

MANUFACTURING MATTERS

Helping New Jersey Manufacture Success

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Built To Last

MFG DAY 2024

Women in MFG



NJMEP

'MADE IN NJ'

MFG

DAY

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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

Manufacturing is evolving faster than ever, and staying ahead of the curve is crucial for success. With new technologies emerging and market demands constantly shifting, manufacturers need to be more agile and forward-thinking than ever before. From cutting-edge innovations to shifts in consumer preferences, the industry is transforming in exciting ways. To keep up, businesses need to be ready to embrace these trends, adapt their processes, and find opportunities to innovate. Staying informed about what's coming next is key to staying competitive in this rapidly changing landscape.

Manufacturing is entering an exciting transformation phase, with trends emerging that offer real, practical ways to thrive in an evolving industry. From closing the skills gap to adopting AI-driven solutions, manufacturers are finding new ways to meet the demands of today and prepare for the future. This year, it's all about how these trends—whether it's building a more agile workforce or embracing on-demand production—are helping businesses operate smarter, more efficiently,

and sustainably. Each trend presents an opportunity to stay competitive and keep pace with a rapidly changing landscape.

Workforce Development and the Skills Gap

As manufacturing rapidly evolves with automation and advanced technologies, the need for skilled workers has reached a critical point. Today's manufacturers are confronted with a challenge: an aging workforce nearing retirement, and a shortage of employees trained in key areas like robotics, AI, and data analytics. It's estimated that over 2.1 million manufacturing jobs could go unfilled by 2030, according to Deloitte. That's not just a workforce problem—it's a major business risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic made this issue even more pressing. With the rise of remote monitoring, data-driven operations, and AI tools, digital skills are more essential than ever. Manufacturers need to invest in upskilling and reskilling their

teams to keep up with these changes. By collaborating with educational institutions and creating apprenticeship programs, manufacturers can build a talent pipeline that ensures their future success. In today's tech-driven world, bridging the skills gap is key to maintaining a competitive edge.

AI-Driven Predictive Maintenance

In manufacturing, downtime can make or break success. That's where AI-driven predictive maintenance steps in, revolutionizing how manufacturers keep their operations running smoothly. By leveraging real-time data and machine learning, predictive maintenance can foresee equipment issues before they lead to costly breakdowns. With global supply chains still recovering and production schedules tighter than ever, avoiding unexpected downtime is crucial. AI helps manufacturers stay proactive, ensuring equipment is operating at peak performance and reducing strain on human operators. For businesses dealing with older machinery, AI-powered maintenance could be the key to unlocking higher productivity and reliability—both of which are vital in today's competitive market.

Advanced Materials and Lightweighting

As sustainability and efficiency become top priorities in manufacturing, the demand for advanced materials is on the rise. These new materials, like composites, bio-based materials,

and nanomaterials, are not only lighter but also stronger and more versatile. This trend, known as "lightweighting," is especially important for industries like aerospace, automotive, and electronics, where reducing product weight can significantly cut costs, save energy, and lower emissions. With increasing environmental regulations and consumers seeking greener products, manufacturers must innovate to meet sustainability goals. Advanced materials reduce waste and energy use during production and result in more durable products. Lightweighting is not only financially sensible, but it's also essential for manufacturers aiming to reduce their carbon footprint will stay competitive as global demand for eco-friendly solutions grows.

Customized Manufacturing and On-Demand Production

The demand for personalized products and the ability to produce them quickly has become a key competitive advantage in today's market. Technologies like 3D printing and digital manufacturing are transforming traditional production lines, allowing manufacturers to shift toward more flexible, on-demand models much easier than in the past. Businesses can now create tailored solutions that better meet customer needs. This shift cuts down on excess inventory and waste, while also allowing manufacturers to quickly react to changing consumer preferences. In industries like

healthcare, automotive, and consumer goods, personalization is becoming increasingly important. Businesses that can deliver custom products quickly are standing out from the competition. Plus, on-demand production reduces costs by minimizing the need for large-scale inventories, making manufacturing more sustainable. As digital technologies continue to evolve, customized manufacturing will be key to staying agile and responsive in today's fast-paced market.

These four trends—Workforce Development, AI-Driven Predictive Maintenance, Advanced Materials, and On-Demand Production—represent key areas of growth and innovation in the manufacturing industry. By staying informed and proactively engaging with these trends, New Jersey manufacturers can position themselves to thrive in a rapidly evolving marketplace. Check back every quarter to review the manufacturing trends that are elevating the manufacturing industry. As always, keep an eye on these emerging areas to ensure your business remains at the forefront of manufacturing excellence. 🌟

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



Reflecting on the Triumph of 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day 2024

A Celebration of Innovation and Growth

The 12th annual 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day, hosted on October 4th, 2024, at iPlay America in Freehold, NJ, marked another chapter in the ongoing success story of New Jersey's manufacturing sector. This year's event was nothing short of extraordinary, drawing record-breaking attendance and engaging participants with a packed agenda that honored the sector's resilience, innovation, and economic importance. Attendees, ranging from CEOs and manufacturing leaders to policymakers and students, gathered to discuss the evolving role of manufacturing in shaping New Jersey's economic landscape, and its significance.

Kicking Off with a Focused Vision

The day began with powerful opening remarks by Peter Connolly, CEO of NJMEP. His speech set an optimistic tone, offering a heartfelt welcome to all attendees and emphasizing the importance of manufacturing in New Jersey. This year, Connolly highlighted partnerships and South Jersey in particular, focusing on revitalization efforts in the region—a topic of increasing relevance as more manufacturers look to bolster local economies and bring new opportunities to the area. His message resonated with the crowd, inspiring attendees to focus on actionable steps that could drive growth in regions like South Jersey, where revitalization efforts are opening new doors for manufacturers.

Celebrating the Achievements of New Jersey's Manufacturers

The 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Awards are always a cornerstone of the event, and this year was no different. Early in the day, the first round of awards recognized companies that had made outstanding contributions to the manufacturing landscape. From small, family-owned businesses to large corporations, each honoree represented the ingenuity and determination that have long defined New Jersey's manufacturing community. Later in the afternoon, a second round of awards continued this celebration,

offering an opportunity to recognize even more businesses across various sectors. These accolades were not just a reflection of past achievements—they served as a reminder of the critical role manufacturers play in fostering economic growth, job creation, and technological innovation in New Jersey.

Breakout Sessions Focused on Industry Challenges and Solutions

One of the most engaging aspects of 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day 2024 was the array of breakout sessions, which catered to the diverse needs and challenges of today's manufacturers. Split into two parts, these sessions covered topics crucial to the future of the industry. Participants explored solutions to pressing issues, including the adoption of automation and technology, enhancing supply chain transparency and addressing workforce challenges. Veteran engagement and workforce development were key topics especially as manufacturers grapple with labor shortages and the growing skills gap. Participants left the sessions equipped with actionable strategies they could immediately implement within their organizations, highlighting the event's practical value in addressing immediate industry needs.

Shining a Light on Robotics and Technological Advancements

A highlight of the day was undoubtedly the Robotics Showcase and Competition. High school teams from across New Jersey demonstrated their innovative prowess through cutting-edge robotics projects, engaging in spirited competitions that captivated attendees. The atmosphere was charged with excitement as students demonstrated the future of manufacturing through their work. More than just a competition, the event emphasized the need to nurture the next generation of talent—an investment that will drive the future of the industry. The showcase also underscored how technological advancements can enhance production processes, pushing the boundaries of efficiency and innovation.

A Renewed Focus on South Jersey

This year's event placed a special focus on South Jersey, an area that has seen growing attention for its potential to become a key player in the state's manufacturing renaissance. Throughout the day, speakers and panelists highlighted the efforts underway to revitalize South Jersey's industrial base, from legislative support to new educational initiatives aimed at developing a skilled workforce. These discussions emphasized the

importance of regional collaboration and the unique opportunities that South Jersey presents for both existing manufacturers and new enterprises. This year's focus on South Jersey wasn't just a nod to ongoing efforts, but a call to drive further investment and foster growth in the region.

Looking Toward the Future of Manufacturing in New Jersey

As the event drew to a close, one message was clear: the future of manufacturing in New Jersey is bright. The day's discussions, breakout sessions, and award ceremonies all pointed toward a common goal—continued innovation, collaboration, and growth. With each new challenge that arises, New Jersey's manufacturers are proving themselves capable of adapting and thriving, and 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day serves as an annual reminder of their remarkable achievements.

There is no doubt that New Jersey's manufacturing sector will continue to grow stronger, driven by the innovation and collaboration that events like this help foster. 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day 2024 was more than just a celebration; it was a call to action, encouraging all those involved to push the boundaries of what's possible in manufacturing. As we look forward to next year's event, the momentum gained from this year's success will undoubtedly propel New Jersey's manufacturers to even greater heights. 🌟

GEMCO is Leading the Way: Creating a Culture of Continuous Learning in Manufacturing



SUCCESS STORY:
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

Background

Since its inception in 1916, GEMCO, originally known as The General Machine Company of New Jersey, has been the global authority in mixing and drying solutions. Operating from an 80,000 square foot industrial machine factory in Middlesex, NJ, GEMCO has consistently demonstrated innovation and engineering excellence. This family-owned business, spanning four generations of the Muench family, has installed thousands of powder blending and drying units in nearly 40 countries, serving diverse industries from pharmaceuticals to automotive. GEMCO's commitment to superior, heavy-duty design, continuous R&D, and dedication to operational excellence ensures that their equipment, which can last over 40 years, remains at the forefront of industry standards and best practices.

Challenge

One of the biggest challenges in manufacturing, particularly in New Jersey, is remaining competitive. New Jersey plays host to just over 9,500 manufacturers ranging from small to medium-sized enterprises to Fortune 500 manufacturers.

"A huge motivator in the industry is competition," says Casey Bickhardt, President and CEO of GEMCO. One of the key ways in which manufacturers like GEMCO stay competitive is by consistently upskilling and reskilling their employees. "Competition drives people to be a little bit better," Bickhardt says, "It's a motivator—it's not the ONLY motivator, but competition certainly is a motivator, and the market has a way of outpacing you, and it has a way of outpacing you really quick if you're not a learner."

Bickhardt, the fourth-generation leader of GEMCO, started her career in one of the most unlikely of places—sweeping the shop floor. From there, she grew in her career from the shop floor to purchasing, then to management, before finally ending up as president and taking over operations. Since she climbed through the ranks the old-fashioned way, she has a greater appreciation for the need to reinvest in all levels of your workforce and instill the same learner mentality at every

level of your operations.

"I'm huge into training, and I always like it when my employees grow from that training," says Bickhardt. "How are we thinking? If our thinking isn't growing more strategic then we're tactical," she adds, "Tactical means someone needs to tell us what to do—'Tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it'—that's the kiss of death for any company or any employee."

If competition in manufacturing is king, and personal improvement is the best way to improve production, then upskilling and reskilling the GEMCO team is what's prescribed regularly and often. In the case with GEMCO, NJMEP's account manager Jeff Meister knows that Bickhardt's a learner and likes to instill this same mindset in her team.

"Not only is the competition constantly upleveling, but we need to be upleveling, and if we're not, that market can outpace us in a blink of an eye," says Bickhardt, "And when it does, it's gonna hurt, it's gonna hurt real bad, and nobody wants to be in that situation."

Solution

The outcome of not reinvesting in your workforce or outpacing your past selves and your competition is a conversation Bickhardt doesn't even want to entertain. What would happen if GEMCO were to put reskilling and upskilling to the wayside?

"I try and talk frequently to everyone about our competition, and how we also need to be competing with ourselves from the basis of last year, so not reskilling or upskilling is an avenue I don't even want to explore," says Bickhardt, "What would happen if we don't do this stuff," she adds. The answer? "We would shrink, we would get smaller, we would lose an edge, we would lose technology if we don't grow," she concludes.



GEMCO is Leading the Way: Creating a Culture of Continuous Learning in Manufacturing

(continued)

Nine participants from the GEMCO team recently completed a PMP® Certification Exam Prep Course designed for project team members seeking to enhance their skills, individuals aiming to deepen their project management knowledge, and executives overseeing project management. The course offered a comprehensive and practical discussion on planning projects realistically to ensure success and managing their progress until completion. Participants gained powerful insights into project management, equipping them to handle time-phased work activities, solve problems, and create unique products or processes effectively. This training emphasized using common sense and determination to achieve successful project outcomes.

The course covered essential aspects of project management, including understanding project initiation, solving organizational challenges, and defining success criteria. Participants learned to identify and sequence tasks, realistically estimate time, and create practical schedules. The course emphasized assessing project cost sensitivity, ensuring quality, and effectively recruiting and managing teams. It also highlighted the importance of efficient communication, managing stakeholder expectations, and monitoring progress. Best practices for maintaining on-time project completion and strategies for rescuing delayed projects were also discussed.

"You could be performing as well as you did last year," says Bickhardt, "But it still wouldn't be as good as what you need to be this year."

PMP® Certification Exam Prep Course

Course Outline – Project Management Essentials:
9 Participants | 48 Hours Total | 6 Days

Results

"GEMCO wouldn't be better off without someone like [NJMEP's Account Manager] Jeff," says Bickhardt, "One reason I know this [project] was successful was because of Jeff. His leadership style is comprehensive and results driven."

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: \$1,000,000**
- ✓ **JOBS CREATED: 4**
- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$1,000,000**
- ✓ **JOBS RETAINED: 3**
- ✓ **COST SAVINGS: \$1,000,000**

Another key outcome from engaging with NJMEP for leadership training is a mindset shift. 🌈

"Communication," says Bickhardt, in a word, talking about her experience of climbing the ranks through the organization over the years beginning on the shop floor and upward to the C-Suite. She says, "I had to learn how to deal with different customers when I was in sales, so I learned a different way to speak and communicate at each one of those different levels. I think this leadership training is starting us off on that journey," adds Bickhardt.

Casey Bickhardt, President and CEO of GEMCO

HIGH-LEVEL LEAN TRAINING AT OFS CHANGES EMPLOYEE MINDSETS TO THINK LEAN



SUCCESS STORY: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Background

OFS is a leading provider of innovative optical fiber solutions, focusing on the design, manufacturing, and delivery of fiber optic products. With a rich history rooted in Bell Labs' pioneering work, OFS offers cutting-edge solutions for telecommunications, medical, industrial, and defense applications. The company emphasizes quality, performance, and sustainability, leveraging advanced technologies to meet diverse customer needs worldwide. By maintaining a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, OFS aims to drive progress in optical communications and beyond.

Challenge

Cari August, Manufacturing Manager for OFS, said the idea behind refreshing LEAN training arose from a need for a refresher following the COVID-19 pandemic, where she says she felt like a new employee even though she'd been working at OFS for over two years. She wanted to refresh not only the production teams, but also management personnel so that all employee mindsets were aligned and thinking LEAN. On top of that, the company was experiencing a rapid uptick in production volumes.

"We had a particular production area where the volumes were higher than we expected sooner than we expected," says August, "So we were looking to address some capacity constraints."

August, along with her Production Manager Maria Fernandez and HR Manager Molly Griffith, set out to work with their NJMEP Account Manager to find ways where they could have the biggest impact on aligning their production and management teams, while also addressing their new capacity constraints. Having completed successful LEAN training in the past, it was decided that a high-level LEAN overview is exactly what OFS needed to tackle its challenges.

Solution

NJMEP's expert resource provided a high-level review of LEAN Enterprise Principles through consultation, facilitation,

and training. The project aimed to reinforce LEAN concepts among OFS supervisors and engineers via onsite sessions involving teaching and hands-on application. The proposal included a LEAN overview and a targeted Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) event—an iterative process integral to LEAN management, focusing on continuous improvement of products, people, and services through planning, executing, checking results, and implementing process improvements. The project was estimated to require 10 hours of work. The high-level LEAN overview project was conducted in two sessions over two days onsite at OFS, combining teaching and hands-on application. Sessions were scheduled at mutually convenient times, minimizing operational impact. A single point-of-contact at OFS coordinated efforts, and key personnel were involved as needed.

NJMEP's resource prepared and conducted two one-day sessions to implement process improvements. Day one included a LEAN overview with a high-level review of major LEAN tools and methods through lectures and discussions. Targeted operations for PDCA demonstrations were identified. The implementation phase included a targeted PDCA event to apply proposed improvements, providing hands-on training and reinforcing the overview training. The goal was for OFS staff to understand the need for these improvements and how they would enhance company operations, making work more enjoyable and fulfilling by eliminating chaos and waste.

Results

One of the most notable results from the recent High-Level LEAN Overview project is a change in the mentality and behavior of technicians, says Maria Fernandez, Production Supervisor. "What I see and I like best is that [the project] has also promoted teamwork," adds Fernandez.

As with most LEAN training, the work doesn't stop at the end of a successful LEAN project. LEAN thinking is all about continuous improvement, and that's something Cari August and the OFS team have certainly taken to heart.



HIGH-LEVEL LEAN TRAINING AT OFS CHANGES EMPLOYEE MINDSETS TO THINK LEAN

(continued)

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: \$200,000**
- ✓ **JOB RETAINED: 2**
- ✓ **COST SAVINGS: \$50,000**

Molly Griffith, HR Manager at OFS, says that engaging with NJMEP has helped take some of the burden off the shoulders of a small company like OFS. "With NJMEP being as proactive as they are with reaching out and creating connections for us and offering services, it's just taken a lot of that admin work out of trying to find resources manually on our own." 🌈

"NJMEP's support has helped us to engage with New Jersey employee upskill grant opportunities that would otherwise be too cumbersome for us to take advantage of," says August. "I would definitely recommend companies investigate NJMEP and what they can offer."

Cari August, Manufacturing Manager for OFS

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The Brenner Legacy: Woman-Owned, Veteran-Supporting, 100% Made In America

WHO IS BRENNER METAL?

Brenner Metal Products Corp. is a family-owned business that has proudly served the U.S. military and defense sectors for over 60 years. Headquartered in Passaic, New Jersey, the company specializes in manufacturing field hospital equipment and emergency management products for the United States Department of Defense (DoD), as well as state and local government agencies. With a legacy of dedication to quality and innovation, Brenner Metal plays a vital role in supporting the nation's Warfighters and National Emergency Preparedness by delivering reliable, mission-critical products that are entirely sourced, machined, and assembled in the United States—something unlike any of their competitors.

In 2011, Christine Brenner unexpectedly inherited Brenner Metal after the sudden passing of her husband. Despite having no prior experience in manufacturing, she quickly learned the business from the ground up. Faced with an uphill battle and a background in Real Estate development and Finance, Christine chose to dig in, get her hands dirty, and revamp operations, focusing on innovation and customer needs. When the U.S. Army updated specifications for field hospital beds, Brenner Metal missed the opportunity, leading to a decline in contracts. Determined to turn things around, Christine herself worked with a contracted engineer to re-engineer the beds and became the sole-sourced manufacturer for the U.S. Army, regaining key contracts and transforming Brenner Metal Products into the thriving manufacturer we see today.

Fast forward to now, and Brenner Metal Products specializes in producing military-grade medical field equipment while maintaining a commitment to U.S.-based manufacturing and supporting veterans through charitable initiatives. Despite common challenges like aging equipment and workforce shortages, Christine is committed to continuing to grow the company, keeping manufacturing in New Jersey, and ensuring it's done right. For Christine, it's all about legacy and carrying on the Brenner tradition.

A MANUFACTURING FAMILY

Brenner Metal is a New Jersey manufacturer that's deeply rooted in the state's industrial sector, dating back well over half a century—one that's committed to remaining local and loyal to its workforce and community. Many of Brenner Metals' workers can count their tenure in decades, owing to the family-like nature of how Brenner Metal has operated throughout the last fifty-plus years.

"We're 100% woman-owned and operated," says CEO Christine Brenner, seated beside her sister and second-in-command, June Abbott, COO of Brenner Metal. "[June] is literally my right hand along with my foreman who has also been with the company for over 30 years, and we have another employee who is deaf and has been with us for over 40 years."

"We're a small team—currently I have ten employees—during Covid I had 25. They are my family and even when I have no work everybody gets paid to either stay home or come and sweep the floor," says Christine.

As we walked around the Brenner Metal



manufacturing facility and talked about the company history and challenges New Jersey manufacturers are facing, one thing was evident—Christine's involvement with the business is deeply personal. We looked at the pallets of inventory of cots, beds & litters, stopping at each workstation to observe and even have a brief chat with Brenner's workers, Christine knew every worker's name, history, tenure, and I'd wager a whole lot more than that. It's evident how deeply she cares about keeping her workers working against all odds—even in the periods where the cycle ends and contracts go dormant until the next round of large purchases come in. Something Brenner is always prepared for evidenced by the piles and piles of pre-cut and machined components and parts.

THE ARCHETYPE FOR WOMEN MANUFACTURERS

When you hear the term woman manufacturer, Christine Brenner is exactly the type of woman that comes to mind. "She's a businesswoman in general, she's had a few businesses in her background," explains June, talking about Christine's storied career.

Unfortunately, when Christine took on the leadership role for Brenner Metal there weren't really any female role models that could offer guidance or that she could lean on. Back in 2011 when she took over, 'women in manufacturing' wasn't a thing. Well, women have always been in manufacturing, but they weren't really talked about or highlighted. That hadn't really happened in the industry yet. Fast-forward to today, events like the annual Women in Manufacturing Luncheon, which brings together women leaders in the industry to discuss key issues, mentoring opportunities, and give the guidance and support that 2011's Christine

Brenner could've used, are showing that women in manufacturing are very much a thing.

According to the latest available data in NJMEP's 2024 Industry Report, women account for 35% of the manufacturing workforce. Yet, women only account for 1 in 4 management positions in manufacturing. Christine is a trailblazer in that regard, for as you climb the executive ladder women become less and less present—and how did she do it?

"I didn't have anyone to call," says Brenner, "I threw myself in it after obviously mourning the loss of my husband. It was two weeks later when I thought to myself, 'Oh my god, he has a business,' because you don't think about that," she adds. "I literally just didn't sleep for two weeks and then just showed up here that Monday morning, and my husband had a secretary and a foreman that had been here for forty years, so I leaned on them a lot for my first year."

"I asked my foreman to put me on every single machine," says Brenner, "So I worked on every machine and memorized every single part." Brenner adds that this hands-on learning and having to know every angle and aspect of the business is just a part of the fabric of her personality. "I studied every drawing, I studied every material, every cut length, every piercing—I enjoyed it," says Brenner.

It's also a way that she processed her grief, getting intimately involved in every aspect of the business that the Brenner family built from the ground up and that her husband continued to grow after taking over from his father. "Looking back, I just loved it. I just fell in love with this business and what we do here," Christine adds.

When faced with the question of what it

takes to be a woman in manufacturing, Christine puts it plainly—you've got to be tough, you've got to be smart, and you've got to earn your seat at the table.

"You have to have the personality to be extremely tough and extremely on-point to be in this business, because it's a tough one as far as negotiating prices and being respected, and I soon earned it," says Brenner. Today they're still dealing with a lot of their original manufacturers and suppliers. It all comes back to a legacy that Christine and June are trying to uphold and build upon—one that's proudly Made in America and one that values the localized impact of a domestically manufactured product. One that has ties and roots so deeply woven into the local community and framework.

In addition to leading the company, Christine is also the founder of the Brenner Foundation, a nonprofit whose mission is to provide humanitarian relief by supporting local veterans and addressing homelessness, demonstrating Brenner's strong commitment to giving back to the community and helping those in need. Through the Brenner Foundation, Christine aims to give back to veterans, homeless shelters, and emergency responders. The foundation supplies folding cots to tri-state area shelters and emergency situations, ensuring that those in need have a comfortable place to lay their head. The foundation's mission aligns with Brenner's long-standing dedication to serving both her community and the broader emergency response efforts.

STICKING TO THEIR GUNS

When we talk about products that are 'Made in America' what a lot of Americans don't understand is that doesn't exactly mean what we think it does. A lot of

times products are only required to have a certain percentage of production occurring within the United States. For Brenner Metal, however, when they say their products are American Made, they truly mean just that—100% of their products are sourced and manufactured right here in the USA. It's something they take great pride in and something they deserve to be recognized for, because it's not an easy feat. Also, when and if things ever go sideways again, we are not depending on waiting for a container to enter our ports to be able to make something. The aluminum is purchased here, the painter and the machine shop are all here. There will be no delays.

"We really take pride that every part and every piece is American Made," Christine explains. "We are really proud about sticking with Made in America and losing so many contracts by not jeopardizing, by not compromising, and not sourcing parts out overseas." Why bring something into my shop from out of the Country, when my friend can weld it or sew it down the block from me? I am supporting him and that really matters to me. He needs the work, and he needs to stay in business too." We are making a difference and together putting that U.S. American Flag stamp our work.

Even though contractors like Brenner are allowed a certain percentage of outsourcing, that's one area where Christine is unwilling to falter in her loyalty to sourcing and producing domestically. This obviously creates some challenges and difficulties when competing with overseas producers who can offer a product at a third of the cost of Brenner's—inferior quality, of course, but that doesn't seem to bother some buyers looking to save money and on budget restraints.

THE BRENNER LEGACY

When asked what's next for Brenner Metal the pair talks about the 'how?' and 'why?' of getting involved with an organization like NJMEP.

"That's why we got involved with NJMEP," explains June, "As Federal Contractors we supply field medical equipment to the U.S. Military. For Emergency Preparedness Management, we're trying to introduce ourselves to work with FEMA, Red Cross, and local purchasing in counties and state for arenas, hospitals, firehouses, and shelters," she adds. And navigating through becoming a supplier is not an easy task.

One of the key issues Christine finds with trying to supply their products to local and state entities is that most of the products that are being supplied are not American Made. Most of these state and local entities are purchasing 'throwaway' cots and litters—as Christine calls them—from U.S. distributors that are bringing them from overseas because they can easily outbid American manufacturers with their lower quality and lower cost products. Christine notes a lot of the issues with how the government contracting works in this arena—but what are the solutions? Christine has that figured out as well.

"What I'm suggesting is that the State of New Jersey slot percentages of contracts mandatory to New Jersey manufacturers," says Brenner. "As a New Jersey manufacturer, you should have priority over out-sourced products; and you should either subsidize the pricing discrepancies or slot a percentage of contracts to the manufacturers in this state. Standing behind products Made in America and the contributions that we make to our Country, is a win-win for all of

us" adds Christine.

Beyond that, Christine talks candidly about what the future holds for Brenner—both the family and the company as the two are virtually intertwined. She speaks glowingly about her son who has little interest in taking over the family business—a cautionary tale we hear time and again in deeply-rooted industries like manufacturing. Something Christine is surprisingly okay with, echoing the sentiment of many parents that she just wants what's best for her son. Naturally, she wants him to pursue what's going to make him happy in life, which is his career in Finance. And yet, there's still that tug, that itching desire to have what you built carry on and continue the legacy that stands as a testament to your family's name.

"Brenner has a legacy," says Christine, "The Brenner name is known in my business. Brenner products are recognized for their quality and superiority—and our Field Bed is specifically kitted in all Military field hospitals," she adds. That's something she wants to keep—that legacy that her father-in-law, husband, and now she has helped build.



BRENNER
ADJUSTABLE FIELD
HOSPITAL BED



Fostering Inclusion and Opportunity: Spectrum Works and ZAGO Manufacturing's Inspiring Partnership

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN MANUFACTURING

Spectrum Works and ZAGO Manufacturing Co. have joined forces to create a more inclusive workforce by integrating autistic individuals into meaningful employment opportunities. Spectrum Works is a non-profit organization located in Secaucus, New Jersey, that offers job training, internships, and employment opportunities to young adults on the autism spectrum. Founded and spearheaded by CEO Ann Marie Sullivan, Spectrum Works addresses the high unemployment rate among autistic individuals, helping them achieve economic self-sufficiency. One of Spectrum Works' most critical initiatives is connecting with businesses in New Jersey to help foster a symbiotic partnership between this untapped talent pool and employers.

Ann Marie Sullivan met ZAGO's Co-Founder & CEO Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich in 2022, a fortuitous meeting that has spurred a fruitful partnership for both New Jersey based companies. "I met Gail and immediately she said we definitely want to figure out a way for us to work together," says Sullivan, "and she introduced me to [NJMEP], and right away she asked if we could participate in 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day, and we were put on the alternative workforce panel." 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day is the East Coast's largest annual manufacturing networking event, which boasts nearly a thousand annual attendees, so an exposure opportunity like this for Spectrum Works was a great opportunity to get in front of potential partners. "That was a really great entryway, not only to working with ZAGO, but it gave us the opportunity to give everyone at

Manufacturing Day an opportunity to learn about who we are and the work that we do," Sullivan adds.

Recent reports estimate that nearly four million jobs will need to be filled in manufacturing in the next decade. To fill these vacancies, industry leaders will need to educate their communities about modern manufacturing, encourage more women to pursue careers in the field, invest in community partnerships, and look for alternative talent pipelines to meet the demand for skilled labor.

ZAGO Manufacturing Co., a family and certified woman-owned business based in Newark that makes sustainable sealing fasteners and switch boots—holds partnerships like theirs with Spectrum Works in high regard, says Kim Keating, Director of Customer Success at ZAGO, "We practice diversity, equity, and inclusion, and that means everybody really, so even if we're not sure how to integrate a student or worker right away, we're going to take our time and figure it out," she adds, "And Ann Marie and Spectrum Works are the best partners to work with for that."

GETTING THE PARTNERSHIP OFF THE GROUND

This past February, Spectrum Works placed their first trainee, Jeremy, at ZAGO. After demonstrating exceptional skill and dedication during his internship, Jeremy has now been hired by ZAGO Manufacturing. "We're thrilled to have Jeremy as part of our team," says Friedberg Rottenstrich. "He has shown remarkable growth and is a valued member of our workforce."

"Our goal was to launch our program

FUP



STATEWIDE HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF NEW JERSEY

THE COUNTDOWN IS ON FOR AN EPIC SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR

ARE YOU READY?

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Networking*



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DIVERSITY
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November 19, 2024



Awards Gala

December 5, 2024



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND QUESTIONS, PLEASE REACH OUT TO:
CHLOE FERNANDEZ - CFERNANDEZ@SHCCNJ.ORG
WWW.SHCCNJ.ORG



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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Helping New Jersey Manufacture Success

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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!**

on-site at Zago, however, unforeseen transportation challenges delayed getting students to Zago's facility for training," says Sullivan. The Spectrum Works team and their students remained undeterred. "The students practiced and assembled Zago's products at our facility to ensure they were fully prepared when we arrived at Zago," adds Ann Marie.

Beyond offering job-specific skills training, the internship program aims to equip students with vital life and leadership abilities essential for thriving in advanced manufacturing careers. "We discovered that the experience extended far beyond simply assembling products; it became a platform for teaching teamwork and leadership," explains Sullivan. "Each participant had the chance to lead and collaborate with others, which not only enhanced their technical skills but also significantly boosted their confidence and self-esteem. It was truly a wonderful opportunity for growth."

A LITTLE OPPORTUNITY GOES A LONG WAY

Ann Marie emphasizes the importance of providing support and opportunities to alternative workforces, including autistic individuals, "We encourage companies to consider alternative workforces, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those on the autism spectrum. We want them to recognize that these individuals can be excellent employees; they just need the right support and opportunities." Sullivan also highlights the practical benefits for employers, outside of just meeting their DEI requirements, noting that autistic employees often exhibit low turnover rates. "Turnover is low

because when they feel valued, they prefer to stay rather than move to another company," she adds.

ZAGO Manufacturing's participation in this internship program has proven their continued commitment to diversity and inclusion. "Everyone at ZAGO is so caring, they make sure Jeremy feels included, supported, and empowered," says Sullivan. ZAGO has demonstrated a commitment to creating an environment where autistic employees can thrive. "We had our annual Autism Acceptance Day celebration at ZAGO and it went really well, all their employees participated, and it was just a great feeling to hear how they cared about Jeremy."

Keating appreciates Spectrum Works for their dedicated approach. "What we loved about Spectrum Works, Ann Marie, her team and coaches is that they really care, and they're patient, and they take time. It takes a village and we wanted to make sure whomever came on we could provide an environment where they could flourish and learn."

SETTING THE STANDARD

The program's success is evident in the opportunities it provides. "Opportunities are not limited at all. That's exciting for anyone to see when it comes to manufacturing," says Keating. She emphasizes the importance of giving people the opportunity to flourish. "No one fits in a box, it's amazing when you can see people flourish no matter who they are. You just have to give them the opportunity and some support."

By partnering with companies like ZAGO, Spectrum Works aims to create more inclusive workplaces,

fostering self-confidence and skills among participants, and promoting societal acceptance of neurodiversity in professional environments. Through this partnership, Spectrum Works and ZAGO Manufacturing are setting a powerful example of how inclusive employment practices can benefit both individuals and businesses. Their collaboration not only supports autistic individuals in gaining meaningful employment but also enriches the workplace with diverse talents and perspectives.

ZAGO's Keating encourages other manufacturers to explore similar programs, stating, "We're really happy with Jeremy and with Spectrum Works. I would encourage other manufacturers to do the same, to look into the program, to go visit Spectrum Works, go meet the students—you can't really get a good understanding of how beneficial this program is until you see it for yourself."

What's next for Spectrum Works? Spectrum Works recently expanded their program by launching a new out-of-school youth internship initiative, which focuses on placing autistic adults who are no longer in the school system. This initiative has already placed ten students in positions. Jeremy is the second graduate of the program, and the second to be hired by a company. Nineteen individuals are participating in the program, with the goal of increasing participation to 28 students by the end of the year. This expansion aims to provide more autistic individuals with valuable work experience and opportunities in the manufacturing sector, further enhancing the inclusive work environment that both organizations are committed to fostering.



‘MADE in New Jersey’ Manufacturing Day 2024 ‘Manufacturer of the Year’ Finalists

Every year, manufacturers from across New Jersey are nominated for the prestigious ‘Manufacturer of the Year’ award where they are honored during NJMEP’s ‘MADE in New Jersey’ Manufacturing Day awards ceremony.

Every award has its own distinction and acts as a way to recognize the most influential companies and individuals and the impact they have on both the Garden State and the country.

The ‘Manufacturer of the Year’ award is divided into three categories based on company size—small, medium, and large manufacturers—allowing businesses of all scales to be acknowledged for their hard work, resilience, and innovation. Beyond these categories, several special awards celebrate unique achievements within the industry. The Rising Stars award honors emerging women leaders who are making waves in manufacturing. The Leaders in Life Science award highlights companies pushing the boundaries of life science manufacturing, while the Innovator of the Year award celebrates manufacturers that have embraced cutting-edge technology and forward-thinking processes to lead the way in their field. This year’s winners were revealed on October 4 during the ‘MADE in New Jersey’ awards ceremony on National Manufacturing Day for their continuous efforts in advancing the industry.

'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Small | 50 or Less Employees



Shovlin Mattress Factory



Shovlin Mattress Factory in Fanwood, NJ, has long been a leader in the mattress industry, distinguished by its customer-centric and employee-focused approach. Founded on a commitment to quality and community, Shovlin not only prioritizes exceptional product standards but also fosters a supportive work environment. The company has introduced ESL courses for employees, organized family-inclusive team-building events, and maintains a fun, family-oriented brand image. Shovlin's luxury mattresses, featuring locally sourced materials and a traditional two-sided design, set it apart from competitors. The company's operational efficiency, ongoing employee development, and strong supplier relationships contribute to its impressive growth and reputation for excellence.



Electro Product Management Inc.

epm

Electro Product Management Inc. (EPM) is a leader in the Defense and Aerospace industry, recognized for its commitment to quality and reliability, winning the Quality Magazine Leadership Award for three consecutive years. EPM focuses on recurring orders, ensuring consistent results and long-term client trust. The company invests in cutting-edge test equipment and software-controlled process routers to optimize production, maintaining a competitive edge. EPM's stable workforce, many of whom have been with the company since its inception, supports its reputation for reliability, while its efficient supply chain ensures on-time delivery and high standards of quality.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Small | 50 or Less Employees

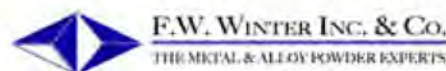
FroDo Baking Company



FroDo Baking Company is a leading frozen dough manufacturer recognized for its dedication to quality, innovation, and community impact. As a top supplier to major grocery chains across the U.S., FroDo exceeds market demands through operational excellence, integrating advanced ERP systems and investing in cutting-edge manufacturing equipment to ensure high-quality products. The company fosters a collaborative and transparent management philosophy, prioritizes workforce development with comprehensive training programs, and excels in supply chain management for reliable, timely delivery.



F.W. Winter Inc. & Co.



F.W. Winter Inc. & Co., founded in 1983 by Friedrich Winter, is a distinguished manufacturer of specialized metal powders and alloys. With a legacy of quality and consistency, the company has grown into a global leader, driven by the leadership of Friedrich Winter and his daughter, Devon Winter, the COO. F.W. Winter is noted for its operational excellence, leveraging advanced technologies and lean manufacturing principles to maintain high standards. The company emphasizes employee empowerment and continuous development, fostering a collaborative culture. Its robust supply chain management ensures reliable product delivery, even amidst global challenges. This dedication to excellence and innovation underscores F.W. Winter's standout position in the industry.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Small | 50 or Less Employees



Brewster Washers

Brewster Washers
Custom Precision Parts Manufacturer

Brewster Washers, established in 1919, has been a leader in precision washers, shims, and discs for over a century. Known for their superior quality and reliability, Brewster Washers specializes in custom-made parts for diverse applications, including guidance systems and space projects. Under new leadership, the family-owned company continues its legacy of innovation with advanced technologies like wire EDM, cross-training its workforce for greater efficiency, and maintaining a 90%+ on-time delivery rate. Committed to excellence, Brewster Washers also prioritizes employee development and supply chain optimization to meet evolving industry demands.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Medium

 | 51 to 250 Employees**REMA
FOODS**

Rema Foods Inc.

Since 1964, Rema Foods, Inc. has been a leader in the global food industry, setting the standard for quality and reliability. The company excels in sourcing premium foods from over 50 countries and offers end-to-end solutions which cater to clients ranging from Fortune 500 companies to independent retailers. Rema Foods' diverse product line, including everything from everyday essentials to gourmet items, reinforces its status as a trusted global culinary partner. With cutting-edge technology in supply chain management, advanced inventory systems, and state-of-the-art logistics, Rema Foods ensures efficient operations and timely deliveries. The company's collaborative management approach fosters open communication and innovation, while its commitment to workforce development and continuous improvement drives ongoing success. Rema Foods also strategically manages its supply chain, maintaining strong vendor relationships and using advanced logistics to deliver fresh, high-quality products worldwide.



MAC Products

**MAC
PRODUCTS**

From its modest start over 50 years ago, MAC has become a leading producer of high-quality equipment for electrical power transmission, distribution, and control. Based in South Kearny, New Jersey, MAC operates a state-of-the-art 4.5-acre facility serving the electric utility and electrified transit industries, as well as various other sectors. Equipped with advanced CNC technology and supported by skilled craftsmen, technicians, and engineers, MAC ensures precise and reliable solutions through stringent quality control and real-time communication systems. Under President and CEO Eddie Rusnow's leadership, the company emphasizes continuous improvement and has successfully integrated new policies across its facilities to enhance output and quality. MAC's commitment to workforce development includes regular training and ongoing engagement with employees to drive company goals and improve processes. Utilizing the latest ERP software, MAC maintains a robust supply chain, ensuring continuity and efficiency in its operations.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Medium | 51 to 250 Employees



Berjé

BERJÉ
— SINCE 1949 —

Berjé, a family-owned leader in the flavor and fragrance sector for over 75 years, is also nominated as one of New Jersey's Innovators of the Year. Berjé is the largest repository of these products in the U.S. Their expertise in supply chain management and commitment to sustainability are reflected in its deep partnerships with local farming communities across 100 countries. With a strong focus on quality sourcing and sustainability, the company maintains long-term partnerships, setting itself apart through ethical practices and environmental stewardship. Its recent acquisition of Global Citrus International and Acelim del Peru has bolstered its production capabilities, enhancing its role as a key supplier of lime products. Berjé's management philosophy emphasizes ethical practices and direct employee engagement. Their focus on workforce development and global supply chain resilience ensures its continued leadership as an innovator in the industry.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Large | 251 or more
Employees

HOWMET AEROSPACE



HOWMET AEROSPACE stands out for its advanced production of "Super" Alloys using an electromagnetic power system under vacuum, serving the aerospace, defense, and automotive industries. The company leverages AI and automation to enhance the precision and efficiency of alloy melting processes, demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Effective management is a cornerstone of HOWMET AEROSPACE's operations, with regular meetings, emails, and special events ensuring clear and consistent communication. Workforce development is driven by Six Sigma, 5S, and lean manufacturing practices such as Kaizen, which help optimize performance and foster a culture of continuous learning. Additionally, HOWMET AEROSPACE employs Just-In-Time (JIT) inventory software to streamline supply chain operations, ensuring timely and efficient delivery of materials and products.



Puratos



Established in 1992, Puratos' Pennsauken, NJ factory is a hub of manufacturing excellence, featuring three departments and ten production lines, with plans for an additional UHT factory and a new distribution center by 2025. Over the past year, Puratos invested over \$20 million in the campus, creating new job opportunities for local New Jerseyans. The company's Operational Excellence Program, launched in 2022, has significantly improved equipment effectiveness, quality metrics, and reduced inefficiencies. Puratos' management philosophy focuses on servant leadership and employee empowerment, supported by continuous training and digital tools. Their supply chain development, including the new distribution center, enhances logistics and product delivery, reinforcing Puratos' commitment to innovation and operational excellence.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Large

 | 251 or more Employees

TRUMPF

TRUMPF, a family-owned manufacturer with a century-long legacy, upholds the highest standards in both its internal operations and external impact. Committed to innovation and environmental stewardship, TRUMPF strives to shape a better world through efficient, cutting-edge solutions. The company prioritizes occupational health and safety at all its locations and values the mindful management of intellectual and material resources. Emphasizing an open feedback culture and diversity, TRUMPF enhances its competitive edge in customer, technology, and talent acquisition. As a leader in machine tools and lasers for industrial manufacturing, TRUMPF is dedicated to advancing production technology and digital integration to create more efficient and precise manufacturing processes, paving the way for the Smart Factory with their software solutions.



Safran Aerosystems Evacuation



Safran Aerosystems Evacuation, the world's oldest aerospace manufacturer with 125 years of experience, is based in Wall Township, NJ, and stands out as a leader in aviation safety and sustainability. As one of the region's largest employers, Safran has expanded its workforce significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic and is committed to achieving zero-emission aviation by 2050. The company is recognized for its innovation, including advancements in evacuation systems and environmentally friendly technologies. Safran's management philosophy emphasizes diversity, skill development, and collaboration, with a focus on continuous improvement through initiatives like Lean and Hoshin Kanri methods. The company's robust career management process supports employee growth, and its strategic supply chain management ensures timely, efficient, and sustainable delivery of products worldwide.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Innovation

Krell Technologies



Krell Technologies, headquartered in Neptune City, New Jersey, has been a leader in the photonics industry for over 30 years, known for its innovation and commitment to quality. The company pioneered the first field polisher for fiber optic cables in 1993 and has since expanded into sectors like telecom, aerospace, and quantum computing. Krell's integrated "workcell" approach enhances efficiency by combining polishing and inspection in one system, while their agility allows them to respond quickly to specialized applications, making them a trusted provider of customized photonics solutions.



Harold R Henrich Inc.



Harold R Henrich Inc. is a leading custom sheet metal fabricating shop, known for its innovation, precision, and dedication to quality. Leveraging state-of-the-art technology and advanced methodologies, the company has earned a reputation for exceptional craftsmanship and reliability in the industry. This commitment to excellence has fueled significant growth in both revenue and market presence, setting Harold R Henrich Inc. apart from competitors.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Innovation



SICAM



SICAM, founded in 1990, is a pioneer in 3D printing and additive manufacturing, known for pushing industry boundaries and setting trends. With a mission to lead in Engineering, Rapid Product Development, and Manufacturing Services, SICAM has built a strong domestic and international client base across industries like aerospace, automotive, and medical. The company offers a full range of services from concept to production, integrating advanced CAD/CAM technologies and ensuring quality through its ERP and ISO standards. Innovations like Precision Modular Tooling and HP's Multi Jet Fusion 3D printing highlight SICAM's commitment to rapid, cost-effective manufacturing solutions.



MyCaseBuilder



MyCaseBuilder, founded by Steve Holand, is a leader in the custom foam industry. The company has revolutionized the design and manufacturing of custom foam inserts with cutting-edge technology, including a desktop application, phone app, and website that allows consumers and corporations to easily create tailored solutions. MyCaseBuilder's continuous investment in technology, human resources, and global partnerships—along with its commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction—sets it apart as an industry leader, serving some of the world's biggest brands with unmatched quality and service.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Innovation

OPEX® Corporation

OPEX®

OPEX® Corporation, a global leader in Next Generation Automation, offers innovative and scalable solutions for warehouse, document, and mail automation, helping clients improve workflow, reduce costs, and boost efficiency. Since 1975, this family-owned company has reimagined automation technology to solve critical business challenges. In 2024, OPEX introduced Sure Sort® X with Xtract™, a cutting-edge, one-touch solution that automates multiple manual tasks, addressing labor challenges and increasing efficiency. OPEX also won the prestigious Red Dot Award: Product Design 2024 for its Infinity® automated storage and retrieval system, further solidifying its reputation for innovative engineering. Despite its global reach, OPEX remains a family-owned business, dedicated to maintaining a positive work culture and employee satisfaction, as evidenced by its recognition as a Top Workplace by The Philadelphia Inquirer in 2022.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Life Sciences



Berjé



Berjé, a family-owned leader in the flavor and fragrance sector for over 75 years, is an innovator in the manufacture of essential oils and aromatic chemicals. Also nominated as one of New Jersey's Medium-sized Manufacturers of the Year, Berjé is the largest repository of these products in the U.S. Its expertise in supply chain management and commitment to sustainability are reflected in its deep partnerships with local farming communities across 100 countries. With a strong focus on quality sourcing and sustainability, the company maintains long-term partnerships, setting the company apart through ethical practices and environmental stewardship. Its recent acquisition of Global Citrus International and Acelim del Peru has bolstered its production capabilities, enhancing its role as a key supplier of lime products. Berjé's management philosophy emphasizes ethical practices and direct employee engagement. Their focus on workforce development and global supply chain resilience ensures its continued leadership as an innovator in the industry.



Utopia Plastix



Utopia Plastix is a pioneering company in the sustainable plastics industry, offering a groundbreaking alternative to traditional plastic. Their product, made from USDA-approved crops, is highly durable, affordable, and environmentally friendly, absorbing carbon at rates 4-5 times higher than trees and replenishing the earth with essential nutrients. Utopia Plastix supports farmers by providing a new bumper crop. Their plant-based technology delivers the practical benefits of plastic while enhancing sustainability, carbon reduction, recyclability, degradability, and compostability. Utopia Plastix's innovative practices offer a seamless, eco-friendly solution without requiring manufacturers to retool their operations.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Life Sciences

Molecular PharmaGroup



Molecular PharmaGroup, an FDA Registered 503B Outsourcing Facility based in New Providence, New Jersey, excels in manufacturing products from the FDA Shortage List and specialty compounds for hospitals and medical groups. Renowned for its high standards in safety and sterile technologies, the company stands out for its commitment to sustainability, employee development, and community engagement. This dedication has driven significant growth and market expansion. By adhering to cGMP standards and proactively pursuing FDA oversight, Molecular PharmaGroup ensures top-quality manufacturing practices and stays at the forefront of regulatory compliance, reinforcing its role as an innovator in the industry.



2024 Rising Star in MANUFACTURING



Maria Fernandez | Production Supervisor, OFS Fitel

Maria Fernandez is a production supervisor at OFS Fitel, where she leads the module and gratings teams with a confident and empathetic approach. Maria has excelled in managing a diverse team, improving business processes, and enhancing technician capabilities. She is a strong advocate for the Lean program, focused on safety and efficiency, and has successfully expanded her role to include additional responsibilities in the Gratings area. Her dedication and performance have earned her a well-deserved promotion to Production Supervisor.

Cristina Antunes | VP of Operations, General Glass International

Cristina Antunes, Vice President of Operations at General Glass International, has played a pivotal role in transforming the company's manufacturing operations. With a degree in Production Engineering from Portugal and over 15 years of experience, Cristina has built a cohesive team and fostered a culture of trust and respect. Her leadership in custom glass manufacturing has driven significant growth, and she actively promotes the inclusion of women in the industry, making her a standout leader in manufacturing.

Susan Masciarelli | Owner, Web-Cote Industries

Susan Masciarelli recently became the owner of Web-Cote Industries after 16 years of progressively managing the business. With a background in manufacturing and a deep connection to the industry, Susan has led efforts to expand operations, improve safety, and position the company for future growth as a woman-owned business. Her dedication to leadership, networking, and advocacy for the pest control sector underscores her commitment to innovation and industry success.

Patty McDonald | Director of Operations, Corim Industries

Patty McDonald, Director of Operations at Corim Industries, has been instrumental in transforming the company into a nationwide manufacturer. Her extensive knowledge of manufacturing processes and dedication to maintaining industry standards have helped Corim Industries achieve SQF certification and become a recognized leader in the industry. Patty's leadership has been vital to the company's growth and success.

Kelly Svihla | Chief Operating Officer, Safran Aerosystems

Kelly Svihla is the Chief Operating Officer at Safran Aerosystems, where her 15 years of experience in engineering, quality assurance, and program management have driven operational excellence. With degrees in Textile Engineering and an MBA, Kelly's leadership has led to significant process improvements and team development. Her resilience during the COVID-19 crisis and her advocacy for women in the industry make her a standout leader, contributing to Safran's success.

Monica St. Claire | CEO, US Offshore

Monica St. Claire, CEO of US Offshore, leads the company in the offshore wind energy sector, driving innovation and sustainable solutions. With 15 years of experience, her company specializes in undersea cable placement and is developing a Green Energy Center of Excellence in New Jersey. Monica's leadership, commitment to the community, and focus on cutting-edge technology positions US Offshore as a key player in the future of sustainable energy.



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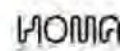
GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE



BLUE



'MADE IN NEW JERSEY' MANUFACTURING DAY

Congratulations
to the 2024
'Manufacturers
of the Year'



Brewster Washers
Custom Precision Parts Manufacturer

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR
Small (50 or less employees)



BERJÉ

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR
Medium (between 51 and 250 employees)

 **SAFRAN**

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR
Large (251 employees or more)

OPEX®

INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR



Molecular
PHARMAGROUP

LEADER IN LIFE SCIENCES

Monica St. Claire

US OFFSHORE | CEO



2024

Celebrating Those Who Stand Up for 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing

New Industry Allies Added to the 'Manufacturing Honor Roll'

'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day is filled with celebrations focused on New Jersey businesses. However, the industry could not progress without some stand-out partners. Time is set aside to honor some of these incredible people that do so much for this vital industry. **The 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day Awards would not be complete without recognizing the 'Manufacturing Honor Roll'.**

The following individuals are being recognized for supporting the more than 9,500 manufacturing, life sciences, and STEM firms and their 300,000-plus employees in the Garden State. Each of the 'Manufacturing Honor Roll' recipients is given an award to immortalize their contributions to this critical industry. Manufacturing and the longevity of the industry depends on collaboration, innovation, and people. Those that are recognized at 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day via the 'Manufacturing Honor Roll' have proven to be allies to the industry, supporting its development and continued progress in New Jersey.

New Jersey brings with it countless advantages to businesses, from its geographic location to its dense concentration of resources and highly educated workforce. There's still no escaping that manufacturers in the state have long been forgotten and neglected. Over the past three years, a light at the end of the tunnel presented itself. A new-found respect for manufacturing by the public has been catching on. The local businesses that stepped up to offset the PPE shortages or donate supplies and resources to their local community garnered positive and well-deserved attention. These businesses never stopped. They helped ensure we all had access to food and did their part in helping the supply chain recover and progress. The 'Manufacturing Honor Roll' recipients showed they are willing to speak up for these accomplishments and are working to make sure the industry doesn't go unnoticed any longer.

On behalf of the entire industry, NJMEP would like to thank all those that continue to help contribute to manufacturing's progression in New Jersey and the United States of America.

2024 'MADE in New Jersey' MFG DAY Manufacturing Honor Roll:

MICHAEL BARTOLI | SENIOR VICE
PRESIDENT, OPTIMUM MEDIA

CHRISSY BUTEAS | PRESIDENT & CEO,
HEALTHCARE INSTITUTE OF NJ

LUIS O. DE LA HOZ | CHAIRMAN, BOARD
OF DIRECTORS, STATEWIDE HISPANIC
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF NJ

MICHAEL EGENTON | EXECUTIVE VICE
PRESIDENT, GOV. RELATIONS –
NJ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

DR. FREDERICK KEATING | PRESIDENT,
ROWAN COLLEGE OF SO. JERSEY

CARLOS A. MEDINA, ESQ. | PRESIDENT/
CEO, STATEWIDE HISPANIC CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE OF NJ

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN VERLINA REYNOLDS-
JACKSON** | CONSTITUENT OUTREACH
CHAIR - DISTRICT 15

ANTHONY RUSSO | PRESIDENT, COMMERCE
AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
OF NEW JERSEY (CIANJ)

SENATOR ANDREW ZWICKER | NJ's 16TH
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

2024 South Jersey 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Honor Roll:



'MADE IN NEW JERSEY' MANUFACTURING DAY

Congratulations to the 2024 MANUFACTURING Honor Roll



MICHAEL BARTOLI
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
OPTIMUM MEDIA



CHRISSY BUTEAS
PRESIDENT & CEO,
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2024 South Jersey 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Honor Roll



NJMEP Unveils Custom-Built RV: Bringing Advanced Manufacturing Skills to a County Near You

NJMEP is thrilled to announce the arrival of its state-of-the-art Mobile Training Center made possible with funding from the NJ Business Action Center (NJBAC)! This custom-built RV, designed within a 2023 Winnebago WFJ38S, has recently arrived at the Cedar Knolls training center and embarked on its tour across New Jersey. This innovative mobile training center is set to revolutionize access to advanced manufacturing training, bringing specialized resources and technology directly to various manufacturing operations, schools, and community centers throughout all 21 counties in the Garden State. The NJMEP Mobile Training Center is equipped with the latest in advanced manufacturing technologies, including:

- ✓ **3D Printers**
- ✓ **Robotic Arms**
- ✓ **HAAS PLC-powered CNC mills**
- ✓ **Augmented Reality (AR) ARC welding equipment**
- ✓ **Laser Engraving Machines**

Additionally, it offers custom training options tailored to meet specific company needs, making it a versatile tool for comprehensive, hands-on training across a variety of locations.

This state-of-the-art Mobile Training Center recently made its debut at the New Jersey State Fair at the Sussex County Fairgrounds, where NJMEP's Workforce Development team engaged with the community, showcasing



advanced manufacturing technologies and shared career pathways in the industry. Attendees included children, parents, and legislators like Congressman Josh Gottheimer, Assemblyman Inganamort, and even Frankford Township's Mayor David Silverthorne and Sussex County Commissioner Chris Carney participated in interactive demonstrations and met local manufacturers, experiencing firsthand and gaining insights into the diverse opportunities within modern manufacturing.

The next stop will be the Trenton State House to show the New Jersey Legislature how their support is providing access to critical career advancement to every corner of the state.

"As advanced manufacturing continues to grow in our state, we're dedicated to upskilling our talent while making training and career opportunities more accessible to all communities here in New Jersey," said NJBAC's Executive Director,



Melanie Willoughby, "This investment will foster talent attraction, boost career development, and encourage business partnerships throughout our 21 counties, further driving economic growth and enhancing the quality of life within the Garden State."

"This Mobile Training Center was one of the first real investments I wanted to make when I came on board with NJMEEP," shared Peter Connolly, CEO, NJMEEP, "When I was joining the team and held the role of COO, I heard two recurring challenges; Transportation issues holding manufacturers back from investing in professional development training for their teams and the need to engage K-12 students to show them, their parents, and school counselors that manufacturing was a viable career path. Employing this Mobile Training Center will solve both those challenges. We can deliver training to any community, any manufacturer, and utilize the Mobile Training Center as a modular classroom or hands-on training center. We can take the training facility to

nearly anywhere in the state. Also, we will incorporate the Training Center in the Future Makers and Creators Tour locations we are hosting with the support of the NJEDA," Connolly continued.

This initiative aimed to inspire interest in manufacturing careers and make advanced training accessible to all. In September, the NJMEEP Mobile Training Center is headed to more schools throughout New Jersey as part of the Future Makers and Creators Tour—a program that educates young New Jerseyans on the career opportunities and local manufacturers that are hiring in their area. To learn more, you can head over to njmep.org/makersandcreators to get involved or contact NJMEEP at 973-998-9801 to learn how to make the Mobile Training Center work for your business!

About NJMEEP: NJMEEP 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), NJMEEP enables organizations to enhance their productivity and efficiencies, reduce costs, and improve employee performance. For more than 20 years, NJMEEP 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. 📈





A Century of Tradition:

The NJ State Fair Shines a Spotlight on Manufacturing with NJMEP's Help

With the return of cooler nights and the impending return to school, New Jerseyans still had one last hoorah before the end of summer—a cherished tradition, the annual New Jersey State Fair and Sussex County Farm & Horse Show kicked off earlier this month.

What began in 1924 as a modest horse show has blossomed into a nine-day celebration at the County Fairgrounds in Augusta. While staying true to its agricultural roots, the event offered a diverse array of activities, from monster trucks to art exhibits, pig races, musical performances, great food and drinks, and new to the festivities this year—a peek behind the veil of advanced manufacturing.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the New Jersey State Fair, it's fascinating to reflect on how much has changed—and yet, how much remains the same. This year marks the first time NJMEP has brought the spotlight to manufacturing careers and technologies at the fair, a fitting tribute to an industry that once stood as the bedrock of America's economic strength. A century ago, manufacturing was the heart of the nation's prosperity, symbolizing

innovation, growth, and opportunity. Factories were bustling hubs of activity, driving the economy and shaping communities.

Today, while manufacturing might not always capture the public's imagination in the same way, its significance has not diminished. In fact, in 2024, manufacturing is as vital as ever, though it looks very different from the assembly lines of the past. Advanced technologies, automation, and digitalization have transformed the industry, making it a key player in driving economic growth, innovation, and sustainability. NJMEP's presence at the New Jersey State Fair was just another stop along the way in showing New Jersey's youth that the future of manufacturing is bright, and its role in our economy is just as vital now as it was a hundred years ago.

Tinkering and Toying with Manufacturing Tech

NJMEP's newly outfitted and wrapped Mobile Training Center RV, which features advanced manufacturing tech like 3D Printers, Augmented Reality ARC Welding Machines, robotic arms, and more, was on-site attracting the curious eyes and attention of New Jersey's youth and their parents. Thanks to unequivocal support from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) and the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC), without whom the NJMEP Mobile Training Center wouldn't be possible, NJMEP has been able to take to the road and bring resources and information across the Garden State through initiatives like The Future Makers & Creators Tour



and the recent appearance at the New Jersey State Fair. Events like this help spread the word about the advancements and career opportunities within New Jersey and the advanced manufacturing sector, as well as help combat some of the stereotypes surrounding what manufacturing careers entail—modern manufacturing isn't the cramped, dark, grueling factory of yesteryear. Instead, advanced manufacturing and its facilities often sit on the cutting edge of technology.

Earlier this month at the New Jersey State Fair, kids and their parents dove into the world of advanced manufacturing with curiosity and enthusiasm. From the moment they arrived, they were drawn to the interactive exhibits that showcased the future of manufacturing technology. Whether it was competing to achieve the perfect weld on the Augmented Reality ARC Welding machine, where young minds and

their parents alike tested their skills, or listening intently as NJMEP Staff Trainers explained the intricacies of programming and operating a HAAS PLC-powered CNC mill or robotic arm, every demonstration sparked interest and excitement. 3D printers hummed steadily, producing baubles on-site in real-time, leaving both kids and adults in awe and further highlighting the endless possibilities within the manufacturing industry. The event not only provided a hands-on learning experience but also inspired families to explore the innovative and dynamic world of advanced manufacturing together.

Get Involved with Modern Manufacturing

As summer winds down and a new school year approaches, now is the perfect time for both young people and parents to explore the vast career opportunities in modern manufacturing. Whether you're an individual eager to discover a rewarding career path or an educator looking to inspire your students, the Future Makers & Creators Tour offers a unique chance to delve into this dynamic industry. By participating in this initiative, you can connect with local industry professionals, learn about cutting-edge technologies, and envision a future filled with creativity and opportunity. Don't miss out on the chance to broaden your understanding of local manufacturing careers and uncover the exciting possibilities ahead. Visit NJMEP.org/MakersandCreators to join the tour or learn how you can get involved in shaping the future of manufacturing in New Jersey! 🚀



The Future Makers & Creators Tour is Blazing a Trail Across New Jersey

The Tour Has Touched Thousands of New Jersey's Youth with Much More on the Way

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Currently four counties into its 21-county journey across New Jersey, The Future Makers & Creators Tour began last year in Atlantic County at Pleasantville Public Schools. Since then, the tour has made stops at three additional schools across the Garden State—Piscataway High School in Middlesex County, Plainfield High School in Union County, and most recently, Orange High School in Essex County. Thousands of students across New Jersey have had the unique opportunity to explore the often-unseen world of modern manufacturing. Your county could be next!

The Future Makers & Creators Tour's events brought cutting-edge advanced manufacturing technology directly to students, offering them a chance to engage with and learn about tools and processes that define the modern manufacturing industry of today and shed light on the fact that manufacturing is greatly different

from what the public perceives it to be. From augmented reality welding simulators to 3D printers and robotic arms, the Future Makers & Creators Tour provided immersive, hands-on activities that showcased the exciting potential and innovation within advanced manufacturing.

Beyond the hands-on experiences, students also had invaluable opportunities to connect with local manufacturers from their communities. These interactions offered students a deeper understanding of what a career in advanced manufacturing might entail. From locally grown and sourced wineries to optical manufacturers, these local business leaders shared insights into their work, discussed the various career paths available, and highlighted the skills needed to succeed in the industry. This connection not only opened students' eyes to the possibilities within manufacturing but also helped to build a bridge between education and the local manufacturing sector, fostering potential future career opportunities.

"The Future Makers & Creators Tour is our chance to finally show why manufacturing matters and how the industry has evolved," shared Torsten Schimanski, NJMEP's Chief Strategy Officer. "Students might not be aware of the incredible career opportunities that await them in their hometown. Connecting schools, students, parents, and manufacturers is the only way the nation will be able to rebuild its manufacturing workforce while at the same time giving children access to a



path that will lead them to a prosperous future."

WHERE WE'RE GOING

Now, the Future Makers & Creators Tour has the NJMEP Mobile Training Center, a state-of-the-art custom-built RV which launched in Summer 2024. This new mobile workforce development center recently arrived at the Cedar Knolls offices and is gearing up to embark on its own exciting tour across New Jersey. This innovative mobile training lab, housed within a specially designed 2023 Winnebago WFJ38S, seamlessly blends practicality with cutting-edge technology. As it travels throughout the Garden State, the NJMEP Mobile Training Center is set to transform the accessibility of advanced manufacturing education and training.

The NJMEP Mobile Training Center will be delivering the latest in advanced manufacturing tech and training curricula directly to schools, manufacturing sites, and community centers. The Mobile Training Center will make several appearances throughout the Future Makers & Creators Tour—its goal is to equip schools and businesses with the latest techniques and knowledge essential for developing and fostering rewarding careers in advanced manufacturing. Whether in the bustling urban centers of North Jersey or the rural areas of South Jersey, this mobile training lab is prepared to empower local schools, their students, and manufacturers with the knowledge, skills, and expertise needed to excel in



modern manufacturing.

In July, the NJMEP team hosted local legislators at the Cedar Knolls Office for the Legislative Open House – Manufacturing Training Lab Showcase. This provided an opportunity for local government leaders to see how NJMEP is continuing to invest in New Jersey manufacturing and workforce development programs. This new Manufacturing Training Lab contains the same exciting and cutting-edge technologies as those found on the Mobile Training Center, and this new center will allow for greater access and control for New Jersey manufacturers when planning and executing the latest training programs.

JOIN US FOR WHAT'S NEXT

"We will be visiting at least 21 schools in every county throughout New Jersey during this tour, all impossible without support from the NJEDA," says Peter Connolly, NJMEP CEO. "The Future Makers & Creators Tour will have a long-lasting impact on the manufacturing industry. Without this kind of action, the industry will not have a passionate workforce to connect with as manufacturing continues to grow in New Jersey."

Having served as the location for the tour's kickoff, Pleasantville Public School's Superintendent, Dr. Martinez, emphasized the transformative impact of the Future Makers & Creators Tour, noting, "The Future Makers & Creators Tour gave Pleasantville students the opportunity to envision themselves

working in manufacturing jobs which have immeasurable possibilities for lucrative careers using their creativity for innovation." She highlights how the program has opened students' eyes to the vast potential within the manufacturing industry, allowing them to see a future where they can apply their creativity and skills in innovative ways. Dr. Martinez expressed her gratitude for the partnership, recognizing its significant role in inspiring and shaping the career aspirations of Pleasantville's students.

With the next school year upon us, we invite other New Jersey schools to join the Future Makers & Creators Tour and become a part of this incredible initiative. By signing up as a stop along the tour, your school can provide students with a unique opportunity to explore the exciting world of manufacturing, engage with industry professionals, and envision a future filled with creative and lucrative career possibilities. Don't miss out on the chance to inspire your students and broaden their horizons.

Whether you're an educator looking to broaden your students' career horizons or a manufacturer eager to connect with future talent, there are numerous ways to get involved. New Jersey schools can expand students' career potential by teaching them about local manufacturing career opportunities, while local manufacturers can help inspire the next generation by sharing professional experiences and highlighting local industry opportunities. Together, we're changing the perception of modern manufacturing and empowering New Jersey's youth to explore exciting possibilities in the industry. Visit NJMEP.org/MakersandCreators to register and become a stop along the tour or learn how you can contribute to this initiative and help shape the future of manufacturing in New Jersey. 🌱





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Empowering Women
in Manufacturing:

NJMEP Women's Initiative Continues...

A Recap of NJMEP's Third Annual Women in Manufacturing Luncheon

Setting the Stage

The event kicked off with a light networking session, allowing attendees to connect and share their experiences before the formal program began. Peter Connolly, CEO of NJMEP, opened the event with a welcome message, setting the tone for the day and emphasizing the importance of fostering a supportive community for women in manufacturing. He highlighted the critical role that women play in driving innovation and growth in the industry. Following Connolly's remarks, Assemblywoman Donlon delivered a brief but powerful message, underscoring the significance of legislative support for initiatives that promote gender diversity and inclusion in manufacturing. Her words resonated with the audience, many of whom have experienced firsthand the challenges of breaking into and advancing within a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Insights from NJMEP's Women Leaders

The event then transitioned into a series of presentations from some of NJMEP's women leaders, who shared their insights on various industry-related topics. Stephanie Casano, Director of Compliance & Quality Control for NJMEP, began



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by explaining the purpose of the event and covering essential housekeeping items. She was followed by Stacy Cooke and Nancy Gross, NJMEP Senior Account Managers who delved into current industry trends, providing a comprehensive overview of the latest developments and how they impact women in the manufacturing workforce.

Tiana Maynard, newly appointed Business Development Lead at NJMEP, took the stage next, discussing workforce solutions with a focus on recruitment strategies, NJMEP's Makers & Creators initiative, and veteran programs. "Overall, two great initiatives to assist in building a strong workforce in manufacturing while introducing the sector to many young girls and women, and opening doors for them in this industry," says Maynard.

Laura Fisher, Human Resources Manager, followed with an exploration of HR trends, offering practical advice on how to create more inclusive work environments and better support women in manufacturing roles. Senior Marketing Project Manager & Events Coordinator Olga Vargas concluded by saying, "Empowering women in manufacturing isn't just about creating

opportunities—it's about driving innovation, fostering diversity, and building a stronger, more resilient industry. Events like today's are vital for shaping a future where women lead, inspire, and redefine the boundaries of what's possible."

Think Tank Initiative

One of the most impactful parts of the event was the Think Tank Initiative, led by Helen Archontou, CEO of YWCA, Peter Connolly, and Senator Testa. The Think Tank Initiative brings together a group of committed women manufacturing professionals dedicated to tackling issues in the industry. This session leveraged the resources of NJMEP, the state, and the manufacturing industry to support survivors of domestic violence, with Archontou, Connolly, and Testa highlighting the importance of addressing this sensitive issue within the sector. They called for a group of women manufacturing leaders to contribute to the conversation and help develop solutions. The Think Tank Initiative served as a call to action, encouraging attendees to shape the state's approach to supporting domestic violence survivors while fostering collaboration and ensuring access to NJMEP's workforce development resources.

Collaborative Problem-Solving and Discussion

After lunch, the event continued with an engagement activity designed to foster collaboration and generate ideas. NJMEP employees facilitated table discussions, encouraging attendees to share their thoughts on the Think Tank Initiative and the first point of action: guiding the state's approach to

supporting domestic violence victims and survivors. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences, offer ideas, and express any concerns about how to best approach this challenging issue.

The conversation then shifted to a discussion on the manufacturing industry, comparing the landscape "then vs. now." Women who had been in the industry for over a decade were invited to share their observations on the most significant changes they've witnessed and what they would like to see in the future. This session provided valuable insights into the evolving role of women in manufacturing and the ongoing challenges they face.

Overcoming Challenges: A Path Forward

The final segment of the event focused on overcoming challenges in the industry. Attendees were asked to consider how to encourage more women and young girls to explore careers in manufacturing. They identified key roadblocks, such as lack of awareness, gender biases, FLIR



insufficient support systems, and brainstormed strategies to overcome these obstacles. The discussion highlighted the importance of mentorship, education, and advocacy in creating a more inclusive and supportive industry for future generations. As the event wound down, attendees filled out table cards with their thoughts and feedback. Constantina Meis, NJMEP's Community Relations Manager, offered parting words, emphasizing the importance of continued engagement and collaboration. The event ended with a final networking session, allowing participants to connect further.

Empowering Progress: The Growing Impact of NJMEP's Women in Manufacturing Luncheon

Now in its third year, the Women in Manufacturing Luncheon is more than just a networking event—it's a platform for meaningful dialogue and action between women in the sector. From its start three years ago as part of NJMEP's Women in Manufacturing Initiative, a year of events and programs dedicated to championing women in manufacturing, the Women in Manufacturing Luncheon has grown exponentially from only fifty attendees at the premiere event to this year's event which hosted over one hundred-and fifty women manufacturing professionals. Beyond that, this event

is also evolving from just a simple lunch intended to celebrate the accomplishments and successes of influential women leaders to something more.

The discussions and initiatives launched during this year's event underscored the significant role women play in the manufacturing industry and the importance of creating a more supportive, inclusive environment that allows them to continue to thrive. As NJMEP continues to champion women in manufacturing and new initiatives in partnership between state and industry, events like this will be critical in driving progress and ensuring that the industry remains vibrant, innovative, and equitable for all. 🌈

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As co-chair of the Legislative Manufacturing Caucus, I have the privilege of championing policies that strengthen the backbone of New Jersey's economy: manufacturing. The Garden State has a rich history of innovation and production, and I'm proud to spotlight some of the critical legislative efforts that are paving the way for a prosperous future.

New Jersey's manufacturing success, however, extends beyond machinery and industrial production – it's fundamentally about people. The skilled workers, dedicated entrepreneurs, and innovative thinkers who shape our manufacturing industry are what keeps New Jersey competitive on a national and global scale. Recognizing this, I'm proud to support the following package of pending legislation that make strategic investments in our workforce and modernizes the industry.

Take S1337 for example, which establishes the "Manufacturing Workforce Development Grant Program" to ensure there is a steady pipeline of talent entering the industry by training students at county colleges. Many of these workers are women, who throughout history have played a pivotal role in revolutionizing the manufacturing industry. SJR 44 would commemorate the valued contributions that women have made while encouraging greater inclusion in the future.

Then there's S1328, which seeks to strengthen the foundation of the industry by drawing manufacturers to New Jersey and tapping the vast potential held in the southern regions of the State. Our efforts to modernize and expand manufacturing are supported by S1355, which offers tax credits to companies that make strategic investments to upgrade their equipment and facilities. To complement this growth and expansion, S1346 would allow for smaller manufacturers to grow by making it easier to qualify for financing and incentive programs run by the NJEDA.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the significant challenges manufacturers faced during the pandemic. By establishing the "Manufacturing Reboot Program" through S2656, impacted businesses could qualify for vital financial assistance through the EDA, and S2891 would establish permanent funding for the New Jersey Manufacturing

Extension Program, Inc. (NJMEP). These efforts underscore our legislative commitment to support the industry's resiliency and continued growth.

“ There is a symbolic sign along the Lower Trenton Bridge that says it all, “Trenton Makes The World Takes.” As we celebrate our legacy of innovation, let us all come together to keep New Jersey at the forefront of the manufacturing world and secure a bigger, brighter, and bolder future for all! ”



CAUCUS CO-CHAIR
SENATOR MICHAEL TESTA



NJ's Cutting-Edge Medical Technology Sector Saves Lives Around the World

New Jersey, long hailed as the “Medicine Chest of the World,” boasts a thriving life sciences community and is a beacon of global medical innovation. It’s a source of pride that the treatments and cures saving lives worldwide are being discovered here in our state.

But often overlooked is that the medicine chests in our homes don’t just contain medicines – they contain thermometers, band-aids, oximeters, compresses, diabetes testing strips, and many other medical devices and diagnostic tools that are critical to managing our families’ health.

While it’s widely known that New Jersey is a hub for pharmaceutical and biotech companies, the equally vital medical device, diagnostic, and medical technology sector often goes unnoticed. These companies, which are instrumental in saving lives and driving our state’s economy, are a significant part of our global health and innovation leadership. With 12 of the world’s top 20 medical technology companies having a strong presence in our state, contributing to over 12,000 jobs and \$5.6 billion annually, their impact on our economy is undeniable.

But what is medical technology? What are medical devices or diagnostic tools? Aside from the above-listed items commonly found in our medicine cabinets, they also include simple and complex tools that average Americans and medical professionals use to treat patients and, often, save lives. From my personal experience, they are the use of bandages, electrical stimulation therapy (e-stim) or electrical muscle stimulation

(EMS) that helped reduce my swelling so I could play sports in high school and college. It’s the pacemaker that let my grandfather lead the cheering from the stands when I played at Rowan.

New Jersey has been at the forefront of these advances in global human health from BD’s first patent for an all-glass syringe in 1897 to Johnson & Johnson’s first manufacturing of sterile surgical products in 1886.

The most recent examples of diagnostic tools are the COVID-19 tests that allowed the world to return to normal by rapidly determining a COVID-19 infection. However, there are many different diagnostics that we rely on frequently – everything from flu testing strips and strep throat swabs to MRI machines and nuclear dye medical imaging tests for cardiac health. Devices such as precision scalpels for routine but intricate eye surgeries, ventilators for COPD patients, or implants for broken bones are all part of our modern treatment regime. Remote patient monitoring for diabetes and heart health has transformed medical care by increasing efficiency, reducing doctor visits and hospitalizations, and even preventing surgeries by identifying health risks much earlier.

Recognizing the medical technology community’s contributions to global human health and its importance to New Jersey’s workforce and economy is paramount. Thus, we need to ensure:

1. The continued collaboration and partnership between these innovative R&D companies, New Jersey research universities and teaching hospitals, and our federal and state policymakers

are at the core of this New Jersey success story.

2. A strong Food and Drug Administration (FDA), streamlining regulatory and approval pathways, strengthening Medicare reimbursement, incentivizing and nurturing incubator companies, and other such policies will safeguard our ability to continue discovering breakthrough treatments and life-saving therapies while preserving access to existing medical care.

This ongoing partnership between the medical technology and diagnostic industry, New Jersey's federal and state policymakers, and our research hospitals and universities propels our state's innovation ecosystem.

We are poised to uncover even more diagnostics, treatments, and technologies right here in New Jersey. The newly established Healthcare and Life Sciences Exchange (HELIX) in downtown New Brunswick is set to enhance the medical device community's ability to collaborate on diagnosing, treating, and curing diseases. The New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) unites medical device manufacturers, contract manufacturing organizations (CMOs), vendors, suppliers, and other experts to drive medical technology and diagnostic innovation.

New Jersey's medical technology community is on the cusp of making an even more significant impact on saving lives and driving our state's workforce and economy. The HealthCare Institute of New Jersey (HINJ – www.hinj.org) will continue working with our state's elected leaders in Trenton and Washington, and all stakeholders to ensure New Jersey remains a national and global leader in this critical field.



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The Glassboro-Camden Line: A New Era of Transportation for South Jersey

The Glassboro-Camden Line (GCL) is one of the most significant infrastructure projects currently underway in South Jersey, set to transform the region's transportation landscape. This 18-mile light rail line, which will connect Glassboro to Camden through an existing rail corridor, has been a long-awaited project aimed at improving regional mobility, reducing traffic congestion, and promoting sustainable development.

The concept for the Glassboro-Camden Line dates back over two decades, rooted in the need for an economical public transit system to connect the growing communities of South Jersey with the broader Philadelphia metropolitan area. The GCL is set to play a crucial role in the growth and development of manufacturing hubs throughout South Jersey by providing enhanced transportation infrastructure that connects key industrial areas.

Improving Workforce Availability

The GCL will provide a reliable and efficient transportation option for workers commuting to manufacturing facilities across South Jersey. The GCL service will provide a connection to PATCO, offering public transit access into Center City Philadelphia with connections to the SEPTA Regional Rail system. The line will also provide the opportunity to transfer to NJ TRANSIT's bus network with connections to Atlantic City, Trenton, and New York City. By connecting residential areas with industrial hubs, the rail line will make it easier for employees to travel to and from work and help manufacturers attract a broader pool of talent. As a result, companies can benefit from a more diverse and stable workforce,

essential for maintaining steady production levels.

Expanding Market Base

The GCL will act as a bridge between South Jersey's manufacturing centers and other regional markets, including Camden and Philadelphia. By facilitating easier access to these markets, manufacturers can expand their customer base and develop stronger relationships with suppliers. This improved connectivity can make South Jersey a more attractive location for businesses looking to optimize their supply chains and reduce transportation-related costs.

Encouraging Industrial Park Development

The Glassboro-Camden Line will link various towns and cities throughout South Jersey, improving the connectivity between existing manufacturing hubs. This connectivity will allow businesses to collaborate more effectively, share resources, and create more integrated supply chains. The introduction of the GCL may also lead to the revitalization of underutilized or declining industrial areas in South Jersey. The improved connectivity provided by the line will make South Jersey more attractive to investors looking to capitalize on the proximity to Philadelphia's large market. As a result, areas along the GCL route are likely to see increased interest from developers looking to further utilize concentrated manufacturing zones in a favorable area.

Strengthening Regional Economic Ties

The GCL will play a pivotal role in strengthening the economic relationship between South Jersey and Philadelphia. By improving transportation links, the rail line will encourage more cross-border

trade, investment, and collaboration between businesses in both regions. For manufacturers, this means greater opportunities to engage with Philadelphia's diverse industrial base, leading to potential partnerships, joint ventures, and increased economic activity that benefits both sides of the river.

Looking Ahead

The Southern New Jersey Development Council (SNJDC) has been a strong partner advocating for and supporting the GCL project. For years, the Council has championed the GCL project as a critical component of South Jersey's transportation network. By providing a reliable, efficient transit option, the GCL is expected to alleviate traffic congestion, reduce travel times, and stimulate economic development along its route.

The SNJDC's support for the Glassboro-Camden Line aligns with our mission to foster economic growth and improve the quality of life in Southern New Jersey. The GCL represents a significant investment in the region's future. With continued commitment and collaboration, the Glassboro-Camden Line will soon be a vital part of South Jersey's transportation network, enhancing the quality of life for residents and businesses alike.



MARLENE ASSELTA
PRESIDENT, SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



Keep People Top of Mind During 2025 Business Planning

Now is the perfect time to develop a business plan for 2025. Recent workforce challenges have exposed the strengths and weaknesses of many companies and have encouraged innovation. As we look to the New Year, these experiences open new possibilities and position organizations for future success.

Business planning should always consider the organization's most valuable asset: its people. The following steps will help position the organization for future success.



Know the Current State of Affairs

Change is inevitable, but for improvement to occur, an understanding of the realities of today's business environment is paramount. Analyze the company's current state using tools like SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), which help you identify focus areas for 2025.

Be Realistic

The economic outlook is mixed, so it is wise to be cautiously optimistic and set conservative projections in case of unforeseen challenges. There is a balance between caution and setting stretch goals to motivate the workforce. Identify new opportunities in response to the company's unique challenges to help drive engagement and productivity.

Prepare to Adapt

The last few years have proven an agile business is a successful business. Adaptability should be a core business plan component, establishing flexible goals, processes, and strategies that will

ensure stability if economic conditions change.

Put People First

A strong focus on people is a strategy savvy business leaders understand. They realize that people are the most critical component of their organization. Attracting and retaining employees relies on putting people first, including prioritizing their physical and mental health, work-life balance, and overall quality of life. If it is possible for the organization, consider incorporating employee wellness programs, flexible scheduling, generous PTO and other benefits into the plan. When employees feel valued and supported, they're more likely to be loyal and engaged, driving the success of your business.

Plan for the Unprecedented

Unexpected challenges can surface. Expanding beyond the traditional financial "what if" scenarios to include the unusual is a good idea. Strategize scenarios that could arise in the next 12-18 months, such as supply chain disruptions, technological

shifts, changes in consumer behavior, or new public health challenges. Planning now for potential hurdles allows the organization to navigate them more quickly and effectively.

Take Action

Planning, especially for the need to pivot, is critical for business success. When organizations develop a thoughtful, forward-looking business plan, they are ready to thrive in a more dynamic business environment. Look ahead and optimistically approach business planning, focusing on people and process improvements. It is a strategy for success.



Michael Timmes,
Human Resource Consultant
at Insperity



AI in Manufacturing: Balancing Innovation and Cybersecurity

From enhancing operational efficiency to automating complex processes, AI promises a new era of productivity and innovation for manufacturers. However, with these advancements come significant cybersecurity challenges that must be addressed to safeguard operations – and reputations.

Opportunities and Risks

AI in advanced manufacturing offers numerous benefits. For instance, generative AI can streamline production by uploading detailed plans directly to the shop floor, ensuring materials and components are efficiently managed and utilized. This automation, evident in projects like the Tesla Cybertruck or aerospace components, allows for over 90% automation in some cases, drastically reducing human error and increasing production speed.

However, this increased reliance on AI introduces vulnerabilities. AI systems, if not properly secured, can become targets for cyberattacks. Injecting flaws into the AI processes can compromise the entire manufacturing line, leading to defective products

and significant financial losses. The integration of AI also means that any cyber breach could potentially manipulate the production process itself – posing a severe threat to the integrity of the manufactured goods. To mitigate these risks, manufacturers must adopt robust cybersecurity measures tailored to their needs. Here are some critical strategies:

General IT Awareness and Training:

Educating your teams about potential cyber threats and the importance of defending against them is vital. Many cyber breaches go undetected for over 200 days, giving attackers ample time to inflict significant damage. Regular training can help staff recognize and respond to threats promptly.

AI Governance and Data Management:

Establishing transparent governance for AI and data management is critical. Tagging data to indicate its relevance and security level helps AI systems process information correctly and securely. This approach reduces the risk of AI making decisions based on compromised or irrelevant data.

Quality Control and Corrections:

Implementing rigorous quality control measures ensures that any errors introduced by AI can be swiftly identified and corrected. This process is vital for maintaining the integrity and reputation of the manufacturing output.

Mid-size organizations of all types often do not have the level of cyber protection they need, and are some of the most susceptible to cyber events, due to the perceived high cost of security. However,

studies have shown that it costs six (6) times more (on average) to remediate controls after a cyber event than it does to address security up front. Therefore, as organizations consider the use of transformative technology such as AI, it is critical that they address security, data protection, and governance as part of the journey. The cost of protection does not have to be exorbitant. Organizations should engage consultants that have not only a deep understanding of the subject, but experience providing solutions that are right sized to fit the client's needs.

Edward Keck Jr., MBA, CISSP, Partner. Market Leader, Cyber and Information Security Services, Withum

Laying the Foundation for Secure Integration

The foundation for secure AI integration lies in proactive planning and continuous improvement. Here are some steps to consider:

Assess and Update IT Infrastructure: Ensure your IT infrastructure can securely support advanced AI applications. This may involve upgrading hardware, enhancing network security and implementing advanced monitoring tools.

Develop a Cybersecurity Roadmap: Create a detailed cybersecurity roadmap that outlines potential threats, mitigation strategies and response plans. Review and update this roadmap regularly to address emerging threats and technological advancements.

Foster a Culture of Security and Integrity: Emphasize the importance of security and integrity over mere compliance. Encourage employees to go beyond checking off boxes and adopt a proactive cybersecurity approach.

"[Regardless of industry sector] it's important to have an understanding of your environment and your vulnerabilities to protect your enterprise, especially if you're dealing in intellectual property, chemical formulation, or HIPAA—because of the intellectual property, those are [the businesses] at highest risk. Small to medium-sized [businesses] are the most vulnerable because they don't really have the infrastructure in place to be cyber secure. They don't have the time or resources to ensure proper cyber hygiene, so they're most vulnerable—and there are a lot of them in New Jersey. There are a lot of manufacturers that are involved in the life science, chemical manufacturing, [and] department of defense spaces—upwards of 3,000."

Dave Visalli, Senior Account Manager and Cybersecurity Specialist, NJMEP

Balancing Trust and Control

One of the fundamental questions manufacturers face is, "How much trust can we place in AI?" While AI can significantly enhance efficiency and decision-making, it is essential to maintain a balance between confidence and control. Manufacturers should

implement AI with human oversight, ensuring that AI systems operate under the supervision of experienced personnel who can intervene when necessary. This oversight helps prevent AI from making erroneous decisions that could impact production quality.

In addition, regularly auditing your AI systems is vital to ensure they are accurate and reliable. Audits help identify potential flaws and ensure that the AI operates as intended. Understanding AI and new technologies and their implications allows manufacturers to continuously adapt and enhance their security measures.

For mid-sized manufacturers, integrating AI into advanced manufacturing processes presents both remarkable opportunities and significant cybersecurity challenges. By adopting a strategic approach that emphasizes robust cybersecurity practices, thorough training and continuous improvement, manufacturers can harness AI while safeguarding their operations against cyber threats. It's not just about protecting the bottom line – but also about maintaining trust and reputation in an increasingly digital world.

For more information or to discuss your business needs, please connect with a member of our team.

By Edward Keck, Jr. and Jason Spezzano

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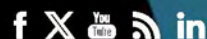


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