but to improve the productivity and capabilities of the existing workforce, offering vital competitive advantages and ensuring continuous return for the manufacturers making the investments. In New Jersey specifically, Gov. Murphy announced plans to ensure that the state is at the forefront of AI R&D. During his annual State of the State address, he announced an effort dubbed an "AI Moonshot" in collaboration with institutions like Rutgers, Bell Labs, and Princeton.

Moving Forward

For those seeking predictability after years of unprecedented uncertainty, 2024 has been anything but straightforward. The valuable lessons learned from the past few years will prove invaluable if business leaders translate them into actionable strategies. As the manufacturing landscape continues to evolve, incorporating shifts in cybersecurity, workforce, economic and geopolitical turbulence, a host of innovative technologies entering the market and being implemented by the competition, navigating these shifts will be critical to succeed in 2024 and the years to come. By leveraging these insights and proactively addressing emerging trends, manufacturers can pave the way for a resilient and prosperous 2025. 🌈



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

Norwalt Design & MAC Products

Norwalt Design

Norwalt Design, founded by Norbert Seitel and Walter McDonald in 1971, has evolved into a leading provider of elite automation machinery. With a commitment to quality and innovation, Norwalt has become the trusted choice for precision machine manufacturing. As CEO Mike Seitel explains, the company's recent expansion to a second facility was driven by increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting their pivotal role in producing essential goods like COVID test kits and vaccine-related machinery.

To meet the challenges of rapid growth, Norwalt turned to NJMEP for assistance in facilitating employee training programs. Through NJMEP's Geometric Dimensioning & Tolerancing training, Norwalt's operators gained essential skills for working with cutting-edge technology. Head over to page 6 to read the full story about how Norwalt was able to focus their efforts on employee upskilling amid increasing production demands.

MAC Products

Founded in 1968 by Ed Gollob, MAC Products Inc. has grown from a small operation with just two employees to a thriving manufacturing company under three generations of family leadership. With over 100 employees and a 4.5-acre complex in South Kearny, MAC specializes in made-to-order manufacturing services, serving diverse clients ranging from electrical utilities to mass-transit entities. With a motto of 'We Don't Do Easy,' MAC emphasizes a personal and honest approach to business, driving innovation through cutting-edge design. Their journey from pencil and paper drawings to one of New Jersey's most technologically advanced operations reflects their commitment to excellence and continuous growth.

The partnership between MAC Products and NJMEP, spanning nearly a decade, has yielded significant benefits. Through NJMEP's training programs and initiatives like the 'MADE in NJ' program and the 'WE MADE IT' video series, MAC has received invaluable support in enhancing their operations and visibility. Most recently, NJMEP assisted MAC in addressing process inefficiencies, leading to improvements in operational performance. Flip to page 8 to read more about how MAC was able to leverage NJMEP's partnership and resources to streamline processes and drive continuous improvement, positioning them for sustained success in the manufacturing industry.

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.

NORWALT DESIGN FINDS TIME FOR EMPLOYEE UPSKILLING AMID RAPID GROWTH

Background

Norbert Seitel and Walter McDonald founded Norwalt Design in Whippany in 1971, before expanding and moving operations to Randolph in 1988. Since Norwalt's doors first opened, they've dedicated themselves to producing machines of unparalleled quality, offering superior customer service, and consistently pushing the boundaries of innovation through cutting-edge design. Over the years, their commitment to excellence and continuous growth has positioned them as the preferred and trusted provider of elite automation machinery. From the initial design phase to the final build, they relentlessly challenge limits and overcome barriers to deliver the most efficient and innovative solutions.

Mike Seitel, CEO of Norwalt and second generation executive explains, "We were working with all the big consumer goods companies on building their custom machines, and now we've gone further," he says. "When COVID hit, we were put under demand to build a lot of the test kit machines and machines for the vaccine," adds Seitel, "Once that was over, we actually held those customers and now they're coming back to us for additional work, and we've had to expand to where we opened a second facility."

The company plans to expand again next November to a third facility as orders continue to flood in for Norwalt's expertise in precision machine manufacturing. Norwalt is also working on a secret project that involves a new patent for sustainable packaging, something that Seitel says is going to revolutionize the industry.

When asked how a small precision machine manufacturing outfit was able to make such a big splash in the major consumer goods market, "We did a pivot in the way we worked in terms of quality and service," says Seitel, "We made sure it was always the best machine you could buy and we didn't question any customer complaints or issues."

Challenge

With the rapid growth that Norwalt has been experiencing comes its own set of challenges, most notably in facilitating programs like employee training and upskilling. In the wake of COVID, where Norwalt's production was increased significantly to keep up with demand for COVID Test Kits and other essential goods, the Norwalt team needed assistance in the way of training facilitation. Seitel says that they try to implement training whenever feasible, but due to the amount of business growth the company has experienced in the past year, it's been difficult to dedicate the time—a sentiment echoed by Keith Harman, Director of Business Development and Technical Sales at Norwalt.

"It's very taxing when you have huge projects for like three months," says Harman.

"There's not a lot of help for manufacturers here, in the state," adds Seitel, "Well, there is, but it's very splintered." But Seitel knows he can always count on NJMEP when he needs resources to solve one of the many challenges manufacturers face in New Jersey.

Solution

"We were doing LEAN 5S training there [at CCM] and we went through the state, where you got money back for the training, and we worked with NJMEP on that," says Seitel. And that's where the relationship between Norwalt and NJMEP began. So, with a need for training and not a lot of flexibility to implement, Norwalt reached out to their account manager at NJMEP again to get some training done for their operators—this time it would be for Geometric Dimensioning and Tolerancing training, an essential skill for an operator at Norwalt working with the latest technology in machine design and production.

The course provided Norwalt's operators with uniformity in drawing specifications and interpretation, and geometric



SUCCESS STORY: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

tolerancing to reduce controversy, guesswork, and assumptions throughout the manufacturing and inspection process. Operators learned that when GD&T is used properly it will improve communication and result in better product design, and can also increase product tolerances, saving the business time and money.

The following steps were taken:

Project Title – Geometric Dimensioning & Tolerancing Training (2 Days Total)


- Introduction; Dimensioning and Tolerancing Fundamentals – 2 Hours
- Symbols, Terms, and Rules; Datums – 2 Hours
- Form controls – Flatness, Straightness, Circularity, Cylindricity, Free state variation – 2 Hours
- Orientation – Parallelism, Perpendicularity, Angularity – 2 Hours
- Position, General – Specifying the position tolerance, Regardless of feature size, Maximum material condition, Shift tolerance, Boundary conditions, “0” Positional Tolerancing – 2 Hours
- Position, Location – Fasteners, Projected Tolerance Zones, Multiple patterns of features, Composite positional tolerancing, Two single-segment feature control frames, Nonparallel holes, Counterbored holes, Noncircular features, Symmetrical features – 2 Hours
- Position, Coaxiality – 2 Hours
- Concentricity and Symmetry; Runout; Profile – 2 Hours

Results

The following results were cited as a direct result of engaging with NJMEP 12-18 months following the conclusion of the project outlined above.

- ✓ **NEW SALES: \$250,000**
- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$250,000**
- ✓ **NEW JOBS: 6**
- ✓ **JOBS RETAINED: 4**
- ✓ **COST SAVINGS: \$175,000**

When asked if there were any ways in which NJMEP has added value to their business, Seitel had this to say: “In the past, [NJMEP] has been the voice of manufacturing with the government,” he responds, “That’s probably the biggest help.”

“It’s indirect, a lot of the help,” adds Harman. “All the work you do helps [manufacturers].” 

“In the past, [NJMEP] has been the voice of manufacturing with the government. That’s probably the biggest help. It’s indirect, a lot of the help. All the work you do helps [manufacturers].”

Keith Harman, Director of Business Development and Technical Sales at Norwalt

MAC PRODUCTS ACHIEVES ROBUST GROWTH THROUGH PROCESS ENHANCEMENTS FACILITATED BY NJMEP

Background

In 1968, MAC Products Inc. was founded by Ed Gollob, who started with just two employees. Over the years, this family-owned and operated manufacturing company has flourished under three generations of leadership, now boasting over 100 employees and a 4.5-acre fully integrated complex in South Kearny. Specializing in made-to-order manufacturing services and products, MAC serves diverse clients, from electrical utilities to mass-transit entities. With a motto of 'We Don't Do Easy,' MAC emphasizes a personal and honest approach to business, a tradition implemented by Gollob and upheld for over 50 years. Having witnessed multiple technological shifts in manufacturing, MAC has consistently been a pioneer of innovation. From initial pencil and paper drawings, the company has transformed into one of the most technologically advanced operations in New Jersey Manufacturing.

The relationship between MAC Products and NJMEP goes back nearly a decade, beginning with some LEAN training and evolving into a fruitful partnership that resulted in some great no cost opportunities like joining the 'MADE in NJ' program and being featured in the 'WE MADE IT' video series. The most recent engagement with NJMEP stemmed from a need to improve certain processes that were impacting MAC's business.

"We continually kept engaged with the MEP over the years," says Eddie Russnow, President of MAC. "With this latest grant that we got from the state for training, it's all been based around the process improvement and process mapping, and that's really been our core focus now as we realize that the things that are holding us back are the processes, and that stemmed from a deep dive that we did with [NJMEP's Resource]."

Challenge

With critical resources made available through the DoL training grant program, Eddie and his account manager set about discerning which area of the business was most critical to improving operations. "What we're recognizing is our ability to get the right data that we need to manage the business is difficult to find in all the disparate areas of the company where the data resides," says Russnow. "A lot of the things that we're experiencing with—we'll call them headaches—with each other, is not because of each other, but it's because of the way we're trying to find data, and how the data all connects," he adds.

Eddie, through his collaboration with NJMEP, recognized that the processes implemented over the years became ineffective and required thorough reevaluation and enhancement.

"In order to get our system to work the way it was designed to work, first we have to figure out what the proper processes are," says Russnow, "If we didn't go through this process, I don't think we would have been able to put a strategic plan in place to try to grow the company."

When asked if he thought it was an outside perspective that gave him more insight into what was causing the tensions with their processes he responded: "There's no question," says Russnow, "We were clouded in our judgment by the seven words of a dying company—'That's the way we've always done it.'"

"It's the fear of knowing that you don't know everything, and then what's it going to take and therefore what's it going to cost to fix it to make it right," says Russnow. "And when you've headed down this road for so long, unless you're strong enough to admit that we don't know everything, if we want to really move the needle, this is what we have to do and we're going to have to just roll our sleeves up and we're just going to have to bite the bullet



SUCCESS STORY: INNOVATION & GROWTH

and do what we have to do, because otherwise we're just going to get the same results we've always gotten."

Solution

In the discovery phase, the operational framework underwent a thorough evaluation to identify inefficiencies and process gaps, with the overarching goal of enhancing business performance. This involved a comprehensive review of how various operational environments adapted to the ERP System, and pinpointing adoption gaps that could be addressed for improvement.

Following the discovery phase, an Operational Effectiveness Team, comprising diverse stakeholders, was established under the name POET – Productivity & Operational Effectiveness Team. This team took on the responsibility of analyzing, identifying, and resolving issues affecting operations. Their collective efforts were directed towards addressing ineffective business processes and recommending necessary changes and improvements to streamline operations.

Throughout the engagement, the team received coaching, training, and guidance, actively expanding their skills and professional development through training courses, mentoring, and daily interactions with stakeholders. Training focused on creating a format for collecting and sharing information using a standardized methodology. The establishment of Rules of Engagement ensured the team's effectiveness and ensured they maintained a prioritized register of identified issues, resolving them through projects, and reporting their progress to management through regular briefings. In subsequent stages, the team actively supported the implementation of leadership-approved changes.

The scope of work included conducting a detailed workflow analysis to assess process gaps, inefficiencies,

and constraints in day-to-day operations. The Aptean Industrial Manufacturing ERP System feature-set was thoroughly reviewed to understand key benefits when properly implemented. A gap analysis evaluated the adoption levels of the new ERP System in various work environments. A Process Dependency Analysis (PDA) identified operational dependencies among stakeholders, ensuring the fulfillment of informational and operational needs. Finally, the formation and training of the Operational Effectiveness Team equipped them with the necessary skills to identify and recommend changes, with subsequent support for implementing approved operational process alterations.

The following steps were taken:

Project Title – Performance Management Consulting (22 Days Total)

- REPORT - Detailed Workflow Analysis — 5 Days
- REPORT - ERP System Feature-set Analysis — 3 Days
- REPORT - ERP Gap Analysis — 3 Days
- REPORT - Process Dependency Analysis (PDA) — 3 Days
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT - Creation of an Operational Effectiveness Team and training via ManageMeant™ — 8 Days
-

Results

The following results were cited as a direct result of engaging with NJMEP 12-18 months following the conclusion of the project outlined above.

- ✓ **NEW SALES: \$3 MILLION**
- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$1.5 MILLION**
- ✓ **NEW JOBS: 5**

"[NJMEP] has opened our eyes to the things that we didn't

necessarily know that were out there for us, from a standpoint of support from the state or support from other organizations," says Russnow.

When asked what the standout results from engaging with NJMEP were from his perspective, he had this to say: "The standout results [from this project]," he begins, "Everything is still moving forward and is still in process and will be in process always, because we'll always be looking to identify ways to streamline things and improve the processes," says Russnow. "The thing that I'm most happy with and most proud of is that I didn't have to be the one to drive it." 🧩

"[NJMEP] has opened our eyes to the things that we didn't necessarily know that were out there for us, from a standpoint of support from the state or support from other organizations,"

Eddie Russnow, President of MAC Products

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Fighting Against Floods: **The Flood Guardian System**

ColeZar Flood Protection LLC Brings Domestically Produced Flood Barrier Solutions to NJ Residents and Businesses.

Changing Tides and Chance Encounters

ColeZar Flood Protection, LLC is a cutting-edge provider of advanced flood protection solutions, revolutionizing the industry with its patented “Flood Guardian” system. At the helm of ColeZar, are Bill Coleman, a construction professional with 55 years of experience, and Cezary Sosidko—a Polish expat and entrepreneur with steel fabrication and custom welding experience that spans over 30 years. The two met on a Hoboken job site in 2014, where Cezary was contracted to provide flood protection for a commercial building, and Bill was an independent sales rep for a Florida-based flood mitigation company that was spec'ed to provide their system.

Fraught with continuing production delays, manufacturing errors, and a lack of product support, Bill decided to start working on designing his own system, which would be lighter and equally as strong, but would consist of design components that wouldn't involve time-consuming secondary manufacturing operations. His goal was to turn around orders to delivery in a matter of weeks, unlike other flood mitigation companies, which could take anywhere from 12 to 14 weeks for deliveries—something Bill felt was an unacceptable turnaround, especially during Hurricane Season. “I thought to myself, ‘Let me see if I can come up with some sort

of modification and develop my own patent.” As Bill puts it: “Technically, if you order at the beginning of hurricane season, you'll be getting your order at the end of hurricane season. So, you're really not servicing the people the way they should be serviced.”

Another aspect of Flood Guardian's creation was that Bill, as a New Jersey resident, experienced significant tragedy and loss over the years with countless hurricanes ripping through his community, leaving destruction in their wakes. Another caveat of working in the commercial space was that Bill's past employer wasn't willing to sell to residential customers because the orders were too small in nature. “[Bill] was thinking about helping his friends and neighbors,” says Cezary, “[He] was upset that his company wouldn't sell to residents, because the orders were too small. So [Bill], as the guy who actually worked in flood protection, couldn't help anybody in his neighborhood. So, he wanted to come up with something that was affordable, easy to install, that anybody can store in a garage and just protect their homes from flooding.”

In 2021, Cezary and Bill once again connected while working on another job site, and the two began talking about coming up with their own flood mitigation system mainly for the residential market—something easy to install, easily stored away, and most importantly, something affordable. The affordable aspect was the challenge, since only the highest quality materials were being used for the Flood Guardian System; all of the aluminum extruded parts were being manufactured from 6063 aluminum and their EPDM gaskets are considered the best

material for this application. After three years of research, trials and errors, and addressing any unforeseen problems from production to installation, all while securing the necessary financing to guarantee production, ColeZar finally had a product which met, or surpassed, any of the standards for flood mitigation on the market today. With a product now ready for market, ColeZar's flood protection system is meticulously designed using high-grade aluminum, high-density neoprene, and ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) gaskets, a culmination of years of hard work, ingenuity, a commitment to excellence, and several chance encounters.

Flood Guardian: Protecting What You Cherish Most

The Flood Guardian is not just a product; it's a sigh of relief for property owners facing the constant threat of heavy rain and flooding. ColeZar understands the multifaceted nature of water damage, addressing not only surface flooding but also potential underlying factors—from groundwater infiltrations to poorly sealed pipes and sewer backups, they provide a comprehensive solution that goes beyond the obvious.

"Devastating storms and hurricanes seem to be occurring much more often," says Coleman, the Sales and Marketing half of Rochelle Park's ColeZar. "Flood Guardian could be the difference between fast-rising waters destroying everything you own, or protecting everything you cherish."

At ColeZar Flood Protection, LLC, they believe in proactive measures as the best defense against potential threats.

By offering a modular system that supplies a range of solutions and the ability to stay ahead of potential risks, Flood Guardian empowers property owners to safeguard their investments and enjoy peace of mind, even in the face of severe weather conditions. Commercial and Residential property owners can rely on the Flood Guardian system for its innovation, reliability, and comprehensive flood defense.

What's Next for ColeZar

ColeZar is coming off a successful trade show at the 2023 New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference. There, they showcased the Flood Guardian system to mayors, engineers, architects and town planners, which the duo hopes will kick off their exposure to a wider range of potential customers. The company's immediate plans are to set up qualified sales representatives and installers to service their clients across the state, and also to partner with a financial institution that could help facilitate financial options for homeowners and potentially offset the cost of Flood Guardian. With these two areas addressed, ColeZar's production, led by Sosidko, can expedite every approved and basic production order in a matter of weeks, ensuring a speedy delivery when clients need the Flood Guardian.

"The initial cost shouldn't be a factor," says Coleman, when considering investing in a flood barrier protection system. "It's not something that's going to lose value. You store it away and it's there when you need it and if you need it, and it gives you peace of mind," he adds. As for Bill's reasoning behind why someone living in New Jersey should invest in flood protection, as a

local New Jerseyan who has weathered decades of storms and coastal flooding: "The benefit of [the Flood Guardian System] to somebody who has gone through these floods several times is a no-brainer." Flood Guardian was tested and proven to withstand waters 6 feet high by 9 feet wide, with approximately 2.88 gallons of seepage over a 48-hour timeframe. With results like that, panic and stress are a thing of the past the next time you hear severe flooding is forecasted—and there will be a next time.

ColeZar is another perfect example of the innovation that comes out of 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing businesses. The Garden State is home to thousands of manufacturers, small and large, all working to create a better nation. As ColeZar progresses forward, keep an eye out for updates as this business is 'Built to Last'! 🏡



UNEX Manufacturing: Lakewood Manufacturer Celebrating 60 Years of Innovation

UNEX is a fantastic example of the unsung heroes of manufacturing in New Jersey—a name that's synonymous with industry and commerce, even if you don't realize it. UNEX's material handling products can be found across many industries and in facilities at Fortune 500 companies like Wal-mart and Amazon, touching the lives of countless American consumers that are unaware how their products get from warehouses across the country to their front door.

UNEX Manufacturing is a gravity conveyor manufacturer based in Lakewood, New Jersey. Celebrating their 60th anniversary this year, UNEX has been at the forefront of innovation in supply chain management since 1964, offering dynamic storage solutions for manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, and retail operations. This commitment to excellence is reflected in their ISO-certified practices and customer-centric approach. UNEX's in-house design and manufacturing capabilities ensure that each product is engineered to optimize space and enhance operational efficiency. In addition to their commitment to customer satisfaction, UNEX is deeply committed to sustainability, prioritizing responsibly sourced materials and recyclable components in their products, reducing environmental impact and promoting greener operations. By offering durable, energy-efficient storage solutions powered by gravity, UNEX helps businesses across various industries achieve their efficiency goals while minimizing their carbon footprint.

Frank Neuwirth founded UNEX in the 60s with the idea of creating a new type of conveyor. In 1964, UNEX manufactured the first cable-driven live roller conveyor, which was revolutionary for the era. The company then went on to manufacture various types of power conveyors before switching gears in the 2000s to focus their business on manual, gravity-powered conveyors. These types of conveyors were a more affordable and more easily implemented method of conveyance, which allowed more businesses to adopt their technology, and in turn, this allowed UNEX to expand more rapidly than their competitors.

When Howard McIlvaine, VP of Operations of UNEX, started at the company 27 years ago, much of their business operations were manual. Due to the volume of



work UNEX does these days, UNEX has had to get smarter McIlvaine says. Now, UNEX has fully automated machines that handle the bulk of assembly. This drive to get smarter and adopt the latest technologies comes from the company's ethos of continuing to drive innovation and evolve with the times. UNEX is coming off a successful Manufacturing Voucher Program application, which has allowed the company to add a brand-new laser cutting machine to replace their old punch press, which has helped them continue to grow and be an innovator in their industry.

The relationship between UNEX and NJMEP goes back quite a few years, beginning with Quality Management consulting and ISO Certification support. Since then, McIlvaine says that whenever he encounters a problem, he knows he can count on NJMEP to help solve it. Whether you operate a warehouse, order fulfillment center, or retail outlet, UNEX has a tailored material-handling solution to meet your business's unique needs and drive success. With over 10,000 manufacturing businesses in the state, these small to medium enterprises perfectly exemplify the diverse wealth of innovation and resilience in New Jersey. Manufacturers like UNEX are not only expanding their operations, but they're also fostering local employment opportunities and supporting industries and communities across the Garden State. 🍷



When state funding for Contract Shop #3 dwindled, Jim was determined to protect his colleagues from job losses. Seeking support from private citizens, NJCBVI, and the National Industries for the Blind (NIB), he founded Bestwork Industries for the Blind, Inc. on September 14, 1981. The early years were challenging, but things changed when Varsaci discovered federal government contracts through the AbilityOne Program, securing Bestwork's initial contract for Navy neckerchiefs with support from the Board of Directors and NIB.

Following Varsaci's passing in 1988, Belinda Moore took the reins as President and CEO, ushering in a new era of growth. Bestwork expanded to a 25,000-square-foot facility in Runnemede, New Jersey, increasing production capacity and becoming a vital service provider to the military and government. A subsequent move to a 50,000-square-foot facility in Cherry Hill allowed Bestwork to double its workforce and diversify its contracts, and the company's reputation brought about more contracts with the Defense Logistics Agency and General Services Administration to support the needs of the Air Force, Army, Navy, and other federal customers.

Under the leadership of Jon Katz, who assumed the role of President and CEO after Belinda's retirement, the company continued to thrive and evolve. Thanks to Katz's leadership, Bestwork has gone on to adopt Lean Manufacturing practices and has since obtained ISO 9001:2015 certification, holding true to their history of dedication to quality.

A Vision of Equal Opportunity and Innovation: The Story of Bestwork Industries for the Blind

From Its Humble Beginnings Post-WWII to
'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day's Manufacturer
of the Year Award Winner

Who is Bestwork Industries for the Blind?

Bestwork Industries for the Blind, Inc. traces its roots back to the vision of Jim Varsaci, a resilient New Jersey native who lost his sight during World War II. Following the war, Jim and his wife Rita toiled on their Delran farm, where Jim adjusted to life without sight. With assistance from the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI), Jim not only learned vital skills for independent living but also assumed the role of manager at NJCBVI's Contract Shop #3. Here, he provided skills training and job opportunities to approximately 25 visually impaired individuals, while Rita became a sewing instructor for NJCBVI.

From Humble Beginnings to 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day Award Winner

The company's journey began in 1981 with a mission to provide exceptional solutions to esteemed companies like Campbell Soup and RCA. From its humble beginnings as a contract shop, Bestwork has transformed into a self-sustaining manufacturing operation, partnering with Fortune 500 companies, growing employment opportunities for the visually impaired, and embracing best practices for quality and efficiency. In the ever-changing industrial landscape in New Jersey, what started as a venture offering packing, mailing, and assembly services has since transformed into a comprehensive suite of offerings that cater to the diverse needs of Bestwork's varied and diverse client base. The history of Bestwork Industries for the Blind is one highlighted with their commitment to professionalism, experience, and quality.

"For our federal, state, and commercial customers, you get a quality product at a competitive price," says Katz.

"Not only are we proud to say that the products we provide to our Federal, State, and commercial customers are made in America, by blind Americans, using American produced raw materials, but everything we manufacture and all the business services we provide are all done right here in New Jersey, creating employment opportunities not only for people who are blind, but also our sighted employees in the state."

Bestwork's commitment to excellence and quality culminated

in 2023, when the company was recognized by NJMEP at 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day in October. Bestwork was recognized during the Manufacturer of the Year Award Ceremony, where excellence in manufacturing is recognized in three separate categories: Small Manufacturer of the Year, Medium Manufacturer of the Year, and Large Manufacturer of the Year. Bestwork was acknowledged at the event in front of nearly a thousand industry professionals, partners, and peers.

NJMEP CEO Peter Connolly and David Visalli, Senior Account Manager and Cyber Security Specialist at NJMEP, later joined with Jon Katz to tour the Bestwork facility. Katz spoke to the importance of being recognized for the company's achievements in the manufacturing sector, he says, "Being recognized for this award amongst our industrial peers validates the work we do and the mission we serve.

"For Bestwork, to be named a 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturer of the Year is important because it helps legitimize the population that we serve as equals in the manufacturing space. We're certified by the state as a Competitive Integrated place of Employment, which means our people who are blind work alongside their sighted counterparts doing similar if not the same complex work, earning competitive wages, and receiving the same upward mobility opportunities as their sighted counterparts."

Deploying Resources to Adopt Advanced Manufacturing Tech

Recently, Bestwork enlisted NJMEP's help in applying and securing a new

automated folding machine through the New Jersey Manufacturing Voucher Program (NJMVP)—a \$20 million pilot grant program that's a game-changer for New Jersey manufacturers eager to enhance their efficiency, productivity, and profitability. The program, facilitated by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) offers grants to cover a significant portion of the costs for necessary manufacturing equipment—up to \$250,000 per manufacturer—an initiative that opens doors for businesses like Bestwork to implement advanced manufacturing technologies, processes, and materials that revolutionize product manufacturing. The NJMVP isn't just about financial support, however—the program is tailored to uplift businesses across the spectrum, including certified woman-owned, minority-owned, and veteran-owned businesses, those in opportunity zones, smaller enterprises with fewer than 100 employees, and those upholding labor rights through collective bargaining agreements—businesses just like Bestwork Industries for the Blind. This holistic approach not only strengthens New Jersey's manufacturing capabilities but also ensures a more inclusive and equitable growth trajectory for its industrial sector.

"The NJMVP was the catalyst to help us embrace automation and diversify into new lines-of-business," says Katz. "Bestwork is an employment program, so people frequently have the misperception that automation eliminates jobs; however, to the contrary, automation actually helped Bestwork create jobs.

"The funds awarded by the program

to purchase an automated folding machine enabled us to consolidate our folding and packaging area, which created three jobs for people who are blind on the folding machine. It also allowed us to upskill and repurpose employees from folding and packaging to our new Document Scanning and Digital Imaging line and Kitting, Packaging, and Light Assembly," Katz added.

Businesses like Bestwork are just one example of the diversity of 'MADE in NJ' manufacturers. There are over 10,000 manufacturing businesses that call New Jersey their home. From their incredible start to where they are today, these small-medium manufacturing businesses in New Jersey are pushing the boundaries of what is possible and supporting local communities through employment and opportunity. 🏠



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How High Are Your Standards?

Quality control is a strategic investment for your manufacturing business.

Show Customers that You Have High Standards

The value of delivering high-quality products and services cannot be overstated in the fast-paced and competitive modern manufacturing environment. Organizations that prioritize and invest in improving quality assurance processes reap a myriad of benefits that extend far beyond ensuring customer satisfaction. Let's delve into the key reasons why making strategic investments in quality assurance is a cornerstone of long-term success.

Consistency in Delivering Quality: Building Trust and Loyalty

One of the primary advantages of robust quality assurance processes is the ability to consistently deliver products and services that meet or exceed customer expectations. This consistency builds trust among customers, fostering loyalty and encouraging repeat business. By aligning organizational processes with customer requirements, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction, resulting in increased loyalty and a positive brand reputation. Satisfied customers become brand ambassadors, amplifying an organization's market presence and attracting new customers.

ISO Certifications: Elevating Credibility and Marketability

ISO certifications, such as ISO 9001, provide a structured framework for establishing and maintaining effective quality assurance processes.



Achieving these certifications demonstrates an organization's commitment to international industry standards, elevating its credibility and marketability. ISO certifications enhance trust among suppliers and consumers, opening new avenues for business partnerships and collaborations.

Increased Market Share and Sales: The Bottom-Line Impact

Studies consistently show that ISO-certified companies witness an

increase in market share and sales (Heras, Dick, Casadesús, 2002, "ISO 9000 registration's impact on sales and profitability A longitudinal analysis of performance before and after accreditation"). Customers actively seek out organizations with established quality assurance processes, as it instills confidence in the reliability and consistency of products or services. This investment in quality assurance directly translates into tangible business growth, expanding market presence and driving revenue.

Cost Savings and Efficiency Gains

Investing in quality assurance processes isn't just about meeting standards; it's about identifying and eliminating inefficiencies, reducing waste, and optimizing operations. Organizations that prioritize quality can experience significant cost savings and improved overall efficiency. By streamlining processes, businesses can allocate resources more effectively, enhancing their bottom line.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement and Sustainability

Quality assurance is not a one-time effort—it's an ongoing commitment to monitoring, evaluating, and improving organizational processes. This dedication to continuous improvement positions manufacturers to stay ahead of the competition, adapt to market changes, and ensure long-term sustainability. Investing in quality assurance becomes a strategic decision to future-proof the organization in an ever-evolving

business landscape.

Investing in improving quality assurance processes is not just a checkbox for compliance, it's a strategic decision that positions businesses for long-term growth and success. Beyond the immediate benefits of customer satisfaction, the long-term impact on brand reputation, market share, and overall business growth makes quality assurance a critical element of any forward-thinking business strategy. As manufacturing businesses continue to evolve, those that embrace and invest in quality assurance will undoubtedly lead the way towards a future of sustained operational excellence.

Resources Close to Home

Whether you're looking to achieve ISO certification for the first time, or you're looking to navigate recent updates, New Jersey's Manufacturing Extension Program has extensive experience with guiding manufacturers throughout the process. NJMEP is THE Manufacturing Resource and helps manufacturers with nearly any ISO-related needs—discover more by visiting NJMEP.org to schedule a complimentary businesses assessment today. 🍷





The Power of LEAN Facility Layouts: Driving Efficiency and Excellence in Manufacturing

In the dynamic manufacturing landscape, the evolution of LEAN thinking is at the forefront. While the industry has been abuzz with the term Industry 4.0, the transformative impact of LEAN methodologies when reviewing facility layouts cannot be overlooked. LEAN experts consistently witness significant and enduring improvements in manufacturing facility efficiency through optimized layouts. A few simple changes or approaching a project with a unique perspective can dramatically improve the productivity of an operation.

Common Challenges in Manufacturing Facility Management

Manufacturing facility managers today often grapple with familiar challenges such as the following:

- ✓ Operating at full capacity with production bottlenecks
- ✓ Long production and lead times
- ✓ An undesirable work environment

Whether you're new to LEAN principles or exploring opportunities for improvement, this article will assist you with understanding what a LEAN facility layout is and how it can help resolve some of your biggest challenges.

What is a LEAN Facility Layout?

An effective manufacturing facility layout is pivotal to successfully managing production. It not only impacts operational efficiency but also influences overall company operations, including production processes, inventory management, dispatch, and administration. An effective facility layout varies based on your desired outcomes. We define an effective facility layout as one that embraces LEAN principles to create an optimized environment. LEAN methodologies focus on waste elimination, delivering value to customers with reduced costs, improved quality, shorter lead times, and increased safety and morale.

LEAN facilities prioritize seamless material and information flow, minimizing handling time and floor space, shortening lead times, boosting productivity, and

enhancing quality. Whether you're designing new operations or revamping existing ones, a LEAN facility layout offers flexibility and efficiency in space utilization.

Differences Between Traditional and LEAN Facility Layouts

There are several key factors that distinguish a LEAN facility layout from a traditional one:

Process-Based versus Value Stream-Focused

Traditional facility layouts center around process-based departments, with similar machines grouped into functional work centers or workshops. This setup often leads to high work-in-process inventory and extended lead times. In contrast, LEAN facility layouts prioritize value streams, connecting processes horizontally to minimize material handling and streamline operations.

Cost-Per-Unit versus Flexibility

Traditional mass production relies on large equipment for cost-effective batch production. While these machines may be efficient on a per-unit basis, they impede material flow and are less adaptable to changing demands. Lean layouts opt for smaller, flexible equipment tailored to specific product families, enabling quick changeovers and smaller batch sizes.

Appearance versus Functionality

Traditional facility layouts may prioritize aesthetics over functionality, leading to excessive space between machines and work areas. This can result in increased work-in-process inventory and

inefficient material flow. In contrast, LEAN facility layouts focus on functionality, minimizing space between machines to prevent inventory buildup and enhance overall flow.

Characteristics of an Effective LEAN Facility Layout

Determining whether your manufacturing facility embodies LEAN principles involves assessing specific criteria that align with LEAN methodologies. First, consider the connection to customers: LEAN layouts prioritize customer-centric value streams, aiming for quick response times and defect-free products by aligning processes with customer demand to drive continuous improvement and satisfaction. Secondly, evaluate flow: a LEAN facility layout emphasizes continuous flow throughout all processes to minimize waste and ensure efficient material, information, and people flow, promptly identifying and removing any blocked flows. Next, focus on waste reduction: LEAN layouts target waste reduction across various forms, optimizing production with smaller batch sizes, reduced inventory, and streamlined processes. Additionally, assess flexibility: an effective LEAN layout is adaptable to changing demands, production methods, or equipment, accommodating future expansions and new product launches to maintain long-term operational agility. Lastly, consider the establishment of a new standard: LEAN facility layouts set a benchmark for operational excellence, promoting collaboration among stakeholders and fostering a

culture of continuous improvement throughout the facility. By evaluating these criteria, you can assess the degree to which LEAN principles are integrated into your manufacturing facility layout.

The Benefits of LEAN Facility Layouts

Implementing a LEAN facility layout may involve initial challenges, but the benefits far outweigh the efforts:

- ✓ Minimized material handling and floor space use
- ✓ Enhanced product quality and reduced defects
- ✓ Lower work-in-process inventory and shortened lead times
- ✓ Streamlined workflows and increased visibility of waste
- ✓ Cost savings and improved production efficiency
- ✓ Enhanced workforce safety, morale, and engagement
- ✓ Flexibility to accommodate future changes and expansions

A LEAN facility layout is a journey of continuous improvement, with room for refinement and enhancement. Embrace LEAN principles to drive efficiency, excellence, and competitiveness in your manufacturing operations. At NJMEP, we're committed to empowering businesses with the resources, tools, and insights needed to embark on this transformative journey towards operational excellence. 🧩



A New Chapter for NJ Manufacturing: NJMEP Entrusts State-of-the-State Summit to NJBIA

Partnership Set to Transform State Manufacturing Dialogue and Policy Influence

The New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) proudly announces the transition of the State-of-the-State of Manufacturing Summit to the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA), in a strategic effort to amplify the influence of New Jersey's manufacturing sector and foster a more business-friendly environment.

This initiative builds on NJMEP's achievements in elevating the industry's voice to the pinnacle of state leadership and cultivating a dynamic community of manufacturing leaders, thereby bridging the engagement gap that existed prior to the summit between the state and its manufacturers.

Recognizing the need for enhanced advocacy, NJMEP is passing the torch to NJBIA, whose robust lobbying capabilities and dedication to a pro-

business climate are seen as key to propelling this conversation forward. NJBIA's commitment to integrating the manufacturing sector's interests into its advocacy work promises to enact meaningful change, benefiting not only the manufacturing community but also the broader business landscape in New Jersey.

Peter Connolly, CEO of NJMEP, expressed his enthusiasm for this new chapter: "We are incredibly excited about the potential that lies ahead with this partnership between NJMEP and NJBIA. Handing over the reins of the State-of-the-State of Manufacturing Summit to NJBIA marks a pivotal moment in our journey to create a more manufacturing-friendly environment in New Jersey." Connolly continues, "Together, we stand on the brink of transforming the landscape for manufacturers across the state, ensuring their needs and contributions are fully recognized and supported at all levels of government. This is a testament to what we can achieve



when we unite our strengths for the greater good of New Jersey's economic future."

NJBIA President and CEO Michele Siekerka: "Manufacturing has been in NJBIA's DNA going back 114 years and we treasure our continuing partnership with NJMEP, the foremost provider of resources and programming for New Jersey manufacturers. As this crucial industry faces continued workforce challenges and costly burdens that chip away at our competitiveness, we are eager to build upon the success of the State-of-the-State Manufacturing Summit and use it to present, amplify and contextualize the needs and concerns of our manufacturers with policymakers to ensure a better business climate from which to operate."

This transition marks a significant milestone in the "Manufacturing Counts" partnership between NJMEP and NJBIA—a unified effort to bolster New Jersey's manufacturing sector. By ensuring a seamless handoff of the State-of-

the-State of Manufacturing Summit, both organizations underscore their commitment to supporting the local manufacturing industry while sharing a collective vision for a prosperous and vibrant business ecosystem across the state. 🌐

For more information about "Manufacturing Counts" partnership events and upcoming initiatives, please visit NJMEP.org and NJBIA.org.



About NJMEP: NJMEP helps to improve the profitability and competitiveness of small to medium-sized manufacturers in New Jersey. Backed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC), and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), NJMEP enables organizations to enhance their productivity and efficiencies, reduce

costs, and improve employee performance. For more than 20 years, NJMEP has used its extensive network of connections and proven track record of success to help manufacturers adapt to the latest innovative technologies and best practices to realize nearly \$8 billion in value.



About NJBIA: The New Jersey Business & Industry Association is the nation's largest and most impactful statewide employer organization. As the state's largest voice for business, NJBIA provides practical information, money-saving services and powerful advocacy in Trenton for its member companies in order to build a more prosperous New Jersey. Learn more about NJBIA at njbja.org and follow @njbja on X or Facebook.com/NJBIA.



New Jersey's State-of-the-State of Manufacturing Summit

Manufacturers across New Jersey gathered at the State House in Trenton on May 20 for the annual State-of-the-State of Manufacturing Summit

State-of-the-State 2024: Changing of the Guard

As reported previously, NJMEP made the strategic decision to transition stewardship of the event to the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA) in 2024. This was done as part of the "Manufacturing Counts" initiative to enhance advocacy efforts and amplify the influence of the state's manufacturing sector. This significant initiative builds upon NJMEP's successful efforts in elevating the industry's voice and fostering a dynamic community of manufacturing leaders. By entrusting NJBIA with the stewardship of the summit, NJMEP aims to bridge the engagement gap between the state and its manufacturers, leveraging NJBIA's robust relationships and dedication to building a more business-friendly environment.

The transition signifies a collaborative effort to propel the conversation forward and enact meaningful change benefiting both the manufacturing community and the broader business landscape in New Jersey. This strategic transition builds upon the "Manufacturing Counts" partnership between NJMEP and NJBIA, underscoring a shared vision for a prosperous business ecosystem in New Jersey, and reflects a unified commitment to supporting the local manufacturing industry.



A New Format

In the past, the event was hosted at the Trenton War Memorial, but this year's format changed to the Trenton State House, bringing manufacturers closer to the source—the legislators. The summit convened industry leaders, stakeholders, STEM firm executives, and legislators, providing a platform for discussions on key industry topics. This year's event featured some new aspects including a presentation of a Senate Resolution to the Manufacturing Counts partnership, a Legislative Manufacturing Caucus hearing, speeches from industry influencers like Michelle Siekerka (President/CEO of NJBIA), Peter Connolly (CEO of NJMEP), and Damian Bednarz (Managing Director of Attentive Energy Two), and networking opportunities at Cooper's Riverview.

Ahead of the event, NJBIA President and CEO Michele Siekerka expressed anticipation for hosting the summit at the State House, saying, "Manufacturing is a crucial industry for New Jersey's economy, with workforce, regulatory and cost challenges providing continuing headwinds. We thank the legislators, partners, and attendees who will be on hand for this event to discuss how we can advance manufacturing in New Jersey."



Networking and Collaboration

After completing registration, manufacturers and partners convened in Committee Room 6 of the state house to network and strategize for the day's events. Throughout the day, legislators, including Senators Testa, Greenstein, Bucco Jr, Zwicker, Johnson, Moriarty, McKeon, Amato Jr., Diegnan, and Steinhardt along with assembly members, visited to engage with constituents, learn about their businesses, and collaborate on addressing challenges and devising solutions.

During the Senate session, the manufacturers proceeded to the Senate chambers for the presentation of the Senate Resolution to the Manufacturing Counts partnership. Following this, they returned to the Committee Room to prepare for the Legislative

Manufacturing Caucus Hearing. More legislators joined them to continue discussions on the industry's needs for growth, with both Democrats and Republicans actively participating in networking and connecting with local manufacturers.

The Manufacturing Caucus

The Legislative Manufacturing Caucus commenced with remarks from Siekerka and Peter Connolly, who answered inquiries from co-chairs Senator Michael Testa and Senator Linda Greenstein. Subsequently, two manufacturers, Zago Manufacturing Company, Inc. and Falstrom Company, Inc. addressed the audience, followed by statements from Aaron Fichtner (President, NJ Council of Community Colleges) and Teik C. Lim (President, New Jersey Institute of Technology), emphasizing the significance of manufacturing and the pivotal roles of NJBIA and NJMEP in supporting the industry and the state.



The five main points the caucus focused on were:

- ✓ Restoring funding to key organizations that support manufacturing
- ✓ Lowering costs of doing business
- ✓ Improving workforce development

- ✓ Supporting an innovation ecosystem and infrastructure improvements
- ✓ Reducing burdensome over-regulation



A Thriving Future for NJ Manufacturing

The 2024 State-of-the-State of Manufacturing Summit in Trenton marked a significant milestone for New Jersey's manufacturing sector. By bringing the summit to the State House, the event facilitated direct engagement between manufacturers and legislators, fostering meaningful dialogue on critical industry issues. Key discussions centered on lowering business costs, improving workforce development, supporting innovation, and reducing regulatory burdens. The participation of industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders underscored the importance of collaboration in driving the manufacturing sector forward. With a shared commitment to supporting local manufacturers, New Jersey is well-positioned to capitalize on new opportunities and overcome ongoing challenges, ensuring a thriving future for the industry and the broader economy. 🇺🇸

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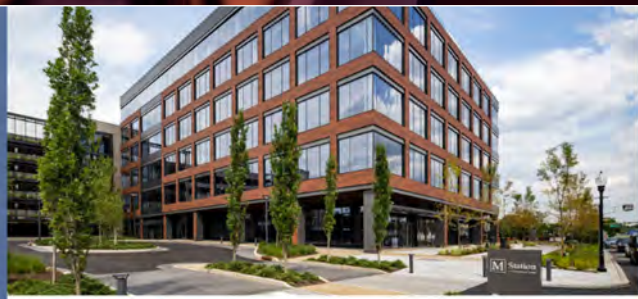
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New Jersey has rediscovered the importance and value of its 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing industry. The small and medium sized businesses that make up the majority of this critical industry contribute billions to the state's GDP. These businesses range from food manufacturing all the way to advanced semiconductor production and touch nearly every sector in between. As the state continues to recognize its value, New Jersey has been investing in manufacturing at a rate not seen in decades. Key state legislators and industry supporters have shared their thoughts on the industry with Manufacturing Matters magazine. Find their input and comments in the Trenton Talks section, below:

Democracy Dies In Darkness

Many of us have heard the saying before but now it resonates louder than ever with the need for greater transparency and accountability when it comes to our government and how it conducts its business and spends the people's money. "Democracy Dies In Darkness" is the official slogan of the Washington Post but what does it really mean?

It means that an open and accountable government is good government. When government is not transparent, doubt is created, and that is never a good thing and will only lead to resentment and people questioning government. It does not matter whether you are a democrat, republican or a member of another party, what matters is that if you are elected to serve the people of New Jersey, then the work you do, on behalf of your constituents and the people of New Jersey, should be open and predictable. The public has a right to know how our tax dollars are being allocated and spent and while we may not agree on the priorities and spending, it is important to provide as much transparency as possible so our confidence in the process and system is not affected. The Open Public Records Act, or better known as OPRA, was a game changer when it became law more than twenty two years ago. It afforded the public a means of securing documents and information about an issue. It could be contracts, bids, proposals, reports, emails, letters at the local, county and state level. People want to know that the process was fair and not abused and their tax dollars spent wisely. Now a bill sits on the Governor's desk reforming OPRA, limiting what is

shared and while we appreciate the strain and workload frivolous OPRA requests have placed on government, we caution the urge to restrict the process. Information is key and how that information is shared with the public will go a long way to assuage any concerns. Possible solutions could be to hold more public hearings, posting more information on websites, or in local newsletters, blogs, etc. which will help answer any questions the public may have on an issue. As a fiduciary of our tax dollars, our government has an obligation to explain the decisions they make before spending the people's money and answering any questions a resident may have in a clear and timely manner. An open government is a good government.



ANTHONY RUSSO

PRESIDENT, CIANJ / PUBLISHER AND CEO
OF COMMERCE MAGAZINE



A Day of Positivity for NJ Manufacturing

The 2024 State-of-the-State of Manufacturing Summit at the Statehouse in Trenton was a memorable day for many reasons, and we thank all of the manufacturers that made their way to join us under the golden dome.

First and foremost, manufacturing had the floor during the Legislative Manufacturing Caucus where I and other manufacturing and education leaders had the privilege of presenting the biggest concerns and opportunities within the industry.

But just as important, we had a very receptive audience in the caucus who listened, appreciated the challenges before us and committed to working on them.

During our discussions with the caucus, we focused on several areas including the restoration of funding to key organizations that support manufacturing, lowering the costs of doing business and supporting an innovation ecosystem and infrastructure improvements.

We had a big focus on workforce development from New Jersey Council of Community Colleges President Aaron Fichtner and New Jersey Institute of Technology President Teik C. Lim. The more we can do to entice, grow and keep our workforce, especially at a younger age, the better off manufacturing in New Jersey will be.

But more immediately, we believe there are steps we can take in the short term to at least reduce burdensome overregulation of the industry.

NJMEP CEO Peter Connolly, Falstrom Company CEO Cliff Lindholm, ZAGO Manufacturing CEO Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich and I all spoke to the need of even taking small steps to reduce costly red tape in manufacturing.

Senators Mike Testa and Linda Greenstein, who both serve as Legislative Manufacturing Co-chairs, agreed this should be a short-term focus for manufacturing this year. Both

questioned Gov. Phil Murphy's veto of a bill a few years ago that would have created the Government Efficiency and Regulatory Review (GEARR) Commission, a bill that had overwhelming legislative support.

It was both disappointing and puzzling that the governor would outright veto a bill that provided a practical opportunity to make state government more efficient and responsive to business in New Jersey, with literally no political angles to it.

But as we heard during our Legislative Manufacturing Caucus meeting, New Jersey businesses are indeed losing out by overregulation and we're hopeful the Legislature will work with us on a new bill to evaluate how the economic benefits of regulations compare to any onerous burdens.

Lastly, NJBIA and NJMEP were thrilled to receive a commendation through a Senate resolution, honoring our two organizations for our Manufacturing Counts partnership.

This is a partnership which coordinates efforts and resources to bolster advocacy and visibility for New Jersey's manufacturing industry. We remain very excited and committed to bringing the most out of this partnership to address challenges and improve conditions for manufacturing in our great state.



MICHELE SIEKERKA, ESQ.
PRESIDENT & CEO OF NJBIA &
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS



Too Often Untapped: How Investing in Veterans Will Help Power Our Workforce

Each week, as I ride the Amtrak train back and forth between Newark and Washington, D.C., I pass Trenton and can't help but notice the Lower Trenton Bridge – with its iconic “Trenton Makes, the World Takes” sign welcoming visitors into the city.

In the Garden State, we know that the sign is more than just a slogan. It's a testament to the generations of New Jerseyans who have gone on to share their innovations, talents, and passions with the world.

I'm fighting to bring New Jersey's legacy of excellence to life in the 21st century by investing in U.S. manufacturing and the advanced technologies of the future. By doing so, we will lower costs for families, support good-paying jobs for workers, and make sure that New Jersey is the best place to live, work, and raise a family for generations to come.

Congress has a key role to play in making that a reality. I am a member of the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, which is tasked with developing a strategy for winning the economic and geopolitical competitions of the next decade. I've heard from experts about how our adversaries across the globe are making major investments in the industries of the future – like semiconductors, electric vehicles, and artificial intelligence – to try and overtake

America's leadership role.

One critical issue kept coming up at each committee hearing and briefing – our workforce. The experts stressed that our workers have historically powered America's global economic leadership, but we risk falling behind without additional investment and support in workforce development opportunities. As a legislator, I knew that I had a responsibility to step up and do something about it.

But to craft meaningful, effective legislation, I needed to hear from New Jersey's manufacturers, workers, and businesses owners about the challenges they face and how I could best support them. So, last summer, I criss-crossed New Jersey's 11th District on an “Innovation in NJ Tour.” I visited labs and facilities at manufacturers like leading life science technology firm Zimmer Biomet. I held employee town halls at places like Onkos Surgical and Ferring Pharmaceuticals, where they are expanding manufacturing capabilities right here in New Jersey. I heard from business owners and manufacturers about the hits they've taken from unfair Chinese Communist Party practices like intellectual property theft and the illegal dumping of subsidized goods in U.S. markets. One business also shared that a key reason they are based in New Jersey is because of our pipeline of talented workers – a resource we must invest in to maintain our competitive edge.

That's why I introduced the American Jobs and Competition Plan – a package that will strengthen our relationships with allies across the globe, call out unfair business practices from our adversaries, level the playing field for businesses, and help build on our skilled workforce here at home.

In New Jersey, our incredibly talented

workers are the strength of our economy. Fueled by one of the nation's leading public school systems and world-class colleges and universities, we have a unique opportunity to grow and strengthen the workforce that powers us as a global manufacturing leader.

We must build on our advantages in training and education. And one way to do so is by investing in a community that is often left behind in these conversations – our veterans. As a former U.S. Navy helicopter pilot, I know that there is nothing that our men and women in uniform can't accomplish. Offering training in advanced manufacturing is a win-win for their successful transition into civilian life and for our economy.

In New Jersey, we're already investing in our veterans workforce through the Department of Defense's Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program. After voting to reauthorize this program in the National Defense Authorization Act, I fought alongside the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program to secure one of six grants awarded last year nationwide to create a Defense Manufacturing Community Consortium.

With this funding, NJMEP is working alongside Picatinny Arsenal, our community colleges like the County College of Morris, and business community, to recruit and train hundreds of veterans and their family members for careers in the defense manufacturing ecosystem.

Building on the success of these programs, I worked with NJMEP, New Jersey's labor representatives, and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association to introduce two bills to strengthen workforce opportunities for our veterans – the Service



member Apprenticeship Act and the College Opportunities for Service members Act. We joined forces at NJ-11's Fairleigh Dickinson University to introduce these two bipartisan bills that will strengthen the Department of Defense's coordination with colleges and businesses to make sure service members entering civilian life have the education and training needed to help move New Jersey's economy forward.

Thanks to the investments we've made, thousands of New Jerseyans will be ready to enter the workforce and meet the needs of the businesses and manufacturers that power our economy.

Armed with our world-class education system and robust workforce investments, New Jersey will be ready to lead the United States through the 21st century economy. And I'll continue to be your partner in building the 21st century workforce that will power American manufacturing, bring jobs back from overseas, and create a more affordable future for American families.

“ In New Jersey, our incredibly talented workers are the strength of our economy. Fueled by one of the nation's leading public school systems and world-class colleges and universities, we have a unique opportunity to grow and strengthen the workforce that powers us as a global manufacturing leader. ”



CONGRESSWOMAN MIKIE SHERRILL
REPRESENTING NEW JERSEY'S 11TH
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Investing in Our Supply Chain and Strengthening Our Workforce is Crucial to Our Economic and National Security

As the world continues to change in every aspect, the one constant that remains is the strength of America's manufacturing sectors. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic reminded us just how vital domestic manufacturing is and why it matters.

The manufacturing supply chain and workforce were most impacted by the pandemic's sudden upheaval of the economy. As we continue to come back stronger and better, we must be prepared for the next supply chain disruption. And we can be, while also building a strong American-made economy with American workers.

That's why I fought so hard for my Buy American provision in last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Buy American was my top priority in 2023 and it offers a solution to secure the supply chain while fostering a robust American-made manufacturing and industrial base that will create jobs. A win-win-win for everyone.

The new law, which was signed by President Biden in December, will reduce our dependence on foreign countries that threaten our supply chain and national security by increasing the percentage of American-made parts in the Major Acquisition Program to 65% by 2024 and 75% by 2029.

Buy American is the first step to ensuring a strong American made economy, and I'm proud of the work we did, but there is still more to do. An American made economy is nothing without an American workforce, which is our greatest asset.

As a former electrician, member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and co-founder of the Congressional Labor Caucus, I know that the human factor is the most difficult. Hiring, training, and maintaining our future American workforce remains one of the top issues I'm focused on in Congress.

A capable workforce with the necessary skills and qualifications is essential to our country and our economy. From the construction site as a former electrician to the halls of Congress, my experiences have shown that it is critical that we continue to invest in and expand workforce development programs like apprenticeships.

My Republican colleague Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and I introduced the Apprenticeship Hubs Across America Act to do just that and expand registered apprenticeship and job training opportunities across the country.



The Apprenticeship Hubs Across America Act will establish and support a national network of Apprenticeship Hubs that convene local workforce boards, community colleges, unions, and employers to help support the expansion of the extremely successful registered apprenticeship model—our country's most successful workforce training program. The Hubs will serve as the place where the future of our American workforce learn the skills and tools they need to be successful across all sectors, including manufacturing. Investing in, supporting, and training our workforce is paramount to the future of the American-made economy, and I'm fighting every day in Congress to do just that.



REP. DONALD NORCROSS
REPRESENTING NEW JERSEY'S 1ST
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Empowering the Next Generation of Manufacturers: The Future Makers & Creators Tour

What is the Future Makers & Creators Tour?

Last year the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP), in collaboration with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), launched a new initiative aimed at educating and inspiring students about modern manufacturing. The Future Makers & Creators Tour is not only about showcasing advanced manufacturing technologies but also about connecting local businesses with the future workforce.

Building Bridges Between Education and Industry

The Future Makers & Creators Tour aims to bridge the gap between education and industry by providing students with direct exposure to local manufacturers and industry leaders. By participating in the tour, manufacturers have the opportunity to inspire and attract the next

generation of manufacturing professionals while schools will provide students insights and background into rewarding alternative career opportunities in their area.

"By bringing manufacturers and schools together on this transformative journey, we can empower our future workforce with the skills needed to thrive in the constantly evolving manufacturing industry," says Peter Connolly. "Through collaboration, continuous training, and a commitment



to adaptability, we can shape a future where our employees are not just prepared for change but are driving it forward, ensuring success and sustainability for generations to come."

Inspiring the Next Generation

On its 21-county tour of New Jersey, The Future Makers & Creators Tour kicked off at Pleasantville Public Schools last year in Atlantic County and since then, the tour has visited two more schools in New Jersey—Piscataway High School in Middlesex County and Plainfield High School in Union County—where thousands of students were able to see behind the veil of domestic manufacturing. These events brought some of the latest advanced manufacturing technology for students to learn about and interact with, from augmented reality welding to 3D printers and robotic arms, students were immersed in hands-on activities that showcased the exciting possibilities of modern manufacturing.

On top of getting some hands-on experience with advanced manufacturing technology, students

also had the opportunity to connect with local manufacturers in their area. These local manufacturers were able to connect with students and provide a window into what an advanced manufacturing career can offer.

Peter Connolly, CEO of NJMEP, emphasized the importance of initiatives like this stating, "Participating in the Future Makers & Creators Tour is not just about exploring innovation; it's a strategic investment in workforce development."

Local manufacturers have been quick to adopt The Future Makers & Creators tour and throw their support behind the initiative.


Educating Students about Career Opportunities

Manufacturing is expected to have nearly 4 million job vacancies over the next decade, so it's more critical than ever for both educators and industry leaders to offer New Jersey's youth alternatives to the traditional four-year degree path. The goal of The Future Makers & Creators Tour is to educate and inspire the manufacturing workforce of the future. It's important for

schools to participate in the tour to ensure that their students get a more complete view of the available career paths and opportunities in their area.

Education in America is changing, with more students electing to enroll in trade schools and community college technical degree programs, over going the traditional college degree route. It's no longer realistic for schools to expect all students to elect the traditional four-year degree—especially as education costs continue to rise as wages continue to stagnate. According to New Jersey's Department of Labor and Workforce Development, a manufacturing career boasts one of the highest average salaries in the state, with manufacturing employees earning \$74,000 annually on average.

Get Involved

Whether you are a manufacturer looking to connect with future talent or a school eager to educate your students about their career options, there are various ways to get involved. For manufacturers, this is your chance to inspire the next generation by sharing your professional experience and shedding light on career opportunities in the local industry; and for schools, this is an opportunity to broaden your students' career potential and teach them about local careers and industry. Together, we're changing young people's perspectives and empowering New Jersey's youth to explore exciting possibilities in manufacturing! Visit NJMEP.org/MakersandCreators to learn more about how you can contribute to this initiative and help shape the future of manufacturing in New Jersey. 



NJDMCC Networking Event Connects the Dots for Defense Manufacturers

Hosted at Jersey Girl Brewing Co by NJMEP, the event brought together government, industry, and partners to build a stronger defense supply chain.

WHAT IS THE NJDMCC?

Defense manufacturers and Veterans are joining forces through the New Jersey Defense Manufacturing Consortium (NJDMCC) to combat veteran unemployment and strengthen the DoD supply chain. Through this program, manufacturers can learn about fast-tracking opportunities for becoming a DoD supplier, how to expand current government contracts if they're already a supplier, and how to access highly skilled Veteran applicants who've received nationally recognized certifications.

Manufacturers part of the NJDMCC can enroll their veterans employees or veteran family members in certification programs aimed at enriching their professional journey at no cost. The NJDMCC is dedicated to fostering veteran careers in manufacturing. The community also facilitates direct access to career opportunities available at member NJDMCC companies, promoting a seamless transition into fulfilling and meaningful employment for New Jersey Veterans and their families.

Together, we're helping to build a more robust defense manufacturing supply chain.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING CONNECTIONS

Manufacturers looking to acquire or expand DOD Contracts need to get involved with the NJDMCC, and that's exactly the message that was shared at the very first NJDMCC Networking event on February 1st, which took place at Mt. Olive's Jersey Girl Brewing Company.

Attendees included existing NJDMCC companies, program participants, and prospective manufacturers, all looking to expand their engagement within the defense manufacturing supply chain and connect with veterans who are looking to begin their careers in the industry.

NJDMCC partners include:

- ✓ Picatinny Arsenal Joint Center for Excellence for Guns and Ammunition
- ✓ Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst
- ✓ County College of Morris (CCM)
- ✓ The African American Chamber of Commerce of WNJ (AACCNJ)
- ✓ NJ State Veterans Chambers of Commerce
- ✓ Bridging the Gap
- ✓ The Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ (SHCCNJ)
- ✓ US Manufacturing Institutes
- ✓ The Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation (IACMI - The Composites Institute)
- ✓ ARM (Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing) Institute
- ✓ National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (NCDMM)

About a hundred local New Jersey manufacturers, industry partners, and program participants were in attendance, along with the NJMEP team and DoD entities. All these attendees came together to talk about fast-tracking defense contract opportunities, supply chain resilience, and

employment challenges. This event was an opportunity for NJDMCC manufacturers to explore the resources made available to them and learn more about the training and certification programs that is provided to veterans and their family members at absolutely no cost, all offered through the consortium. Attendees enjoyed good food, cold beer, and stimulating conversations.

Lance P. Lopez, Sr., NJDMCC Project Manager, Veterans & Community Recruitment at NJMEP, helped develop and create the NJDMCC Networking Event in hopes that it would provide an open forum for manufacturers to learn about the resources available to them in the NJDMCC, network with each other, and connect with DoD entities. "The NJDMCC is instrumental in fostering collaboration among New Jersey manufacturers, supporting the defense industry, providing career opportunities for veterans, and enhancing cybersecurity measures to protect critical manufacturing operations," says Lance. "This consortium serves as a vital link in strengthening the DoD supply chain and promoting economic growth and innovation in the region."

FIGHTING THE LABOR SHORTAGE

For manufacturers, this program provides access to highly qualified job candidates while also helping New Jersey's unemployed Veterans. The NJDMCC is instrumental in job development and creation by providing valuable resources and opportunities for veterans and their families, as well as supporting local manufacturers in expanding government contracts and becoming DoD suppliers.

Access to Talent Pool

By joining the NJDMCC, manufacturers gain access to a pool of talented job seekers who are either veterans or are related to veterans. This access to a diverse talent pool enables manufacturers to recruit skilled individuals who can contribute to job development and creation within their organizations.

Recruitment Support

NJMEP's expansive network and recruitment expertise help manufacturers identify, source, and recruit top talent. By leveraging various recruitment methods and resources, including community events like the NJDMCC networking event, career fairs, job boards, and partnerships with educational institutions, NJ manufacturers have access to partners that makes finding skilled individuals to add to their organization easier.

The NJDMCC's focus on career support, training, access to talent, workforce development, and recruitment contributes significantly to job development and creation within the manufacturing community in New Jersey.

EXPANDING OPERATIONS THROUGH MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

One of the key elements of the NJDMCC Networking Event was to provide existing and prospective consortium members with the opportunity to learn more about how the program can benefit their business. Representatives from the Picatinny Arsenal were on-site to answer questions about how the process works and how new manufacturers can expand their

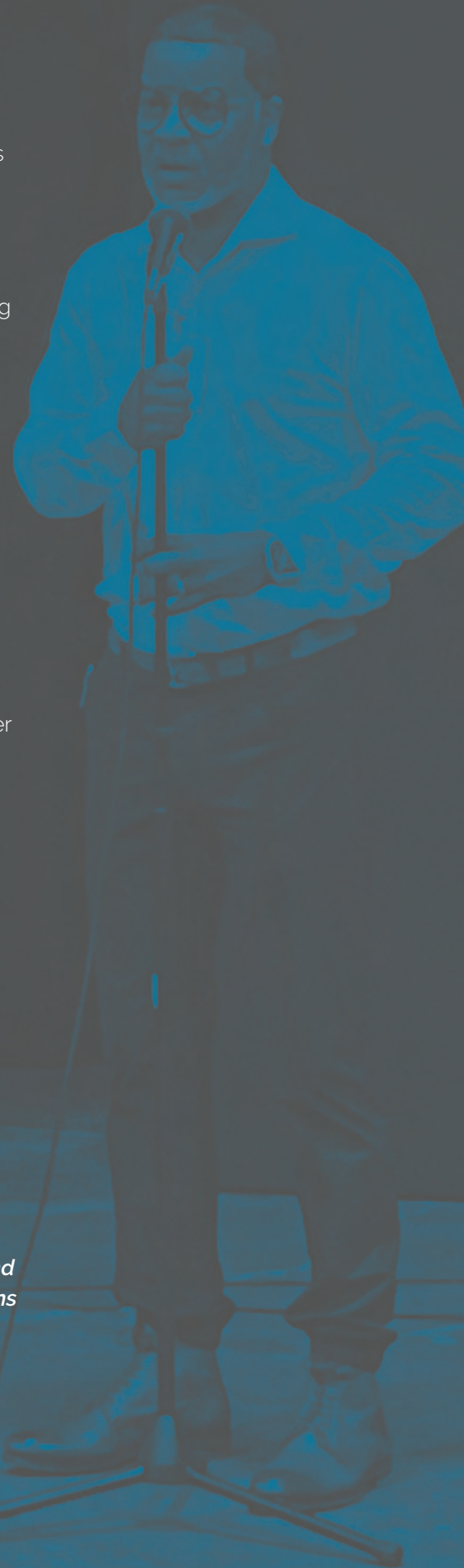
operations by getting involved with the NJDMCC.

"[This event] serves to shed light on the significant opportunity for manufacturers to expand their DoD contracts through the NJDMCC. This consortium offers manufacturers a gateway to unlocking new business prospects and enhancing growth within the defense manufacturing sector," said Torsten Schimanski, Chief Strategy Officer at NJMEP.

JOIN THE FIGHT

"Joining this consortium not only benefits individual companies but also strengthens the manufacturing ecosystem in New Jersey," says Peter Connolly, CEO of NJMEP. "All manufacturers should consider the immense value of being part of the NJDMCC and the positive impact it can have on their businesses and the broader community," he adds.

Join the NJDMCC today and discover a pathway to efficient and effective entry into DoD supplier status. For current DoD suppliers, this is an opportunity to broaden and expand your government contracts. By becoming a member of the NJDMCC, manufacturers also gain access to a valuable talent pool of job seekers, primarily consisting of veterans and their families, all who've received industry-relevant training and certification through NJMEP and its partners, ensuring they're equipped with the skills needed to thrive in the advanced manufacturing sector. Head over to njmep.org/njdmcc to register and join us in supporting our nation's veterans by contributing to a stronger, more resilient DoD supply chain right here in New Jersey! 🍷





NJMEP

Reinvesting In Workforce Development

New Workforce Training Facility

is geared to offer hands-on training programs tailored to meet the evolving needs of New Jersey's diverse manufacturing sector

NEW TRAINING CENTER IN CEDAR KNOLLS

NJMEP recently unveiled its brand new, state-of-the-art training facility at their Cedar Knolls headquarters. The goal behind the new training center is to bring essential skills training, along with more advanced skills, to today's manufacturing workforce. The training center will feature the latest innovations in advanced manufacturing technology and a large training space that can host trainees for any given course requiring hands-on equipment experience.

The Cedar Knolls Training Center features the following Advanced Manufacturing Technology:

- ✓ 3D Printers
- ✓ Robotic Arms
- ✓ HAAS PLC powered Desktop Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) mills

- 
- ✓ Augmented Reality ARC welding equipment
 - ✓ Laser Engraving Machines
 - ✓ The ability to provide custom training depending on the company/partner's needs

This state-of-the-art facility is geared to offer hands-on training programs tailored to meet the evolving needs of New Jersey's diverse manufacturing sector. The Workforce Training Center is designed to address the critical skills gap in the manufacturing industry by providing comprehensive training programs. Led by industry experts, these programs will equip participants with the practical skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's manufacturing environment. From technical skills to leadership development, the center aims to empower individuals with the expertise required to drive innovation and productivity in their

workplaces. Coupled with NJMEP's Open Enrollment Calendar, which puts all the latest industry training right at your fingertips, the NJMEP Cedar Knolls Training Center will be the epicenter for advanced manufacturing skills training!

NEW SKILLS FOR MANUFACTURING PROFESSIONALS

The Cedar Knolls Training Center is tasked with making Advanced Manufacturing training and careers more accessible to jobseekers looking to break into the manufacturing industry or to further advance their career. Additionally, manufacturers that need training but don't have the space to accommodate hands-on training can take advantage of this new facility. As New Jersey's premier training and consulting partner for manufacturers, NJMEP understands the difficult and time-consuming nature of training new employees and upskilling existing staff with the latest certifications and trainings—that's why the new training center is designed with making it easier for manufacturers to plan and execute new training programs.

Manufacturers in New Jersey can now seize the opportunity to leverage this cutting-edge facility to enhance their workforce capabilities. With a focus on hands-on learning and tailored development initiatives, NJMEP's Workforce Training Center promises to be a valuable resource for companies looking to invest in their employees' growth and success. To learn more about this exciting opportunity or to join us in shaping the future of manufacturing in New

Jersey, head to njmep.org/contact to discover how your business can take advantage of this new facility.

MOBILE TRAINING CENTER

In addition to the new state of the art training facility in North Jersey, NJMEP is also introducing a mobile training center equipped with cutting-edge manufacturing tech, ready to travel across New Jersey. Thanks to a sponsorship by NJEDA, NJMEP was able to secure this custom-built Winnebago to provide manufacturers in both North and South Jersey with on-demand training using 3D printers, robotic arms, CNC mills, and much more. The goal is to make advanced manufacturing skills accessible to job seekers and manufacturers, offering custom on-site training across North, Central, and South Jersey. The mobile training center will save manufacturers time, energy, and costs by replacing the need for sending employees to various sites across the state to get equipped with the latest industry training. Plus, NJMEP's The Future Makers & Creators Tour will also be making use of the mobile training lab, which is intended to inspire the next generation of makers by bringing modern manufacturing to schools statewide. Good news for manufacturers, as now they'll be presented with a unique opportunity to participate in the tour and engage directly with their future workforce!

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

The NJMEP Mobile Training Center aims not only to train existing manufacturing professionals but also to inspire the next generation

of makers and creators through its Future Makers & Creators Tour. This initiative offers schools in all 21 New Jersey counties a firsthand experience of modern manufacturing, allowing students to interact with cutting-edge technologies and industry professionals while exploring career paths in the field. Manufacturers are encouraged to join this movement by participating in the tour, engaging with students, and showcasing career opportunities in manufacturing. For those interested in learning more about this unique opportunity, head to njmep.org/makersandcreators to connect with NJMEP as they bring advanced manufacturing across New Jersey. 🌟



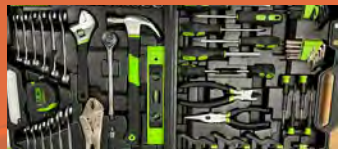
NJMEP

HANDS-ON ESSENTIAL TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

The modern manufacturing landscape is defined by a diverse array of cutting-edge technologies that revolutionize production processes and capabilities. Get hands-on training—from 3D printers to robotic arms and advanced CNC mills—these innovations represent the forefront of manufacturing efficiency and customization.

GENERAL MACHINING & TOOLING EQUIPMENT

- ✓ SAFE TOOL & EQUIPMENT HANDLING



- ✓ HAND TOOLS



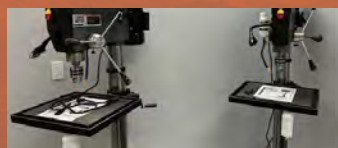
- ✓ BENCH GRINDER



- ✓ VERTICAL MILLING/ DRILLING MACHINE



- ✓ LATHE



- ✓ PRODUCTION DRILL PRESS



- ✓ BAND SAW

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING EQUIPMENT



- ✓ 3D PRINTERS



- ✓ ROBOTIC ARMS



- ✓ HAAS PLC POWERED DESKTOP COMPUTERIZED NUMERICAL CONTROL (CNC) MILLS



- ✓ AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) ARC WELDING EQUIPMENT



- ✓ LASER ENGRAVING MACHINES



How Can Manufacturers Remain Profitable in the Face of a Skilled Labor Shortage?

A combination of in-person work, low unemployment, and high industrial demand has turned a pre-pandemic labor shortage into a current-day labor crisis for industries that rely on specialized skills. The manufacturing industry has been among the hardest hit as the skills gap widens.

Grassi's 2024 survey of food and beverage manufacturers in the NYC metropolitan area found that an astounding 90 percent have concerns about staffing. Among them, companies that grew profits in 2023 were likelier to have implemented strategies to mitigate staffing risks. Nearly 60 percent credited improved employee productivity as a primary driver of profitability.

These high-performing manufacturers use the most effective staffing strategies, including converting temporary workers into full-time positions, changing shift schedules, offering bonus incentives, and implementing flexible schedules.

Of course, these solutions come with a price, and unsurprisingly, the high labor cost was the most common concern reported by respondents this year. Savvy business owners recognize that staffing strategies must be offset with cost-saving tactics to remain profitable.

When we spoke with the owners of these companies, several key themes emerged. First, prioritize employee retention to minimize the exorbitant costs of recruitment, training and understaffing. This can be achieved by recommitting to employee development, enhancing the employee experience, and offering a comprehensive benefits package.

It is also important to ensure that critical employees can envision their role in the business's future. Succession planning is not only about planning the owner's exit but also about paving the way for the next generation of leaders. Communicating the succession plan, identifying critical roles, and preparing your successors are essential to employee retention, which promotes engagement, investment, and long-term stability.

In this labor environment, it is unsurprising that investing in automation and improving operations were among the most common profitability strategies. Rising labor costs and shrinking talent pools require companies to run operations as efficiently and accurately as possible. Some of the most effective technology drivers of productivity and profitability cited were ERP systems, programmable logic controllers, automated batching systems, online point-of-service (POS) programs, electronic engineers, and robotic process automation (RPA).

Despite the industry trends toward technology adoption, a third of respondents cited automation and technology as challenges, which were just as high as staff recruiting and retention—one of the main challenges this technology intends to solve. This signals the importance of selecting

and implementing the right technology effectively.

While these strategies reflect trends in the food and beverage sector, they can be used by any manufacturer struggling to combat the skilled labor shortage. Combined with the other operational and financial strategies uncovered in the survey, workforce management will continue to propel the rising revenues and profits most respondents experienced last year.

Overall, businesses understand that they must invest in their assets to increase profits. Eighty percent of respondents expect to increase capital spending this year, which should be equally true of their most significant asset—human capital.



To download a complimentary copy of the 2024 State of Food & Beverage Manufacturing report, please visit grassiadvisors.com/2024foodmanufacturingreport.

Robert Grote leads the Manufacturing & Distribution Practice at Grassi. With more than 30 years of experience in public accounting, tax planning and

management consulting, Rob and his team of 12 dedicated partners and many industry professionals are dedicated to helping manufacturers and distributors succeed.



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GRASSI

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STRENGTH IN CERTAINTY



JOIN THE NEW JERSEY DEFENSE MANUFACTURING COMMUNITY

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!

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NJMEP

Helping New Jersey Manufacture Success

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



NEW JERSEY MANUFACTURERS

New Jersey manufacturers are invited to join this community of local businesses supporting the DoD Supply Chain.

- » Whether you're looking to expand your government contracts or become part of the DoD Supply Chain, joining this community will help!
- » Unlock access to a pool of talent
 - Job seekers are either veterans or veterans families
 - Job seekers receive valuable, industry-relevant training by NJMEP and partners



JOB SEEKERS

Veterans, soon-to-be veterans, and their families will have access to certification programs to prepare them for a career in the advanced manufacturing industry Access...

- » Career support and resume-building resources
- » Professional Development Opportunities
- » Certification Programs
- » Access to Career Opportunities at Member NJ Defense Manufacturing Community companies
- » **All at no-cost!**



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