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**ILLINOIS
MANUFACTURERS'
ASSOCIATION**

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association is the only statewide association dedicated to boldly moving Illinois' makers forward. The IMA is the oldest and largest state manufacturing trade association in the United States, representing nearly 4,000 companies and facilities.

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THE PROMISE OF MANUFACTURING

MARK DENZLER, PRESIDENT & CEO



As I reflected and gave thanks for many blessings over the Thanksgiving holiday, I thought back to the dark days during the Civil War when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November “as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise.” It was a means of expressing gratitude and extolling hope for America.

Today, the United States is the greatest nation on earth and a beacon for countless people around the world but we continue to face challenges at home and abroad including struggling supply chains, a slowing economy, high inflation, worsening civility, and the war in Ukraine.

At a time when many people are struggling, and some believe that the Golden Days of the United States are behind us, I’m optimistic. My glass is half-full largely because of the promise of manufacturing and what it continues to mean for our nation and the world.

Peter Zeihan, a geopolitical expert, believes that while global economic struggles and superpower clashes lie ahead, the one sector that could benefit most is American manufacturing. The basic elements of Zeihan’s theory are that a weakened Russia resulting from the war in Ukraine coupled with a significant reduction in German manufacturing because of energy shortages and a slowing Chinese economy and aging demographic, set up the United States to rapidly expand the industrial sector.

American manufacturing is well-positioned to take advantage of this opportunity. We have abundant natural resources and energy independence with a renewed focus on producing complex semi-conductors here at home. Illinois, along with the Midwest, is a bread basket with the ability to help feed the world. Political upheaval and the recent pandemic have seen companies seeking to reshore or locate facilities in the United States. Finally, despite the political polarization, America remains the best place to invest capital, and we have the ingenuity for groundbreaking discoveries.

Zeihan believes that “for energy, manufactured products, and food, this will become the greatest opportunity in the history of the Republic.”

There is no doubt that we need to address the labor shortage as we build the workforce of the future. We are training workers for jobs that don’t even exist today, but our colleges and universities, especially the University of Illinois, are graduating engineers and business leaders. We’re refocused on adding Career and Technical Education in our high schools, and we need to fix the broken immigration system. Manufacturing pays a great wage with benefits and is the bedrock of the middle class.

I saw the promise of manufacturing recently during our Makers on the Move bus tour when we stopped at Macon Resources Inc. in Decatur. They serve over 800 children and adults with developmental disabilities every year. MRI also operates a 200-person manufacturing company that is largely staffed by the clients they serve who had huge smiles on their faces and felt the accomplishment of earning a paycheck.

While we may see struggles and while we don’t know what lies ahead in coming days and months, I do know that manufacturing will continue to provide the solutions whether it’s creating the next life-saving medicine, increasing our food security, defending our great nation, developing new energy resources, or unlocking the next great discovery.

This is the promise of manufacturing and it’s available for everyone.◆

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11:00AM – REGISTRATION
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NOON – LUNCHEON & PROGRAM
Ballroom, DoubleTree Hotel

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State Capitol

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2022 IN REVIEW AND WHAT ILLINOIS MANUFACTURERS CAN EXPECT IN 2023

AM TRANSPORT SERVICES

In order to review the freight market and to make strong logistics decisions going forward, Illinois manufacturers should understand that the North American Full Truckload (FTL) market is supply and demand oriented. We've been on a rollercoaster ride the past 2 ½ years due to increased consumer demand and COVID-related supply chain issues in the US and overseas.

However, in 2022, we began to see an unfamiliar sight—signs of an oversupplied market. While the dry van spot market has held close to the five-year average of load to truck ratios for the last several months, indicators suggest that market is oversupplied. Simply put, this means there is enough available truck capacity, and market pressure has largely abated.

Indicators that point to an oversupplied market:

- The Class 8 tractor fleet expanded 4% year over year.
- ACT research continues to increase their estimation of fleet growth across private and for-hire fleets each month. Their November 14, 2022 report forecasted 4% growth for 2022 year over year and an additional 1.5% for 2023.
- Trucking labor is shifting away from owner-operators. Since Q2, 2022, owner-operator capacity has diminished while employee-based and independent contractor capacity has increased. Meanwhile, there was an uptick in voluntary revocations of operating authority in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reporting trucking job growth (through October). These combined factors suggest self-employed truck drivers are seeking the shelter of employee-based carriers.
- Owner-operators are faced with compressed spot market pricing, elevated diesel costs, and fewer opportunities in the spot market.

The October Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) and BLS jobs reported a trucking jobs growth figure in both September and October (amending a forecasted loss in September). Year-to-date trucking jobs have increased by about 55,400 or about 3.5%.

- Carriers are close to reaching the threshold of cost-per-mile to operate a truck.

What does an oversupplied market mean for Illinois manufacturers?

An oversupplied market can provide some pricing relief for manufacturers in the short term; however, it can create a plethora of problems over time. Like most manufacturers, trucking companies saw their operational costs increase throughout 2022. With costs rising and rates decreasing, something has to give, and too often that is preventive maintenance on equipment. This leads to safety issues and increased breakdowns which result in late deliveries contributing to chaos with value dock space.

There are only two remedies for an oversupplied market. Capacity must leave the market or demand must increase. Most economists do not predict enough growth in 2023 to offset the oversupply of capacity, therefore, the more likely scenario is capacity leaving the market. This means smaller trucking companies shut their doors completely or they downsize and many of their drivers take jobs in other industries or with very large fleets. As we explore the possible impact of the above scenario, it's helpful to remember the American Trucking Associations (ATA) reports that 91% of truckload firms have six or fewer trucks with 97% having fewer than 20 trucks.

The aftermath of such a capacity rebalancing is where Illinois manufacturers will be affected most. Like the trucking industry, the economy is cyclical, and as industries and markets rebound, we will see a surge in demand with limited capacity. Truckload rates will increase

which draws more entrants to the market, and the cycle will begin again.

Based on the economic headwinds we are experiencing today, we predict freight volume growth will be negligible in 2023. This allows us to classify 2023 as the sort of rebalancing year described above which means truckload capacity will be in equilibrium with demand and bring stability to the market.

Of course, that stability will last only until the next economic bull market takes off and upsets this equilibrium.

What can Illinois manufacturers do during this period of capacity rebalancing to prepare for the future?

- Begin preparing your strategy for the next cycle shift. Now is an exceptional time to get a jump on developing transportation strategies for the upcycle. Lower rates are welcome in the short term, but building relationships with your transportation providers will insulate you in the long run.
- Maintain efforts to deliver positive driver experiences at your facilities. When rates are high, we hear about the importance of being a "Shipper of Choice," but when rates decline, this distinction seems less important. That's a mistake. If your facility is driver friendly, your rates are affected. Driver experiences do make a difference in your ability to partner with superior transportation providers.
- The old adage, "you get what you pay for," will certainly hold true through 2023. Freight can act as an extension of your marketing department. Think about it like this: Do you want your customers to have a bad experience based on the transportation provider you have chosen in order to save a few dollars? ♦



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REMOTE WORK: THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES FOR EMPLOYERS & EMPLOYEES

BARNES & THORNBURG LLP



The COVID-19 pandemic upended the norms of the workplace, and one result is remote work. Remote work is a phrase we'd never heard of until the pandemic, but it is now here to stay. This article will focus on how remote work has impacted both employees and employers.

Change is difficult, and employers and employees are still navigating the new work-from-home (WFH) landscape. Before the pandemic, many employers were adverse to employees working at home, fearful that full-time remote work would diminish workforce productivity. The pandemic and WFH have shown this generally to be untrue; if anything, many WFH employees are working harder. Today, trends show that remote work will continue to grow; by 2025, it's projected that 36.2 million Americans are expected to work remotely—nearly doubling the number of remote employees we saw pre-pandemic. Employees like working from home for many obvious reasons: flexibility; no commute; more time for personal activities. Employers like remote work because it reduces real estate costs and opens a greater population from which to recruit. Remote work, however, presents implications for employers and employees.

Expenses

There is an expense for employers in allowing employees to work from home. Employers must supply, at a minimum,

a laptop. Many employers reimburse for additional hardware such as computer screens, etc., so employees can be productive working from home. Moreover, various states (including Illinois) require employers to reimburse employees for the use of personal resources to complete their work, including internet access and cell phone.¹

Recruitment and Retention

The demand for remote work has altered recruitment efforts of employers and recruiters alike. Employees are demanding higher salaries and rejecting offers if remote work is not an option. Employers are forced to respond by increasing salary, benefits, and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Employees are motivated by the benefits remote work provides them as individuals. They want the autonomy to decide when and where to work without regard to an employer's organizational framework and prefer remote work for its flexibility, potential work/life balance, and savings on expenses, mostly time and commuter expenses.

Alternatively, although many employees embrace WFH with open arms, they fail to foresee the challenges they will experience. Employees report that WFH is tiring because it can lead to working outside of established hours and disrupt their work/life balance.² Employees battle striking the balance between work responsibilities with distractions at home. Distractions are

pervasive in the comfort of one's home, especially when extra space to work is not readily available.³ WFH schedules have the potential to diminish, dilute, or change a company's culture.

Technology

Employees can experience difficulty resolving issues related to technology when working from home, which is why it is critical that employers ensure they are equipped to assist with technical issues remotely. Broader technological concerns include protecting intellectual property such as copyrights, trade secrets, patents, and trademarks.⁴ Confidential documents related to marketing data, manufacturing data, or sales data, should be maintained securely even when accessed remotely. Protection of company property such as documents, files, and folders should be an employer's top priority in the virtual workplace. If employers provide remote work as an option, they should enforce security measures such as the use of a virtual private network (VPN), anti-virus and anti-malware software, and regular password changes. Policies should be created to enforce the protection of confidential information, define confidentiality, and outline procedures to enforce employee adherence. Employees working remotely must secure such information from family members and guests in the home.

At Home Safety

Other policies should address compliance with employment laws. Even though employees work off-site, employers still need to ensure they comply with employment laws. Employers have a general duty under Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to ensure that the workplace is free from recognizable hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. At a minimum, employers should have policies in place specifying the requirements of an at-home workplace. Employers should consider having a WFH employee send pictures of the workspace.

Have a Policy

Companies should consider having a remote or hybrid work policy. Hybrid work allows employees to work from home some days and in office others while remote work is completely offsite. Either option requires policies to hold employees accountable for their actions, within the scope of their work, whether on or offsite; this reduces the perception of differential treatment. These policies should be clear and allow flexible working guidelines that aid employees in their performance and provide fair and equitable evaluations. While a one-size policy does not fit all positions or companies, it is important employers are intentional and transparent about expectations.⁵

One aspect of a WFH policy is: What does “WFH” mean? During the pandemic, some employees used it as an opportunity to pick up and see the world. After all, working on a beach or in a European capital has allure. If working abroad is permitted under your policy, you should be explicit as it offers additional complexities such as significant time zone and connectivity challenges. Someone who wants to be a “digital nomad” should know the rules. Greater support, management tools, and upper management support are critical for leaders to be successful in this new work environment.⁶

Disadvantages of WFH

Remote work is not always as glamorous as it sounds. Employees who work from home may experience technological failures that include no internet, computer fail-

ure, or no electricity. These issues generally arise at the most inopportune times and can negatively impact operations or daily progress.

There also must be trust. Employers must trust that employees are working diligently, unless there is a reason to think otherwise. Setting regular work hours, performance expectations and check-in meetings shall be established.

Another disadvantage is isolation. Some employees thrive in a WFH or hybrid work situation. Others do not. Employers should be aware that such a program may not be for everyone.

Employers must be able to supply the necessary support. These situations may trigger skepticism, but it is important that there is a culture of trust unless or until there is reason to think otherwise. If trust is

broken it can be a catalyst to performance issues. Employees who work from home miss opportunities to engage with their colleagues which has potential to negatively influence morale. Isolation and seclusion presents challenges in completing group tasks, receiving feedback, or managing workload.

Every employer is different. As always, there are difficulties and benefits to a structural and cultural change in the workplace. But this change is unavoidable. Transition to remote or hybrid work and shifting from traditional office culture positions employers to hire excellent talent which will hopefully have a long-term, positive impact on the organization. Embracing this change will contribute to an overall increase in employee morale and satisfaction as well. ♦



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HOW TO BUILD THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW, TODAY

As one of Illinois' largest industry sectors, manufacturing is a pillar of the state's economy. It supports nearly 30% of all jobs in Illinois and has an even greater share in Lake County where local production is dominated by pharmaceuticals, plastic products, and medical equipment thanks to the presence of globally recognized leaders like Abbott, AbbVie, AkzoNobel, and Baxter. Those giants are in good company among high performers like Novelis, Echo, HydraForce, Yaskawa, Zebra, and many others.

Manufacturing employs nearly 100,000 in Lake County, which is among the highest concentrations in the state. An impressive one in every seven Lake County jobs is now in manufacturing. Locally, the industry's labor force has grown 3.6% over the last year alone, representing 2,200 new workers. The increased employment base will go a long way toward supporting manufacturing businesses in Lake County, but we cannot rest on our laurels if we wish to stoke the growth.

IMA projections indicate that some manufacturing occupations could see up to a 20% increase in employment growth over the next six years. To meet the demand for talent, Lake County leaders have partnered on cutting-edge solutions to foster growth and workforce development. Collectively, these initiatives serve as a model that other communities can use to support the surge in manufacturing and meet the needs that accompany such a tremendous uptick in production:

1. Form innovative partnerships to develop talent

Through our close relationships with local manufacturers, we know that workforce is often the biggest asset or impediment to growth. For this reason, Lake County Partners, the nonprofit charged with fueling local economic development, spearheaded a partnership with the College of Lake County, Lake County Workforce Development, the Lake County Tech Campus, and area

high schools—under the umbrella of the “Lake County Workforce Ecosystem”—to align training with in-demand skills and put employers directly in touch with talent and upskilling opportunities.

A core focus of Lake County Partners is meeting directly with business leaders to discuss challenges and then using that intelligence to take action that strengthens the local business climate. Through our close relationships in the Workforce Ecosystem, we can quickly assemble tailored solutions related to recruitment, site selection, infrastructure, financing, and incentives that make it easier for businesses to grow in Lake County.

2. Invest in education

Businesses are only as healthy as the workforce that supports them. The College of Lake County (CLC) is a key player in the Workforce Ecosystem and a long-time leader in community education. The school has leaned on creative, out-of-the-box thinking to strategically invest in talent development and arm students with in-demand skills.

As a result, Lake County now has over 1,000 students in manufacturing programs at the college and high school levels that will go on to fuel business growth. That number only stands to grow, thanks to CLC's latest endeavor and its crown jewel of manufacturing education: the incredible Advanced Technology Center (ATC) in Gurnee.

The ATC is a former big box store that is being thoughtfully transformed into a 142,000 sq. ft. center for manufacturing education. In the short time since the ATC opened, its impact has been immense—prior to its existence, CLC averaged 115 welding students. This semester, which is the first-time offering classes at the ATC, there are over 200 welding students. With the launch of the new program and facility, CLC can teach and train upward of 700 students annually.

CLC also offers dual credit partnerships with 24 high schools in more than 40 academic areas—that encompasses 2,200+ high school students who are

enrolled in dual credit classes that both reduce the time students spend completing certifications and provide an annual savings of approximately \$1.5 million for students and families. These programs were intentionally designed with multiple entry and exit points to meet the educational needs of a variety of students. The coursework to complete credentials is purposefully sequenced so that students can earn one or more certificates on the way to completing either an Associate in Applied Science or an Associate in Science degree.

The power of dual credit partnerships can be seen in CLC's relationship with the nearby Lake County Tech Campus. Tech Campus students can earn up to 9 college credits at no cost through CLC. Credentials are stackable, so students can use them to supplement post-secondary education as they zero in on a long-term career path.

The Tech Campus is well-regarded as one of the best career and technical education training facilities in the Midwest. It was established nearly fifty years ago to pool together local educational resources to educate high school students. This year, the Tech Campus welcomed 1,900 students—its largest cohort in the past 10 years, which solidified its position as the biggest career technical secondary educational center in the entire state of Illinois. It is also the largest career center in the state, both in space and student population

3. Pioneer bold new career pathways

Communities that lead manufacturing growth won't do it by staying tethered to traditional models. Dual credit programs are a fantastic way to get young people engaged and foster their interest, but we can't stop there. Local schools have begun to explore new certifications that provide clear pathways for high school students to pursue a career in manufacturing while benefiting from practical workplace experiences, streamlined connections with area employers, and minimal educational costs.

The Illinois School Board of Education (ISBE) has provided a means of establishing these certifications through the Illinois State Career Pathway Endorsement Process. As of earlier this year, twelve schools in the state have moved forward to pilot programs, including Grayslake District 127 in Lake County. The school has leveraged a grant through Ed System NIU to establish a four-step process that results in a seal on a student's transcript that can distinguish them from other peers entering the field of manufacturing.

The transcript seal is as important as the process itself. In strategically walking students through the steps of the endorsement framework, educators like Gina Schuyler can help them make more informed post-secondary education decisions. Grayslake D127 uses the program YouScience to engage students in 11 brain-based games that align interests and aptitudes across a broad spectrum of career options. The tool begins conversations that students can then explore with the support of a mentor. Grayslake D127 is excited to add to this process with SchoolLinks, a career readiness product that can help counselors, CTE teachers, and internship coordinators collaborate more efficiently.

As students take early college credit classes in the form of dual credit, articulated credit, or AP credit, they can pursue professional learning experiences outside of the classroom. Examples of career exploration activities include site visits to employers, virtual experiences, career expos, and mock interviews. Team challenges can take place within a lab-based classroom such as a "skills check" through an employer or involvement in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) such as Skills USA, FBLA, FCCLA, or NTHS. Finally, the school ensures students are reading and math ready for post-secondary options.

As other schools in Lake County, including the Tech Campus, begin to embrace the endorsement process for their students, Grayslake is pioneering a discussion with Workforce Ecosystem

partners to garner support for the initiative, establish best practices, and chart a path forward that increases participation and support. To fuel this program and ensure its success, the Workforce Ecosystem is also lining up buy-in from the business community. This is an important step that starts with educating and engaging local business leaders so that they can more quickly tap into Lake County's extraordinary talent pipeline.

4. Build diverse community support

Engagement is fundamental to establishing a clear direction that serves the entire community as a whole. Lake County Partners secured a federal grant to lead the development of a county-wide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that has earned the full endorsement of area

leaders. The Lake County CEDS supports continued economic prosperity through social initiatives tied to affordable housing, paratransit, early education, and other important elements that support manufacturing growth and tie into the ideas included in this article.

5. Keep the feedback loop open

Economic growth doesn't happen in a vacuum. To build flourishing businesses and vibrant communities, leaders must be open to connecting, discussing, and listening. Economic development organizations like Lake County Partners can drive conversations forward by bringing together informed elected officials, business owners, workers, educators, and other stakeholders to ensure that training and investments remain relevant, forward-thinking, and inspiring. ♦

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Q&A WITH GOVERNOR JB PRITZKER

JB PRITZKER

Illinois voters recently reelected Democrat JB Pritzker as the 43rd Governor in Illinois. Pritzker and Juliana Stratton, the first African-American Lt. Governor in the state's two hundred year history, have a great opportunity to continue to reform Illinois and address many of the state's formidable challenges. The IMA sat down recently with Governor Pritzker who weighed in on his top priorities during his second term, continued plans to support the manufacturing sector, and plans to further address the workforce gap.

What are your top priorities for your second term in office?

My administration's top priority remains fiscal responsibility. After four balanced budgets, eliminating our \$8 billion bill backlog, building our Rainy Day fund, and increasing our pension assets under management by half a billion dollars, there is still more fiscal work to do. The better our state's finances are, the more likely it is that we can lower taxes and improve public safety. Economic growth requires us to produce and attract the best and brightest talent and that requires investment in education from early childhood to higher ed. I've worked to attract and grow businesses and make Illinois the best place to raise a family, and I look forward to working with the business community to continue moving the state in the right direction.

As the creator of 1871, and owner of manufacturing companies, how can we help attract the next generation of talent to the manufacturing sector?

Illinois is uniquely positioned to grow businesses and jobs in manufacturing. Our community colleges and workforce programs must continue to produce a steady stream of highly talented manufacturing workers with specific skills that meet the needs of the current and future manufacturers of Illinois. During my first term, we've made significant investments in workforce development, including three manufacturing training academies, the establishment of an EV innovation center, and clean energy manufacturing workforce & community support programs. We still have a lot more work to do, but I'm encouraged by how far we've come in four years.

Manufacturers are concerned about supply chain disruptions, rising energy prices, and finding qualified workers. How can Illinois help address these issues for the manufacturing sector?

Across the globe we're seeing consequences of a supply chain crisis unlike any in recent memory. It's put pressure on the manufacturing, logistics, and trans-

portation industries, and disrupted many aspects of the way we do business here in Illinois. That's why my administration has collaborated with the White House to identify options for long-term railroad container storage, providing relief for the congestion and pollution issues presented by supply chain backups in Chicago. In addition, the Rebuild Illinois infrastructure plan includes \$400 million in new funds for projects in the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program that improve safety and enhance



the movement of freight in and out of Illinois, driving down prices for all Illinoisans. Since I became Governor, we've added more energy production and maintained Illinois' position as a net energy exporter. And despite the rising cost of energy caused by international disruptions, Illinois remains a lower-cost energy producer than most other states. Finally, workforce development requires investment in job-specific programs at our community colleges and universities, something Illinois has made a greater investment in over the last four years than in the last two decades.

The IMA worked with you on numerous issues including manufacturing academies, apprenticeship credits, expanded Career & Tech Education, MICRO Act, REV-EDGE, and the R & D extension. What are 1 or

2 priorities or opportunities where the Administration and IMA can collaborate in the coming year?

The most important things we can do are to continue to build on our progress in funding quality technical education programs and attract additional companies to the state. I've always said part of my role as Governor is to serve as the state's best Chief Marketing Officer, and that means making sure people know what opportunities are here for them. Through a partnership with the IMA, we can promote the availability of advanced careers in the manufacturing industry, build on our already robust incentive programs to bring more manufacturers to our state, and strategize on how we can best retain the talent we already have here. It's important to me that we are making informed, thoughtful decisions on how the workforce of the future is trained, and I know the IMA can play a critical role in their development.

Is there anything else that you would like to communicate to Illinois manufacturers?

The best way to recruit new companies is by creating a stable economic environment so they know they can depend on the state government to be a partner for them in the years to come. We've made the responsible fiscal decisions in Illinois to put us back on the right path and businesses now know what to expect from the state government. Our population has increased to over 13 million residents, and we continue to add jobs at a pace faster than the U.S. rate. Our GDP has outpaced its pre-pandemic level and just crossed the trillion-dollar mark for the first time. Companies like Rivian, Lion Electric, Ferrero, Tyson, Boeing, and Caterpillar know we're a state on the rise with a workforce that is second to none, and that's why they've increased their manufacturing presence here. Working with IMA, my administration will continue to drive manufacturing growth throughout the state, and I'll continue the drive toward making Illinois the best state in the nation to live, work, and do business. ♦

Q&A WITH U.S. REPRESENTATIVE NIKKI BUDZINSKI

NIKKI BUDZINSKI

Representative-elect Nikki Budzinski will help grow Illinois Democrats' control of the Illinois congressional delegation by flipping a recently remapped House seat from red to blue. Now, Budzinski will head to Washington D.C. and represent a district that stretches from Champaign to East St. Louis. Budzinski is no stranger to Illinois politics or policy and has an opportunity to support ideas and concepts that will help grow Illinois manufacturing. The IMA recently sat down with Budzinski and asked a series of questions on how she views her role in Congress and the role manufacturing plays in Illinois.

What are your top legislative priorities as you enter Congress?

I am honored to serve Illinois-13 in the 118th Congress and look forward to working in a bipartisan fashion to help working families. Congress needs to work to ensure that the important bills for domestic manufacturing and energy investment are implemented responsibly, protecting taxpayers, and ensuring we can bring manufacturing jobs back to this country. Additionally, we need to pass a comprehensive farm bill that invests in our agricultural economy, supports family farmers, and ensures access to safe and healthy food for working families.

Manufacturers are concerned about supply chain disruptions, rising energy prices, and finding qualified workers. How can Congress help address these issues for the manufacturing sector?

Manufacturing is the backbone of the American economy, and Congress needs to continue to promote legislation that will minimize supply chain disruptions and decrease our reliance on foreign goods. In addition, the CHIPS Act was a major step in the right direction, and I look forward to playing a key role in the implementation of this important policy. Semiconductor chips are used in everything from our vehicles and microwaves to our cell phones – yet most semiconductors are made outside of the United States, making us far too reliant on other countries. By investing in creating semiconductors here in America, we will be able to control our supply chains, unleash American manufacturing, and minimize the chances

of supply chain issues like those we have experienced over the last few years from happening again.

Additionally, we need to work to ensure energy independence. As we transition to a clean energy economy, we need to ensure that Central and Southern Illinois families and businesses have access to baseload power that protects consumers from rising costs, ensures energy reliability, and makes progress toward achieving a zero-emission clean energy economy. In Congress, I will work with the IMA to ensure that this is possible.

are significantly impacting the manufacturing sector. We need to be investing in workforce training which includes programs at four-year colleges/universities, community colleges, union apprenticeship programs, and vocational education. We need to approach workforce training as not a one-size-fits-all but an approach with multiple options for working people to achieve affordable, high-quality job training that leads to well-paying middle-class jobs.

Congress should also return to bipartisan negotiations to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. A comprehensive approach to immigration reform should include expanding H-2A and H-2b visas that will allow employers to fill open positions, helping to address our workforce shortages. This must also include a pathway to citizenship for dreamers, farm workers, and immigrants covered by Temporary Protected Status (TPS). In Congress, I would look for bipartisan options to support and achieve comprehensive immigration reform.

Is there anything else that you would like to communicate to Illinois manufacturers?

I am excited to represent the 13th Congressional district with a strong manufacturing base and workforce training programs like Enrich at Richland Community College, which set up Central and Southern Illinois to be a leader in economic development, innovation, and middle-class job opportunities. I look forward to partnering with the IMA to support and strengthen our assets and opportunities. ♦



The single largest issue facing manufacturers is the workforce shortage as there are more than 800,000 open manufacturing jobs across the nation. How can federal policymakers assist manufacturers and attract the next generation of workers (perception, immigration, training, etc)?

I look forward to working with the IMA to address workforce shortages that

HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING ARE CHANGING THE ENERGY INDUSTRY

CONSTELLATION

Artificial intelligence or AI involves a computer's ability to adapt to a situation and create a unique solution that was not directly programmed. The energy industry has been tapping into the innovative world of AI to learn how to improve processes, ensure energy resiliency and to enhance the customer experience, among other pertinent goals.

AI vs. Machine Learning

The terms "machine learning" (ML) and AI are often used interchangeably, but ML is just one branch of AI. ML can be defined as a collection of computer science-based methods to find insights by leveraging past experiences to inform a future decision. Over time, these decisions improve and become more precise as the ML system learns from its mistakes. ML itself can be broken down into additional categories and has many different applications.

AI Energy Innovations Currently in the Market

There are many solutions entering or existing in the market now based on some level of AI or are enhanced by AI. The simplest form has been around for some time: the Nest thermostat. It learns your schedule through its occupancy sensor, the weather outside, the temperature of the space, your phone or car's location and the feedback of the individuals changing the set points. After about a week, it knows when to start cooling or heating your home. On top of the thermostat itself, you can also use a smart home assistant to ask the thermostat to change the set point at any time. The complexity of understanding speech and having a seamless conversation with a voice assistant is heavily based on the capabilities that AI has brought to the world.

Beyond the home, we are seeing AI enter every part of the energy value chain. Examples include the work being done at Constellation, such as the generation facilities leveraging AI to better predict failure and optimize when to schedule maintenance. On the distribution side, utilities are using AI-based technology to better respond to storm-related outages. On the sustainability side, by leveraging emissions, usage and energy tariff data, along with implementation costs and financing, we can create

plans that optimize costs, emissions and reliability to meet sustainability goals as well as increase resilience and decrease costs.

For commercial energy managers, new solutions providing enhancements that breathe new life into some staple capabilities, such as utility bill review and auditing, and energy forecasting, are now available. Additionally, we are seeing such tools complement the role of the energy manager. No longer is the energy manager logging into one of a multitude of dashboards and searching for anomalies; now, they are being notified of an anomaly or an opportunity to create value for their organization.

AI's Potential to Improve the Energy Industry

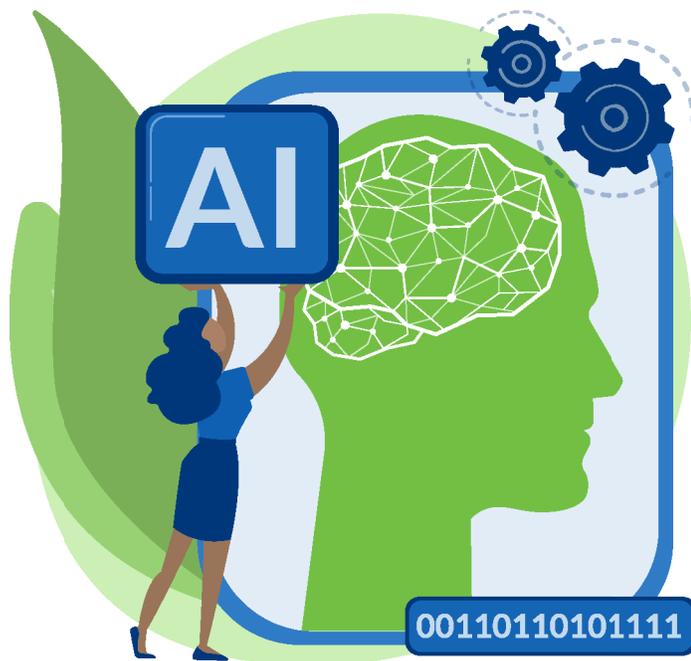
Constellation is looking at AI to decrease our customers' energy costs and to optimize the many tasks they perform on a regular basis. As we think about cost for our customers, it is easy to just think about price per kilowatt-hour, but we know our customers think about more than just that number. They are interested in ways to be more efficient or to decrease capacity costs and other energy-related costs.

We are exploring how we can leverage AI

to deliver the right person the right insight at the right time to make more informed decisions that have a direct impact on cost. For example, a new solution we're offering known as Pear.ai allows customers to talk conversationally with a system to gain insights. They can ask a question about a site or portfolio of sites and Sam, the technology's virtual energy agent, is able to answer the question. Today, the questions are focused, but we are seeing Pear.ai add capabilities on a monthly, if not weekly basis.

How Does AI Impact Customers?

AI can enhance an energy manager's capabilities. Customers will be able to forecast load as well as cost to help determine the value of energy efficiency and energy solutions. In finance, we can provide insights into why budget forecasts were off and how that will have a ripple effect through the remainder of the year. In sustainability, AI can help you balance the risk tolerance of your organization with your greenhouse gas-related goals to assist Constellation experts in the creation of a customized commodity product for your business, including offsite renewables and managed commodity products, that meet your needs.



Constellation – 24/7 access to billing and energy usage data

OLD TECHNOLOGY IS HURTING PRODUCTIVITY IN ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING PLANTS

SUNDOG

In today's world, technology is constantly changing and evolving. For manufacturers, it is important to keep up to date with the latest technology in order to remain competitive. Unfortunately, many manufacturers are still using old technology which leads to increased downtime that greatly affects productivity and profitability. The return on investment with new technology will make a significant impact on the bottom line. Therefore, it is important for Controllers, CEOs, CFOs, and Plant Managers to understand the impact of old technology on their manufacturing plants and to take steps to ensure that their plants are using the most current and reliable technology available.

How Old Technology Causes Downtime

Downtime is a major problem for manufacturers because it leads to lost production time and decreased profits. When machines break down or computers crash, it takes time to fix the problem and get the machines running again. This lost production time can be costly, as it can mean missed deadlines and lost orders. Just like any other machines on the factory floor, even simple workstations are now necessities for manufacturing as they are used both in the office and on the line, and they require the same amount of care as any forklift or production machine to maintain consistent productivity.

These days, most workstations talk directly to online portals and other online systems for financial reporting, ERP integration, OEM communications, and more. Running outdated software and workstations create communication issues between your workstations and these newer systems because these cloud-based systems are constantly being updated to improve performance, security, and enhance features. The more outdated you let your systems become, the more you increase the chances of communication issues between the new technology and your older systems.

Utilizing Technology to Retain Staff

In addition, downtime can lead to employee frustration, as they are unable to do their jobs properly when machines

are not working correctly. Downtime and slow operations can hurt not only the organization by losing staff, but it can hurt your staff's pockets due to inconsistent scheduling. 85% of manufacturing staff agree that unpredictable work scheduling negatively affects their overall well-being.

Luckily, technology can play a large part in the retention and recruiting of your staff. For one, incorporating and updating your technology infrastructure can raise productivity by up to 25% by limiting the amount of time wasted on machine stoppage, human error, and insufficient product quality, making your staff's job easier. Additionally, updated technology allows your workforce to have an easier user experience, which means less time and frustration spent on trying to solve technology problems—a task that your team did not sign up for in the first place.

Another retainment factor is the level of support you are offering your team. This benefit increases exponentially when you have an IT firm that is dedicated to quickly solving your workforce's technology problems. As technology has become more integrated into the manufacturing industry, it is important to give your staff a ground level of cybersecurity and technical training on things like Microsoft 365, which includes Teams, Outlook, Excel, Word, and OneNote. This benefit heightens when you partner with a proven I.T. provider that gives your team plenty of staff training opportunities to inform them on how to work with their technology both safely and effectively.

Investment in New Technology Pays for Itself

Investing in new technology can be costly, but the return on investment is significant. Newer computers, workstations, laptops, switches, and servers are faster and more reliable than older models. This means that employees can work more efficiently, saving time and money. Imagine saving an employee just 10 minutes a day (very conservative number) by being able to open programs faster or by eliminating annoying technical issues. Ten minutes a day adds up to more than a week of saved time over the course of a year. You probably just paid for a new workstation in

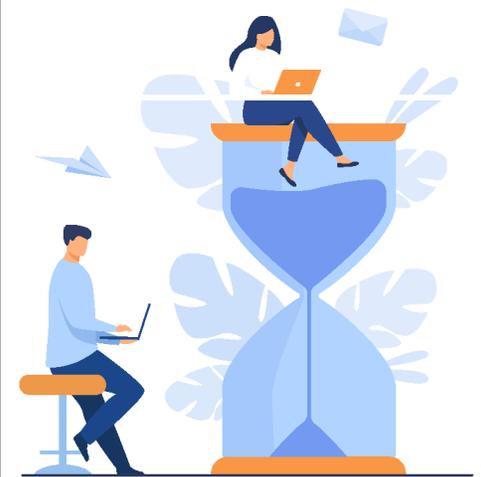
year one, so imagine the savings over the course of 5 years.

Old Technology is like an Open Door for Hackers

Another danger of using outdated technology is that it can make your manufacturing operation more vulnerable to cyberattacks. Outdated computers, servers and firewalls are not as secure as newer models, which means that hackers may be able to gain access to your network more easily. This can lead to a loss of data or a complete shutdown of your operations. Workstations running older versions of Microsoft Windows and older software are incapable of receiving the newest vital patches, or security updates that are necessary to keep hackers out of your network. Not being able to apply these types of critical updates opens not only your organization's confidential information to hackers, but potentially your clients too.

In Conclusion

You can take big steps in upgrading your technology, securing your network, and retaining staff if you are working to ensure that all equipment is current and up to date. You can take this off your plate by having a managed I.T. provider that is truly a partner for you. They should be focused on what you need to help move your organization forward while remaining within your budget and balancing your timetable with the ever-changing state of technology. ♦



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REGULATING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORKPLACE

GREENSFELDER, HEMKER & GALE, P.C.

The proliferation of social media creates new and difficult situations for employers, including manufacturers. Many employers wonder to what extent they can regulate their employee's social media activities.

For better or worse, virtually all our employees have smartphones with the capacity to text, email, comment, and upload photos and videos instantaneously. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube provide our employees with, for the most part, an unregulated platform to easily and instantly share their personal, and potentially controversial, opinions publicly, such as negative things about their employment. For example, frustrated employees might complain about their working conditions – or, even worse, about their supervisor or management in general.

Navigating these situations is not simple. For example, to combat this, unfortunately, many employers' initial reaction is to ban employees from saying anything negative about the employer online and on the employees' personal social media accounts – or perhaps even discussing work at all, or even demanding their social media passwords or logins to access their personal media accounts. While the First Amendment's right to free speech generally does not apply to actions taken by private employers, there are Illinois privacy laws and federal laws that do.

For example, the Illinois Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act (820 ILCS 55) prohibits an employer from, among other things: (a) requesting, requiring, or coercing any employee to provide a username and password or any password or other related account information in order to gain access to the employee's personal online account or to demand access in any manner to an employee's personal online account; or (b) requesting, requiring, or coercing an employee or applicant to authenticate or access a personal online account in the presence of the employer.

Separately, what may be surprising to many manufacturers (and employers in general), particularly non-unionized employees, is that the National Labor

Relations Board ("NLRB"), which interprets the National Labor Relations Act ("NLRA"), has ruled that restricting or prohibiting an employee from discussing terms and conditions of employment (e.g., wages, hours, benefits, working conditions) is illegal. Indeed, Section 7 of the NLRA protects those non-supervisory, unionized, and non-unionized workers who use social media to engage in "concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid and protection." This creates a special risk for non-unionized employers who are unlikely to be aware of current NLRB precedent. They usually draft their social media policies using what most people would consider common sense and legitimate business interests in mind. The danger for these employers is that the NLRB often finds that these policies violate the NLRA because they may chill the exercise of Section 7 rights by employees.

Notwithstanding, however, employers can still encourage employees to think before they speak (or type) and remind them that behavior akin to unlawful harassment of their co-workers may still lead to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

Employer "Dos" for Social Media Policies

- Maintain control over company social media accounts. As the employer, you own them and have a right to access them. You should always have the current credentials to access company social media, even if you assign an employee or outside party to oversee the accounts.

- Make sure that any restrictions regarding employee conduct on social media are as narrowly drawn as possible. For example, if your company precludes employees from disclosing certain categories of company information (e.g., confidential, financial, or other proprietary information), you should define each of those terms in the policy with specific examples of the types of documents and information that fall under each of these broader terms. These examples should identify clearly protectable interests like trade secrets, marketing plans, business strategies, customer lists, research and

development activities, and pricing information.

- Encourage employees to be respectful and to avoid statements that could be interpreted as threatening, harassing, or defaming, for example, posts about co-workers, supervisors, or the employer, competitors, or suppliers that are vulgar, obscene, threatening, harassing, libelous, or discriminatory based on a protected class (but be careful about regulating negative posts made in the context of discussing terms and conditions of employment protected by the NLRA, as discussed above).

- Include provisions in social media policies that require employees who are posting about work-related issues or company products or services to include a disclaimer that their views are their personal opinions and do not reflect those of the company, especially if the employee chooses to identify themselves as an employee of the company on any social media network.

- Put employees on notice that if the employer is conducting an investigation into the employee's alleged misconduct, and the employer has a reasonable belief that the employee's personal social media activity is relevant to the investigation, you may request or require an employee to share specific content that has been reported to the employer, without requesting or requiring an employee to provide the employee's username and password, or other means of authentication that provides access to an employee's personal online account, for the purpose of viewing their social media activity.

Employer "Don'ts" for Social Media Policies and Practices

- Do not include blanket restrictions prohibiting employees from defaming or otherwise damaging the reputation of co-workers, clients, or the company. The NLRB has held such broadly worded restrictions will be considered violations of an employee's Section 7 rights. Further, the Illinois Workplace Transparency Act prohibits an employer from including a provision in any "document" (e.g., employee handbook) that prevents an employee from reporting/disclosing allega-

tions of unlawful workplace conduct to government officials or testifying in administrative, legislative, or judicial proceedings about alleged criminal conduct or unlawful employment practices.

- Do not prohibit employees from posting information about their wages, hours, or other terms and conditions of employment. The NLRB has made it clear that these are topics that employees generally are free to discuss under Section 7 of the NLRA, without reprisal. Further, the Illinois Equal Pay Act prohibits employers from requiring employees to sign a waiver that prohibits employees from disclosing or discussing information about the employee's wages, salary, benefits, or other compensation.

- Do not use information you learn from an employee's personal social media account, for example, related to the employee's protected activity or the employee belonging to a protected class, to make an adverse decision regarding the employee. This could subject the company to claims of retaliation or discrimination.

- Do not fail to report and, if appropriate, take prompt remedial action against an employee whom you know and/or learn is engaging in discriminatory and/or harassing conduct via social media against another employee. The prohibition of harassment and discrimination in the "work environment" under the Illinois Human Rights Act is not limited to the physical location in which the employee is assigned. This means that Illinois employers can be held liable for discriminatory and/or harassing conduct that occurs outside the workplace of which they become aware, for example, on social media, but which affects an employee in the workplace.

Before taking any adverse action against an employee based on an employee's social media use, employers should consider the following:

- Does the activity negatively affect your business? How?
- Does the activity violate your social media policy?
- Are you enforcing the policy uniformly? For example, have other employees posted similar content or about similar

topics without being disciplined?

- Can you legally take action, or is the activity in question protected under the law? Consult legal counsel if you have any doubts.

- How did you learn of the posting or conduct? Did you learn in a way that could be considered an invasion of privacy, for example under the Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act?

- How will taking action affect employee morale?

- How will the action be perceived by the employer's customers, community, and the public if it is publicized?

While the above provides a solid foundation for drafting, amending, and ad-

ministering a social media policy, this is still an area of law that is in flux. Thus, best practice dictates that manufacturers always think about the legal risks involved, adopt a legally compliant policy, and retain knowledgeable employment counsel to review the facts related to any proposed discipline based on an employee's social media use to ensure that the discipline does not violate any laws. Similarly, manufacturers should retain knowledgeable employment counsel to analyze any proposed implementation or revision of their social media related policies to ensure the proposals reflect the latest trends in the NLRB's treatment of social media issues. ♦



Gain insight into DEI-related benefits strategy and workforce planning

Download Gallagher's 2021 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Employer Considerations Guide

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Q&A WITH SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER JOHN CURRAN

JOHN CURRAN

The Illinois Senate Republicans unanimously selected Senator John Curran, 41st District, as their leader for the 103rd General Assembly. Curran, who is often seen as a moderate Republican that works well with legislators on both sides of the aisle, will have the opportunity to build off his positive relationships with Democratic leadership and push a pro-business message despite his caucus being outnumbered 2-1 in the Senate. The IMA has had a great relationship with future Leader Curran who has joined the IMA in touring several manufacturers in his district. Recently, the IMA sat down with the Senator to discuss, among other things, his views on manufacturing in Illinois.

What are your top priorities as you assume your new leadership role?

In the 103rd General Assembly, a top priority for Senate Republicans will be improving the business climate in Illinois. Every piece of labor/business legislation will be viewed through a lens of whether it will improve or diminish the ability of businesses to succeed, grow, and thrive. The Senate Republicans' legislative agenda will include several measures that help our job creators reach these goals.

Senate Republicans will also continue pushing for strengthened ethics laws in the 103rd General Assembly. We firmly believe Illinois' ethics laws are too lax and include loopholes that allow bad actors to engage in unethical behaviors. Our ethics reform priorities include:

- Allowing the IL Attorney General to use the statewide grand jury (currently unavailable) to investigate, indict, and prosecute bribery, official misconduct, and other state public corruption crimes.
- Amending the State Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) law to give wiretap authority to state attorneys to investigate crimes of public corruption (currently only available to federal investigators).
- Prohibiting legislators from accepting lobbying positions for a minimum of one year after leaving office or until the end of their current term if a legislator steps down early, whichever is longer.
- Instituting a full lobbying ban for members of the General Assembly, their spouses, and immediate family members, and

prohibiting legislators from negotiating employment with a lobbying firm while they are in office.

- Strengthening the autonomy and powers of the State Legislative Inspector General with regard to issuing subpoenas and investigating legislative misconduct.
- Bringing a higher level of transparency to Legislative Ethics Commission Meetings.



How can manufacturers better engage in the legislative process in 2023?

Manufacturers are valuable partners and are critical to Illinois' economic vitality. With more than \$50 billion in manufactured goods exports in this state

annually, they must have a voice in policy discussions that have the potential to impact the manufacturing and overall business sector of Illinois. Unfortunately, that isn't always the case. Senate Republicans will continue to advocate on behalf of these job creators and push for their greater involvement in future policy discussions.

What are your expectations for a working dynamic with Democrat majorities, and how can your caucus work effectively?

The Senate does its best work when Republicans and Democrats work together. Especially for the most important and impactful public policy discussions, Republicans, Democrats, and relevant stakeholders all need to be at the table for a respectful exchange of ideas. When collaboration and respect are at the center of policymaking, good results follow. In the 103rd General Assembly, Republicans are hopeful to gain a seat at the negotiation table.

How important is manufacturing in your eyes as an economic driver for Illinois?

The manufacturing sector is a primary driver of our state's economy and employs more than half a million Illinoisans. Manufacturers provide good-paying jobs that provide stability for middle-class Illinois families. There are opportunities to grow this sector and create more jobs for Illinois families. By supporting research and development and investing in new technologies that carry the manufacturing industry forward, Illinois can become a manufacturing destination state. ♦

Q&A WITH HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER TONY MCCOMBIE

TONY MCCOMBIE

The Illinois House Republican Caucus recently chose Representative Tony McCombie, whose 89th District is in the northwestern corner of the state and includes Galena and Freeport, as the next Illinois House Republican Leader. McCombie replaces current Leader Jim Durkin beginning in January after Durkin announced he would not seek another term as leader of the caucus that has struggled to make inroads in the last few elections. McCombie has the ability to bring a new face and fresh ideas to the caucus that often supports manufacturing but finds itself in the super minority. The IMA recently chatted with Representative McCombie to get her take on the state of affairs in Illinois.



What are your top priorities as you assume your new leadership role?

My top priority is to bring our partners together to unify around a message and develop a strategy to bring balance and prosperity to Illinois. We must grow our numbers and get our message out to republican and commonsense voters in a way that crushes any preconceived notions about who people think we are as Republicans. We will take the lessons we have learned from the past, set short-, mid-, and long-term goals, and work effectively to politically and structurally

reform Illinois. With better policies surrounding education, taxes, and public safety, Illinois would be the best state in the nation to live and raise a family.

How important is manufacturing in your eyes as an economic driver for Illinois?

Manufacturing is critical to Illinois. Communities across the state rely on the manufacturing industry to provide employment and revenue to their tax base. The past couple of years have educated Americans about supply chain issues and the need for local manufac-

turing and better distribution networks, firsthand. Now that people understand the problems, they can advocate for improved public policy that will attract new manufacturers and grow the existing manufacturing presence in Illinois.

What are your expectations for a working dynamic with Democrat majorities, and how can your caucus work effectively?

I have high expectations that Speaker Welch will put aside politics and capitalize on the wide range of experience within the Republican Caucus. In this upside-down environment, the Democrats do not need our votes, but taking advantage of our knowledge will bring better opportunities for the districts we all serve. Many of us in the Republican Caucus have a reputation for working honestly and fairly on issues with our colleagues to get things done. I look forward to sitting with Speaker Welch in the next few weeks to share our vision and hear his thoughts for the 103rd General Assembly.

How can manufacturers better engage in the legislative process in 2023?

Manufacturers can better engage by reaching out to their community leaders, and local and state representatives directly. Touring manufacturing facilities and hearing from the employers has certainly helped me better understand local, state, and in some cases, federal issues. Direct communication from job creators and employees about the impact of an existing policy or one being considered is extremely important. The impact of personal relationships cannot be overestimated. Business owners must be ambassadors for policies for manufacturing, job creation, and overall economic growth. ♦



It's the things most people take for granted that make the world work. We barely think about electricity unless our power goes out. We don't notice the road until it has a pothole. If we ever ran out of coffee, you better believe people would start thinking about international trade.

In the manufacturing industry, going unnoticed is often a sad sign of a job well done. Nobody thinks about truckers when the package arrives on time. However, as the threats of cyberattacks increase, the manufacturing industry is in danger of getting noticed, and unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons.

If your company falls victim to a cyberattack, then you and everyone who relies on your services pay the price. So, let's talk about regulations, cyber insurance, cybersecurity, AI, and how these things can keep you safe. It's the start of a new year and the word on everyone's lips is "compliance." Cyberattacks have been a problem for years, but they've skyrocketed since the start of the pandemic. We're seeing massive companies like Uber, Sephora, and Omnicom get hit by cyberattackers. But these are just the attacks that make the news. Every day, companies that aren't fa-

mous suffer from cyberattacks as well.

In an effort to help ensure our nation's cybersecurity preparedness, the government is rolling out several cybersecurity compliance regulations. This wave of regulations comes at a pivotal time for SMBs. In fact, a new study finds that smaller businesses are more common targets for cyberattacks than enterprises. Since the pandemic, cyberattacks on smaller companies have increased 600%.

These smaller companies are being targeted daily. Many of them don't have sufficient cybersecurity practices in place. Perhaps they don't understand the realities of the threats that face them, or perhaps they are in denial and think, "this won't happen to me." Regardless of the reason, these companies can't afford to be exposed to cyberattacks.

The point of these regulations isn't to charge companies for no reason. In many ways, this is almost a last resort to get companies to keep themselves safe. The government has been warning companies about the dangers of cyberattacks for years, but these warnings have fallen on deaf ears. Now the government is putting in rigid legal regulations to ensure that companies keep themselves safe.

For every company that is hit by a successful cyberattack, our nation's economy (not to mention millions of people) takes a hit. As the supply chain learns more about the nature of cyberattacks, people are increasingly reticent to do business with companies that don't have cyber insurance. So now, just like you need auto insurance to own a car, you need cyber insurance to own a company.

This is why cybersecurity is so important. Without cybersecurity, you do not meet compliance standards. More importantly, without cybersecurity, you don't qualify for cyber insurance.

In November of 2022, BlackBerry and Corvus Insurance published research about the state of cyber insurance. Their top three findings were shocking:

1. Only 55% of those interviewed currently have cyber insurance.
2. Of those with insurance, over one-third (37%) aren't covered for ransomware payments.
3. Of those with ransomware payment coverage, only 19% are covered if the ransom is higher than the

median demand in 2021 of \$600,000. That number drops to 14% for companies with fewer than 1,500 employees.

Let's analyze that data for a moment. If the survey field accurately represents all companies in the United States (which we'll assume that it does), barely half of our nation's companies have any sort of cyber insurance at all. Of those that have cyber insurance, almost 40% aren't covered if someone hacks into their company and demands a ransom. Even if your cybersecurity knowledge only comes from movies, you know how common these kinds of attacks are. Finally, of the total number of companies with cyber insurance that covers ransomware (35% of all US companies), not even 20% of them are covered if the hackers demand one penny more than the median demand in 2021.

Meaning, if there were 100 companies in the US, only seven of them would be covered in case of a ransomware attack. With over 90% of companies under-protected from cyberthreats, now is the time to invest in cybersecurity. This country relies on the stability of its manufacturing industry. We all remember how hectic things were at the beginning of the pandemic, when a congested supply chain had everything backed up for weeks. Imagine how bad it would be if companies in the manufacturing industry were taken out by cyberattacks.

If you work in the manufacturing industry, the last thing you want to worry about is hiring an IT team to keep you safe. That's where AI comes in. New developments in the world of AI are making it easier than ever to keep your company protected. According to Dror Liwer, Coro Cyber Security's co-founder and CMO, AI breakthroughs are making cybersecurity more accessible to small and mid-sized companies. "Adopting AI-driven tools can lessen the burden on resource-stretched businesses, reduce bottlenecks and make processes more efficient—freeing up time to focus on strategic efforts," Liwer notes in a recent Forbes article. "Furthermore, an in-house IT team or deep technical know-how isn't necessary to realize the benefits of AI. 'Unsupervised' AI learning uses ma-

chine learning algorithms to analyze data and discover hidden patterns without the need for human intervention or data scientists (ideal for a business function like cyber security or IT service desk)."

These new cybersecurity systems are not just designed to keep your company

safe, but also to keep you compliant as regulations ramp up. AI-driven tools could be the perfect solution for companies that want to be safe and compliant without hiring an entire IT team or breaking the bank. For more information, contact the author or visit coro.net/manufacturing. ♦

Moving **FOR**ward requires **VIS**ion

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2022 IMA ANNUAL LUNCHEON



Almost 500 business leaders from across Illinois gathered in person on Friday, December 2, for the IMA's 2022 Annual Luncheon at the JW Marriott in Chicago, featuring keynote speaker Gene Seroka, Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles. The Port of Los Angeles is the nation's busiest port, which has overcome numerous supply chain challenges since the global pandemic began in 2020. In addition, a series of virtual breakout sessions were conducted in the days leading up to the Annual Luncheon, covering energy, an economic forecast, and workforce challenges.

"I'm thrilled to honor The Will Group as the 2022 Manufacturer of the Year in Illinois for their amazing leadership in developing the next generation workforce for manufacturing and aerospace while investing in underserved areas that need economic development," said Mark Denzler, president & CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association. "'Where There's a Will, There's a Way,' is the company's philosophy and they are empowering success by investing in their workforce and changing neighborhoods. This wonderful family-owned company is also honoring the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen by transforming the lives of at-risk youth with aviation career education and career path opportunities."

The IMA's annual award recognizes a company for their leadership in six core areas:

- Manufacturing Advocacy: Serves as a

strong voice for the manufacturing industry at the local, state, or national level.

- Operational Excellence: Creates a profound and lasting impact on stakeholders, companies, markets, and suppliers within the manufacturing sector with a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

- Innovation & Technology: Committed to innovation, Research & Development, transformative product development, or technological advances.

- Workforce Development & Diversity: Focused on building the next generation of leaders through support of education and workforce development programs.

- Community Engagement: Demonstrates long-term commitment to local community, charitable, and philanthropic efforts.

- Sustainability: Supports sustainable methods of production and elimination of non-value-added activities from operations.

Along with our partner, BlueCross and BlueShield of Illinois, we also concluded this year's Manufacturing Miles competition, which was created to encourage healthy activities amongst the manufacturing community. Thirty-five companies competed, and over 900 manufacturing employees logged more than 600,000 miles (walking, running, swimming, biking, and an array of other activities) between March and October. The winning teams were recognized in three size categories: United Scrap Metal Inc., Hoffer Plastics, and Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation. Our overall

top individual winner was Rick Weaver from Novelis with 4,761 miles. Congratulations and keep up the healthy activities!

These IMA members were recognized for milestone anniversaries of membership:

100 years – Members since 1922

Innophos
United States Steel Corporation

75 years – Members since 1947

Superior Graphite
Western Structural Company

50 years – Members since 1972

Afton Chemical
Bell Flavors & Fragrances
Krueger Steel & Wire
The StandFast Group, LLC

25 years – Members since 1997

AGCO – GSI
Alu-Bra Foundry, Incorporated
Falex Corporation
Fuyao Glass America
Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC)
Keating of Chicago, Inc.
North American Lighting, Inc.
Prospect Products Inc.
Simplomatic Manufacturing Company
Sternberg Lighting
Swiss Automation, Inc.
The Clorox Company
Unilever

TOP 5 WAYS SOFTWARE VENDORS TRY TO MISLEAD YOU

TAFT LAW

From modernizing business processes to accelerating workflows and increasing profitability, there are plenty of upsides to implementing ERP software or full-scale digital transformation. However, there are many things that can go wrong during and after the implementation process that can result in an implementation train wreck. In the cases we litigate, on behalf of ERP customers victimized by software failures, the reason for the failure almost always lies squarely with the ERP vendor or integrator.

ERP Software implementations can take on many forms, from not realizing expected business benefits, blown budgets, extended timelines, the failure of deliverables to conform to agreed-upon specifications, to production stoppages, massive loss of revenue and even business failure.

While there are a multitude of reasons behind a failed software project, we consistently see the common theme of misrepresentations and over sales during the sales process. Software salespeople are almost always commission based. Thus, the incentives for making their “numbers” are high - large bonuses, new cars, and exotic trips. Similarly, the consequences of not meeting their “numbers” are dire - reduced compensation and termination.

The way software vendors typically over-sell is by setting unrealistic expectations to their customers regarding project complexity, software features, capabilities and functionality, to flat out misrepresenting what the software can do, and whether it is a proper fit for the customer’s business.

Here are the top 5 ways software vendors try to mislead you:

• The Silver Bullet:

One common sales tactic is for the vendor to represent that the software is the one-piece of technology that is going to solve all of your problems. They position the software as an easy fix to the organization’s technology issues with zero drawbacks or risk. As an organization it is crucial to understand that no software is perfect, regardless of how the software is being advertised to cater to your needs. It

is important to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the software against any other potential solutions to save both time and money as an organization.

• The Lift and Shift:

A sales tactic that traps many customers is the suggestion by the software vendor that it is going to be easy to transition from the legacy ERP system to the new ERP system. This is far from the truth. When deploying new technology, the adoption and utilization of that new technology almost always requires significant changes from current business processes. The role the individuals in your organization will play with the new software will change. Finally, users often need extensive training in the new ERP software to become proficient.

• The Software Can Do Anything and Everything:

Software vendors will be quick to represent that their software meets all capabilities required by your organization, or that the software can be easily modified or customized to meet your requirements. This is unrealistic. No software system is perfect, and there will always be functionality gaps. It is more of a measure of how well the software’s functionality handles certain business requirements compared to other available software systems.

• Failure to Properly Integrate Software:

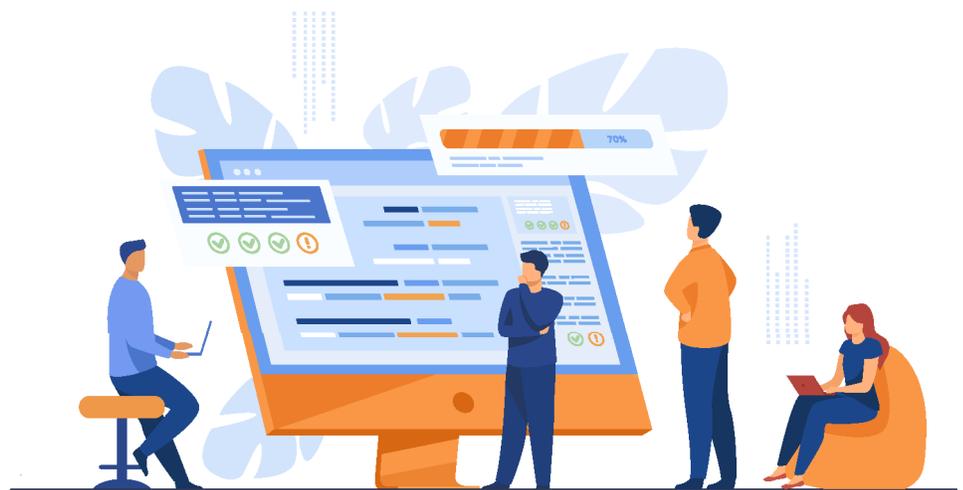
ERP vendors sometimes under-test the

system to intentionally conceal defects and meet milestone and deliverable deadlines. Often this results in a failure to perform proper integration testing to determine if the ERP system can interface with other non-ERP systems on which a customer might depend.

• Complexity and Risk of Implementation:

It is common for ERP vendors to over-promise and under deliver the ERP software’s functionality and exaggerate the software’s fit for a customer’s business needs. Despite a customer’s best efforts to evaluate and select an ERP system, ERP vendors often engage in puffery and misrepresentations to meet sales quotas. When this happens, customers are often so far into an implementation that they feel compelled to pay for expensive customizations to try to save an ERP software system that is riddled with unsalvageable functionality gaps.

To avoid an ERP implementation train wreck, it is crucial to understand how a software vendor may mislead you into believing an ERP system may be the right fit when it is not. Falling victim to the glitz and glamor of software demonstrations and the pressure of the sales process sets you up for failure. Understanding your business requirements and taking the steps to identify functionality gaps in the new ERP software will put you in a position to be successful. ♦



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HOW COMBINING REVOPS AND INBOUND CAN BOOST GROWTH FOR MANUFACTURERS

SIMPLE MACHINES MARKETING

You've likely heard the term "RevOps" as it continues to become a common topic of conversation among manufacturing leaders. In fact, 48% of B2B companies now incorporate a RevOps function into their business strategy – and those numbers are growing.

The concept involves aligning production, sales, marketing, and customer success and working together toward a common goal – increasing revenue. Research shows this approach is working: a 2020 study by Boston Consulting Group found that businesses using RevOps are seeing noticeable results like a 200% increase in digital marketing ROI and a 30% reduction in go-to-market expenses.

With results like that, you may be considering implementing a RevOps model within your business. But does it work with the Inbound marketing you've worked hard to implement? Or does RevOps take its place? Should you do both? There are so many questions, and the short answers are: Yes, definitely not and yes, you likely should. But let's look at the longer answers.

RevOps Basics

The concept of RevOps is to maximize revenue through alignment among sales, marketing, and customer success teams. Tighter coordination of those functions helps streamline purchasing funnel activity, increase efficiency, and reduce friction by aligning your efforts regarding your processes, people, and platforms. How? Let's take a look:

- **Processes:** Every customer touchpoint, from building brand awareness to purchase troubleshooting and service after the sale needs to be given a thorough once-over. Can improvements be made? If so, document your processes so there's no question what steps are involved, and they can be easily repeated. Apply the same tactic to your production protocols.

- **People:** Who's responsible for each process? If there are new procedures, where do they fit into the rest? Do you need to hire RevOps staff to carry out these responsibilities? Will external help

– perhaps an ops consultant or a marketing agency – be required?

- **Platform:** It's essential to look at your tech stack with this question in mind: Does each component facilitate collaboration and communication between sales, marketing, and customer success? Is it easy for all teams to log, track, and access data that's pertinent to their work? To keep each department well-equipped to do their jobs and avoid the detriment of silos, your data and activity need to be connected to a single source of truth, like a CRM. Some CRMs are designed with operational efficiency in mind while others may need to use integrations for data to flow between sources effectively.

Let's say you were going to assemble an electric motor. You know you'll need bearings, windings, wires, cores, etc. But without instructions telling you how to combine those components, your motor isn't going to work as well as possible. Sure, if you're experienced in assembling motors, you could probably wing it and it'd start, but it wouldn't perform optimally. But what if you had instructions?

RevOps is like the assembly instruction manual, complete with diagrams and an orderly sequence of events. Your company already has the components; RevOps puts them – processes, people, and platforms – into context and pulls it all together. It may not be an actual motor but will spark efficient flow through the sales funnel, resulting in satisfied customers, reduced costs, and increased revenue. Much like improving manufacturing processes, streamlining the Three Ps may also heighten worker productivity and elevate the employee experience

RevOps & Inbound: The Difference

So, what's the difference between RevOps and Inbound? Great question!

RevOps focuses on how the organization handles the entire customer journey with the customer in mind. Removing the silos within an organization allows collaboration and innovation to increase (usually, along with ROI) while redundancies, waste, and friction decrease – all wins. So, while the end goal of RevOps is

an increase in revenue due to an increase in satisfied customers, it focuses largely on standard operating procedures that enable teams to improve – easier, faster, and frictionless – the customer experience.

Inbound is also customer-centric but with a slightly different angle. It aims to attract, engage, and delight prospects and customers. The focus here is more on the prospective customers' behavior, interests and needs as they proceed through their buying journey and how your teams respond to them. Much of it is based on well-researched generalizations, but the ability exists to precisely tailor outreach or responses to contacts.

How RevOps Helps Inbound

Centralized, shared data gives clarity to what otherwise could be complex and murky. Having access to sales and marketing data helps make Inbound efforts more effective. Tracking and reporting on past marketing campaigns, social media engagement, website traffic, etc., helps drive decisions regarding marketing strategies, lead and sales forecasting, revenue projections, and ROI calculations. Accessibility to those figures helps stakeholders see the path to their goal and facilitates collaborative effort and innovation.

Centralized data and consistent reporting on KPIs also give you better feedback. When the whole organization is speaking the same language as to what constitutes success, it's easier to maintain alignment. You also can quickly see whether key tactics are working or not, enabling needed adjustments.

Further, seeing the benchmarks, past successes and failures and current campaign data help with goal setting, keeping objectives realistic and on track. Marking milestones and seeing how each team relates to the others gives team members a sense of cohesive, aligned effort. It's nice when the right hand knows what the left hand is doing, and the alignment RevOps provides helps keep each team aware of the needs, plans, and actions of the others.

Free-flowing, frequent communication

between sales and marketing makes for efficient handoff of leads to sales, which is key to driving revenue. An effective RevOps model ensures a similar seamless handoff between sales and customer success and optimizing the entire customer lifecycle – a key component of keeping current customers satisfied and earning their future business.

How Inbound Enhances RevOps

Let's go back to our electric motor – it's fine as-is, but what if we could tailor it to people's current needs? Maybe we adjust its size or output, offer different power sources, or even something similar that better suits their needs, like an air motor? Sometimes a small, simple AC motor is perfect; sometimes people want other variations depending on innumerable factors and we'd likely respond with a variety of fine-tuned parameters for motors. It's the same way for marketing, sales, and customer success messaging and outreach. And the ability to take centralized data and use it to personalize messaging makes Inbound a perfect complement to RevOps.

Inbound lets you take those carefully crafted processes and personalize the experience for prospects and customers using distinct messaging, specific pieces of content, varied marketing channels, and landing pages based on what you know about the contacts. You can personalize your customers' buyer journey based on their persona, lifecycle stage, previous engagement with any of your teams or content, or any other data point you've collected in your CRM. The more targeted and intentional your communication is, the more likely you are to get positive engagement.

For the customer, receiving content that matches where they are in the buying process and in a context that makes sense to them is ideal. Using inbound tactics allows marketers to provide such intentional content. Have you ever received a marketing email clearly intended for someone who is barely aware of a company or product after speaking to sales twice? Or have you received an

email asking you to buy additional products or add-on services when you have a current, unresolved service issue? Those types of messages make people wonder if anyone in the organization ever talks to each other. And they do nothing to boost confidence in the company.

According to the SiriusDecisions State of Revenue Operations Study, most B2B companies indicate their greatest misalignment lies with the relationship between customer success and both sales enablement and marketing. It appears a disconnect occurs once the sale is made, leaving customer success out of the loop. RevOps and its mission to optimize the customer lifecycle from end to end can help bridge that very disconcerting gap.

Is RevOps Next for Your Organization?

Implementing a solid RevOps strategy can help your organization estab-

lish a fully optimized customer lifecycle, where congruent data and procedures keep prospects and customers not only aware but appropriately and intentionally informed about your products. Inbound methods can only benefit from centralized data, improved inter-department communication, and the collaborative efforts of multiple teams. Combined, RevOps and Inbound offer continuous, centralized support to the revenue engine – and that's a winning outcome for both.

Manufacturers wanting to ramp up revenue should consider exploring the ever-increasing movement toward RevOps. Incorporating it (and Inbound) into your organization may help you remain competitive, innovative, and successful. It's an investment in making your processes – and your business – better. ♦



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HOW TO EMBRACE THIS MANUFACTURING MOMENT

ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE CENTER
DAVID BOULAY, PRESIDENT



Another year has passed by in a flash. Where does the time go? I remember fondly my many visits and tours this past year with our great manufacturers. I am always amazed by their stories, entrepreneurial spirit, hard work, and dedication to both their customers and their workforce. These visits made 2022 a refreshing year for me, given how our lives have been punctuated in recent years with COVID waves, supply chain shocks, and countless other unexpected challenges.

I admire the steady leadership and agility that seems to come naturally to Illinois manufacturers. So, perhaps it is unsurprising to hear that I am incredibly optimistic about our manufacturing future. The sector is reshaping before our eyes and creating great potential as we learn how to prevent future supply chain disruptions and address growing geopolitical uncertainties. The shifts are creating a true manufacturing moment. Yet, we have a major priority to address in order to fully embrace this moment.

At the heart of manufacturing success is productivity. Granted, workplace productivity may not be the most exciting topic to discuss at a networking event, but growing our productivity makes us more competitive. With it, we win more business, improve company profits, create higher wages for our workforces, and raise the standard of living in our communities. Conversely, stagnant performance slowly deteriorates our ability to compete globally. As the economist Paul Krugman once noted, "Productivity isn't everything, but, in the long-run, it is almost everything."

Despite its vital importance, U.S. manufacturing productivity has stagnated since the Great Recession. We are producing the same amount of goods, but more people are needed to make them. We remain a global productivity powerhouse, but we are losing our edge exactly at the time we need to up our game.

Productivity is a blend of investments in skills, technology, and market growth. Each company brings their own unique combination of talent, technology, and customers. Revenue per employee, or volume per employee, can serve as a rule of thumb measure to assess productivity performance. Here are a few steps to focus on productivity improvement:

- Evaluate technology options to determine the best return on investment. Start in bottleneck areas, routine and dangerous tasks, and areas with high labor requirements.
- Upskill the team. Assess the effectiveness of your training approaches based on consistency of performance and cross-trained capability. Creating internal career pathways are a way to link business needs with individual growth opportunities.
- Review your customer base to determine which are most important to the business. Using an 80/20 approach, by identifying the 20% of customers responsible for 80% of revenues and profits, a business can determine where to best focus their efforts. Delivering high-quality results for just the top 20% of customers can become a noticeable productivity boost.

This is a manufacturing moment; one full of opportunity. But only if we address the foundations of success. Based on my tours and conversations, I know that Illinois manufacturers have the can-do mindset to overcome our productivity challenge. But we must create the urgency ourselves. Otherwise, we may be late to fix the slow drip eroding our competitiveness. I know that Illinois manufacturers will prove again that we can rise to the challenge. ♦

MEMBER NEWS

Ace Metal Crafts Company Names Jeff Szczupaj Vice President of Sales



WHERE YOUR DESIGNS TAKE SHAPE

BENSENVILLE, Ill. November 29, 2022 – Ace Metal Crafts Company, a leader in stainless steel machining and fabricating, is pleased to announce Jeff Szczupaj has been promoted and will assume the role of Vice President of Sales effective immediately.

This recognizes the contributions Jeff has made to ACE over the last 13 years, including his commitment to and great impact on company growth, his love of the customer, and his unique ability to maintain long-term customer relationships.

In this new role, Jeff will continue to lead growth for ACE as he heads the ACE Customer Success Team.

Ameren provides sustainability data through GRI and SASB standards



ST. LOUIS, Dec. 9, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Ameren Corporation (NYSE: AEE) released two additional reports to provide stakeholders with information on how the company is managing its environmental, social and governance (ESG) responsibilities. The reports follow the Global Reporting Index (GRI) and the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) frameworks.

"We embrace transparency with our investors, customers and communities about the progress we are making toward a more sustainable future," said Gwen Mizell, chief sustainability, diversity and philanthropy officer at Ameren. "Our GRI and SASB reports compile data that is housed in many places, such as our annual report and CDP questionnaires, so stakeholders can more easily find the specific information they need."

GRI is the most widely used sustainability reporting framework and provides an

opportunity to evaluate companies on ESG performance based on universal standards. SASB reporting provides corporate ESG data to investors to inform their investment and voting decisions. Ameren's GRI and SASB reports are available at AmerenInvestors.com.

Sustainability is deeply embedded into Ameren's business. The company has set an ambitious target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2045, as well as working to reduce water use and waste generation. Commitments to promote workforce safety and diversity, and support local communities and suppliers also remain paramount to Ameren's sustainability strategy and its vision to Lead the Way to a Sustainable Energy Future.

In addition to GRI and SASB, Ameren reports on its sustainability performance using the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), and the Edison Electric Institute and American Gas Association (EEL-AGA) frameworks.

Greenwood Plastics Inc: Kicking off 2023 With A New Thermoformer



Greenwood Plastics Industries will welcome the new year with greater production capabilities than ever before. Located in Danville, Illinois, GPI is a manufacturer of custom sheet-fed thermoformed parts for a variety of industries. The increased demand for thermoformed products has contributed to growth and the need for additional capacity on the production floor.

In the first quarter of 2021, leadership at GPI began researching options for purchase of a new thermoformer. In October 2022, GPI added a new MAAC automatic four station double oven rotary thermoformer to the production floor lineup.

"The new four-station rotary machine brings a new level of safety and excitement to our plant floor. Anytime you bring in new equipment for your employees, it really shows your appreciation for them, and the hard work they put in every day", says Production Supervisor Austin Buckley.

The new thermoformer, playfully nicknamed "Big Betty", expands capabilities for a wider variety of thick-gauge thermo-

formed parts. With a maximum mold size of 96" x 48", it also allows for production with improved tolerances and accuracy.

As GPI continues to experience growth, they will make ongoing strategic capital investments to meet customer's evolving needs. 2023 will certainly be a year of new possibilities for this Illinois manufacturer.

Illinois American Water Announces Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Grant Recipients



Belleville, Ill. – (Dec. 2, 2022) – Over \$22,000 will be shared by 12 organizations through Illinois American Water's Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Grant Program. The program provides financial assistance to nonprofit organizations seeking to develop and implement programs, training and/or community-related projects that aim to promote and foster inclusion, diversity and equity in their community.

Rebecca Losli, Illinois American Water President, is excited "to be a part of the progress occurring in the communities we serve." She said, "At Illinois American Water we celebrate and value the different perspectives and backgrounds each of us offer. Diversity makes our company and our communities stronger. This is why we created this program focused on partnerships for inclusion, diversity and equity. We're excited to collaborate with these impressive organizations."

Twelve organizations across Illinois American Water's footprint will receive funding. Illinois American Water's 2022 Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Grant recipients and projects are described below.

Alton Athletic Association will receive a \$2,500 grant to support the Beautification Diversity Program which will use local banners to celebrate local athletes.

Alton YWCA will receive a \$2,500 grant for their self-care program focused on supporting Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color.

Black History Month Awareness Club located in Bolingbrook will receive a \$2,500 grant to secure scholarships for high school seniors.

Eastern Illinois Food Bank in Champaign

County will receive a \$1,000 grant for their “just-in-time” produce delivery program to distribute produce to rural and under-served areas.

Lincoln Park District will receive a \$1,500 grant to support access for visitors with disabilities to local parks.

Loving Bottoms Diaper Bank in Peoria will receive a \$1,000 grant to provide diapers to families in need.

NAACP Champaign County will receive a \$2,000 grant to support educational scholarships for diverse students.

Peoria Public School Foundation will receive a \$1,500 grant to support the snack pack supplemental food program.

Stephens Family YMCA in Champaign will receive a \$2,000 grant for the Y on the Fly program which will support summer and afterschool programming.

The Bridges Program at Belleville West will receive a \$2,500 grant to create a pop-up farmstand to deliver nutrition and share information about agriculture while engaging students and increasing skills.

The Eagles Nest of St. Clair County in East St. Louis will receive a \$2,500 grant to support transitional housing for homeless veterans and training for staff members.

Titanium Force Cheer in the Peoria area will receive a \$1,000 grant to support the Cheerabilities program.

Magna and Celanese to Host Women of Inforum@CES Networking Reception to Connect Women in Tech



DETROIT, Mich. (December 1, 2022) – Women make up half of the total U.S. college-educated workforce yet represent only 28 percent of the science and engineering workforce and hold only about a quarter of the jobs in automotive manufacturing.

To connect talented women and men within the automotive and other tech-reliant industries, Magna and Celanese will host the Women of Inforum@CES event at the 2023 show to showcase and support the work of Inforum, a nonprofit dedicat-

ed to accelerating the careers of women and building talent initiatives at companies. The reception will be Friday, January 6, 2023, 4-6 p.m. PST, at the Magna Booth #4425, West Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Center.

“Women represent an important but underrepresented part of the automotive workforce and in STEM fields overall. We, along with our partners, are working to rectify this,” said Terry Barclay, president and CEO of Inforum. “CES represents an excellent opportunity to tap into the talented women and men in these growing fields and help them make the connections needed to advance and elevate their careers.”

“Magna is proudly committed to supporting any initiative that enriches the industry’s workforce with diversity, equity and inclusion top-of-mind. Inforum@CES is both a great opportunity for brilliant women in STEM to come together and network, and allows us to learn and collaborate on ways organizations can elevate under-represented professionals in automotive manufacturing,” said Eric Wilds, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Magna.

“Female leadership is core to who we are, from our CEO and board composition to our employee resource groups and Celanese Foundation programs,” said Kara Grasso, Global Strategy Director – Advanced Mobility, at Celanese. “Our industry is stronger when we integrate a broad perspective of ideas and viewpoints, and we are proud to be here at this important event.”

Stevens Industries Opens Tot Mate® Central Childcare Facility



October 7, 2022 (Teutopolis, Illinois) Stevens Industries President and CEO Todd Wegman announces the opening of Tot Mate® Central, a company-owned childcare facility, on Monday, October 3, 2022. Tot Mate® Central was built as a benefit for Stevens Industries employees to help address the area’s childcare crisis.

The childcare facility is located across the

street from Stevens’ main plant in Teutopolis. The building is nearly 6,000 square feet and will offer both childcare and preschool for up to 100 children. Tot Mate® Central is available to the children or grandchildren of Stevens’ employees beginning at age six weeks old.

Tot Mate® Central is aptly named after Stevens’ Tot Mate® Division, a line of daycare furniture found in childcare centers and early-learning education centers across North America. Stevens Industries supplied a complete outfit of their own products and materials. These child-friendly designs include a comprehensive collection of cabinetry, storage solutions, and furniture.

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Wegman commented, “We have received an overwhelmingly positive response from our team members who are appreciative for this dedicated childcare opportunity. It’s always been our goal to listen to our most important asset, our employee-owners. Everyone who helped with this project, including our team members, is especially proud of what we have created.”

Charity Ozenkoski serves as the Director of Tot Mate® Central. She brings with her over 23 years of experience in early childhood instructional and program development. Ozenkoski previously served as Head Start’s Home-based Education Specialist. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education from Eastern Illinois University. An Effingham County Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting and Business After Hours is planned for Thursday, October 20, 2022, from 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm. Tours, appetizers, and refreshments will be available.

Stevens Industries, a community-focused company since 1956, continues to lead the industry in Commercial Casework and Architectural Millwork. The 100% employee-owned company continues to progress and innovate to meet the world’s changing needs. ♦

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Roselle, IL

EC MACHINING
Justice, IL

GREIF, INC.
Naperville, IL

HEINKEL'S PACKING CO INC
Decatur, IL

INCOBRASA INDUSTRIES, LTD
Gilman, IL

KORTE & LUITJOHAN CONTRACTORS
Highland, IL

LUX BLOX LLC
Galesburg, IL

MACHINERY MAINTENANCE, INC.
La Salle, IL

MORCOR INDUSTRIES
Elgin, IL

MOTORAD OF AMERICA, INC.
Mt. Carmel, IL

NAVIS INDUSTRIES
Elgin, IL

NEWMEDICAL TECHNOLOGY, INC.
Northbrook, IL

PARVIN-CLAUSS SIGN CO INC
Carol Stream, IL

PENN ALUMINUM INTERNATIONAL LLC
Murphysboro, IL

PEOPLES NATIONAL BANK
Benton, IL

SCADAWARE
Normal, IL

SERVPRO SOUTH CHICAGO
Chicago, IL

SG360°
Wheeling, IL

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To learn more about participating in the IMA Energy Program, please contact Rich Cialabrini at richard.cialabrini@constellation.com or **847.738.2510**.



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