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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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2021 MAKERS MADNESS: SELF-REGULATING TRAFFIC SIGNAL HEATER
FROM TERMICO TECHNOLOGIES NAMED "THE COOLEST THING MADE IN ILLINOIS"

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THE PROMISE OF MANUFACTURING

MARK DENZLER, PRESIDENT & CEO



Our history is a story about revolutionizing and capitalizing on the growth, ideas, and dreams of American workers and leaders.

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Centuries ago, people migrated to Illinois in order to take advantage of its natural resources but also because its location and the ability to transport products around the world. Farmers used the rich, fertile land to unlock the state's agricultural marvels including crops and livestock. Processing added value to both grain and animals. Soon, Illinois' reputation as a transportation hub soared attracting new immigrants and industries such as mining, steel, meat packing, and even more manufacturing.

Trade brought with it manufacturers and the earliest documented manufacturer in Illinois was a tannery for buffalo skins by Frenchman Charles Juchereau de St. Denys, Lieutenant General of the jurisdiction of Montreal, in 1702 in Va Bache on the Ohio River where he was able to take advantage of the region's strategic advantages.

Throughout history, whether it was the Civil War, Industrial Revolution, advent of the assembly line, or most recently our collective response to the global pandemic, Illinois manufacturers played a key role in nearly every major event. Most recently, during the greatest economic and health crisis in generations, innovative and groundbreaking manufacturers created the fastest vaccines in history, produced PPE for our health care workers and first responders, stocked our stores with safe and nutritious food, provided energy for our homes and businesses, and ensured a robust communications network.

OUR SECTOR IS FOCUSED ON ACHIEVING GREATER EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY, AND COMPETITIVENESS WHILE ENVISIONING THE FUTURE. MANUFACTURING DOESN'T JUST USE CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY. WE CREATE IT.

It's the great promise of manufacturing that continues to move our nation and world forward. Manufacturers are once again demonstrating the strength and resiliency of our sector. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's the need for a strong American manufacturing sector and supply chains.

We now have a tremendous opportunity to imagine the future and shape it for future generations. Today's manufacturing facilities are clean, sustainable, diverse, and high tech. We need to help erase the view of factories as "dark, dirty, and dangerous" from our collective minds and open up the minds of students, parents, teachers, and counselors to great careers in manufacturing.

Manufacturers are an innovation engine that is remaking the world around us literally at the speed of light. New technologies and processes have brought us lifesaving medicines and therapies, autonomous and efficient vehicles, new sources of energy, and a digital economy. Things that were unimaginable or simply on a planning board just a decade ago are now being unleashed for the betterment of our world. Augmented reality. Artificial intelligence. 5G. Additive manufacturing. Robotics and the Internet of Things.

Our sector is focused on achieving greater efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness while envisioning the future. Manufacturing doesn't just use cutting edge technology – we create it. The IMA is laser focused at the State Capitol to make sure that we have a modern Telecommunications Act and other policies that encourage the implementation and use of these new technologies in our homes and businesses.

In 1969, the Apollo Guidance System that landed astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon with processing power equal to a Nintendo console. Fifty years later, our computer processing performance has increased 1 trillion-fold. This spring, I attended a ground breaking at Ingersoll Machine Tools that is helping build the largest telescope in the world that will see further into space than ever before while gears created by Forest City Gear in Roscoe are now helping the Mars Rover navigate another planet.

These groundbreaking technologies and advances are a result because of the promise of manufacturing. We've come a long way from tanning buffalo hides to seeing further into space than ever before with a Mars landing in site. I cannot wait to see what the future holds because it's ours to create. ♦

BUSINESS DAY

2021

Wednesday, May 5

IMA's 2021 Virtual Business Day is a unique opportunity to hear from leading policymakers in Illinois, help the IMA deliver our message of job growth and prosperity, and help legislators understand the impact of their actions on Illinois manufacturing.



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**House Republican Leader
Jim Durkin**

Register online at ima-net.org. For more information, contact Christine Sisk at csisk@ima-net.org.



2020 was a whirlwind for any number of reasons including a global pandemic and a bruising US presidential election which have contributed to continuing uncertainty.

In logistics we refer to ups and downs of the market as “which way the pendulum swings.” Very rarely is the freight market at anything approaching equilibrium. Based on supply and demand, the fluctuations are nothing new and haven’t changed greatly in the last 30 years.

What has changed, however, is the length of time it takes for the pendulum to swing. Historically, it would take years to tip the scales, but that time has shortened to mere months in recent years, and 2020 is a great example of this new paradigm.

Let’s take a look at what happened. At the beginning of the pandemic in early spring, demand came to a near standstill as manufacturers went off line to take precautionary measures to decrease the spread of

COVID-19. Trucking companies saw rates plummet overnight as the need for their services paused.

If you remember, independent owner operators were protesting for more transparency in front of the White House because rates had fallen so precipitously.

Largely because of the Heroes Act, we witnessed some relief in increased unemployment benefits. This allowed companies to furlough drivers and other important workers during the slowdown. The government stimulus checks coupled with advancements in treatment and a greater understanding of COVID-19, helped manufacturing facilities head back to work. This boosted consumer confidence.

By mid-summer, manufacturers were ramping up production more quickly than truck capacity could rebound. As virus rates began a decline, many people believed we were out of the woods. The pendulum continued to swing widely in the direction of increased need for truck capacity. This coupled with Chinese manufacturers sending

a backlog of container ships to the United States created a surge in demand.

This is where we found ourselves today at the end of the year and the beginning of the new year – without enough truck capacity to meet the demand. As a result, truckload rates continue to break records. As you know, in order to get your shipments moved, you’ve been required to pay higher rates.

While this isn’t the first or last time the pendulum has or will swing, this spike is interesting for a couple of reasons. The rate at which truckload prices sank and then sharply increased have many in the industry uncertain and unwilling to predict what the future will hold.

Historically, when we see this sort of spike in demand, trucking companies interpret it as a sign to expand their fleets and they purchase new equipment. Ultimately, this uptick in purchases saturates the market and drives rates back down.

Interestingly, carriers are not rushing to place new truck orders. This is likely due to

the long-term economic effects of the pandemic coupled with a wait-and-see attitude as to whether or not the Federal government will legislate new stimulus packages for individuals and companies. With so much uncertainty, people and companies are wary of making any big moves.

What are Rates Going to Look Like in 2021?

Unfortunately, we can't know for sure, but it doesn't look like rates will be falling anytime too soon.

It is likely that rates will remain higher than usual for at least the next several months due to the following factors.

1. Fallout from the Presidential election. The transition has been surprisingly smooth, but the months between the election and the inauguration were fraught. With the wins in Georgia, Biden's plans for a comprehensive relief bill will be passed sooner rather than later. We'll have to wait and see, but the state of the economy will most likely dictate whether truck drivers will continue to drive trucks or find short-term employment elsewhere.

2. Vaccine distribution will continue to disrupt supply chains because these loads are considered government relief loads. Trucks moving other goods will now be waiting in line to move these loads due to both the high rate and the ability to do some good in the world by delivering the vaccine.

3. E-Commerce. 2020 has taught retailers they do not need brick and mortar locations to survive. I expect many of the stop gaps put in place during the pandemic to remain in place and this will lead to continued stress on supply chains, especially in warehousing, as well as, small parcel and last mile delivery. With gift cards an increasingly popular gift, we expect to see purchases and shipments continue to rise. This coupled with another individual stimulus could keep consumer demand high.

4. Oil and gas industry. It's no secret that President-elect Biden doesn't agree with many of the regulatory rollbacks we've seen during the past four years. The new administration will be more environmentally-focused, we've seen this already with Pete Buttigieg at the helm of the DOT, and this will have a trickle-down effect on the oil and gas industry. This could affect the transportation industry in a few ways. First, an increase in diesel prices will provide carriers with reasoning to demand higher rates. If shipment tenders remain

high, shippers will not be in a position to negotiate and will be forced to pay the higher rates. In addition, increased regulations could lead to bankruptcies and closures which would flood the transportation industry with qualified drivers. It's a stretch, but if companies are able to hire qualified drivers, it might be a catalyst to purchase new equipment which would in the end level off freight rates. Not likely, but something to consider.

5. Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse. 2020 saw the implementation of the Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse which requires CDL holders to register with an online database. A central repository for drug and alcohol violations, the Clearinghouse database is used to make sure trucking companies cannot hire drivers with past offenses. Most experts believe the database will limit the number of available truck drivers and will do so into the future.

Looking Ahead

There doesn't seem to be a likely scenario where rates will go down significantly in the near future unless we see a dramatic

uptick in COVID-19 cases causing another shutdown. Hopefully this will not happen, and with the vaccine and its distribution, we are heading into calmer territory.

For now, the best thing to do is to accept the higher rates. At the same time, have open and honest conversations with your providers. See if you can lock in dynamic pricing and ask about shipping practices you could improve to lower friction and obtain lower rates.

For carriers, you should use this time to build relationships with both brokers and shippers. These relationships will sustain you throughout the next pendulum swing. Think strategically and long-term about your business. Logistics is a relationship-based industry, and if you take care of your customers, now they will take care of you later.

Win/win is a philosophy based on the idea that when we work together, we achieve the best outcomes for all parties. Now is the time to solidify those important relationships to create win/wins in all situations. ♦

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A MANUFACTURER'S GUIDE TO CURBING INTERMITTENT FMLA LEAVE ABUSE

GREENSFELDER, HEMKER & GALE, P.C.

One of the most frustrating issues for manufacturing employers to address is an employee's continued sporadic, and unpredictable intermittent absences taken pursuant to the Family Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"). FMLA intermittent leaves of absence have a tendency to wreak havoc on manufacturers' operations. Manufacturers rightfully complain that an employee's repeated FMLA intermittent leaves of absences effectively transform a full-time position into a part-time position, or leave the manufacturer "high and dry," especially when it's the only person in the plant who knows how to operate the widget making machine –and the manufacturer makes widgets.

By way of background, the FMLA allows employees to take 12 weeks of leave for their own or a family member's serious health condition. The leave can be taken in one block, over several stretches of time or intermittently. To take intermittent leave, the employee is required to provide a certification that there is a medical need for such leave.

While longer, continuous FMLA leaves are easier (relatively speaking) to plan for than sporadic intermittent leaves of absence, an employee's ability to take small increments of FMLA leave sporadically generally result in administrative (these do not qualify as a serious health condition under the FMLA, FYI) headaches for employers and raises concerns about employee abuse of intermittent leave. The FMLA offers a number of tools – many of which are not widely known unless recommended by experienced employment counsel – that you can use to discourage abuse of intermittent leave. Below are my recommended best strategies for curbing FMLA intermittent leave abuse.

Examine the medical certification to ensure it has been properly and fully completed. When a certification has missing entries or is ambiguous, you

may require the employee to provide complete and sufficient information. Your request must be in writing, specify why the certification is incomplete or insufficient, and provide the employee seven days to provide the additional information.

Another tool is the ability to contact the health care provider to ensure that he or she actually prepared the certification, and to clarify handwriting or the meaning of a response. But, the FMLA regulations make clear that the employee's direct supervisor may not be the one who contacts the health care provider; rather it must be a human resource professional, leave administrator or management official. During this process, be careful not to request more information than what is required to authenticate or clarify the form.

**IF AN EMPLOYEE'S
CONTINUED INTERMITTENT
ABSENCES INTERFERE WITH
YOUR OPERATIONS, THEY
MAY BE TEMPORARILY
TRANSFERRED TO AN
ALTERNATIVE POSITION
UNTIL THEIR FMLA LEAVE
IS CONCLUDED.**

If you have a legitimate basis to doubt the validity of an initial certification, you can ask for a second opinion. While you can choose the physician, it cannot be one the employer uses on a regular basis, or the owner's golfing/tennis buddy, and they must pay for the second opinion. If the first and second opinions conflict, you may require the

employee to see a third health care provider, also at your expense. The third provider's opinion is binding.

Manufacturers also must be certain that all absences related to the condition are counted against the employee's FMLA entitlement. Identifying FMLA absences is not simple, mainly because the employee does not have to even state the words "FMLA" in a request. If there is an existing certification, it is enough for the employee to notify the employer that he had a recurrence of the health condition covered by the certification. Thus, supervisors should be trained to notify human resources any time an employee is out for more than an extended period (i.e. more than three days) with an illness, particularly if the employee sought treatment from a physician during that time.

Adopt a policy that requires accrued paid leave to run concurrently with unpaid FMLA leave. Employees are less likely to abuse intermittent FMLA leave if they are required to use up their vacation/sick/PTO time each time they take leave. So, make sure include such a requirement in your FMLA policies and enforce the practice of using up paid time off during FMLA leave.

The FMLA standing alone would not allow you to request a doctor's note for every absence if there is a valid medical certification in place. But if your leave of absence policies require employees to sign a certification upon return from any leave of absence (medical or otherwise) that the leave taken was for the reason given, here, the serious health condition on the certification, you can require employee so sign such a certification after each intermittent leave.

Require employees to provide recertification when appropriate and necessary. You may request recertification (1) no more than every 30 days in connection with an absence or (2) when the minimum duration from a prior certification expires, if the minimum dura-



tion exceeds 30 days. You may request recertification more frequently if an employee asks for an extension of leave, circumstances change (e.g., an employee's absences aren't consistent with his doctor's prognosis), or you doubt the legitimacy of the employee's medical status (e.g., Monday or Friday absences). "Changed circumstances" include a different frequency or duration of absences or increased severity or complications from the illness. The regulations allow you to provide information to the health care provider about the employee's absence pattern and ask the provider if the absences are consistent with the health condition. "Information that casts doubt on the employee's stated reason for the absence" may be information you receive (possibly from other employees)

about activities the employee is engaging in while on FMLA leave that are inconsistent with the employee's health condition. Always attempt to independently verify information received from coworkers before taking action or requesting recertification for suspicious circumstances.

Employees may take intermittent leave for among other reasons, treatment, therapy, and doctor visits. Employees must schedule those absences for planned medical treatment in a way that least disrupts your operations. When you receive a request for this type of intermittent leave, communicate with employees about the frequency of the treatment, the office hours of the health care provider and ways that the employee may be able to alter the schedule to cut down on disruptions.

If the need for intermittent leave is foreseeable, assign employees who are taking intermittent leave to alternative positions to cause less disruption. If an employee's continued intermittent absences interfere with your operations, they may be temporarily transferred to an alternative position until their FMLA leave is concluded. However, the transfer may not result in a loss of pay or benefits or be used to discourage employees from taking leave.

These tips won't entirely eliminate the problem of employees trying to take advantage of the intermittent leave regulations – probably nothing can do that – but they will help. ♦

IDENTIFYING LEADERS AND INVESTING IN THEIR SUCCESS

CINDY TOMEI, CAE



The number one challenge our members face is securing the right workforce in order to meet current production demands and possibly grow. The reasons workforce challenges exist are numerous and rarely attributed to one factor. As companies come up with strategies to conquer their most obvious workforce needs, how are they preparing for the next generation of leaders?

Manufacturers can be very intentional about recruiting, hiring and training production staff. Resources are expended to recruit in unconventional ways, train for the appropriate skill set with the necessary safety training. But how intentional are manufacturers being when it comes to the future leaders of the company?

Is leadership development as intentional as other hiring needs? Are the appropriate resources being committed to assess if an employee can contribute as a leader and then what investment is being made to ensure someone's success at this level?

As important as it is to have the right workforce to address immediate needs and plan for future production growth, an intentional leadership development program for the future evolution of the company is just as critical. As a company evolves, having the essential leaders in place may necessitate having an internal farm team of vital employees who exhibit leadership behaviors and need an investment in their development to make a strong contribution to the organization as it grows.

A strong leadership development program contains the same components as hiring someone brand new for your company. Internally, where can you recruit the next generation of leaders? What assessments will you use to determine if their qualities and talents align with the goals of the company? What commitment in resources will the company expend to develop strong leadership behaviors in those identified with that potential?

These are all critical issues any company should consider as part of a comprehensive plan in ensuring its longevity. Beside the tangible benefits a company can garner from a leadership development strategy, investing in existing employees provides them the opportunity to showcase their talents at a higher level, contribute to the decision-making process to ensure the company's longevity and allows them to be more invested in the success of the company.

The pandemic required everyone to step up as we all worked together to navigate these uncharted waters. As we get closer and closer to the other side, workforce issues may be more pronounced. But reflecting on the past year is also an opportunity. Taking the time to assess the current health of your organization and gauging what bright spots popped up in the last year may have some surprising revelations. Navigating a year-long crisis may have been the right opportunity for those with leadership qualities to stand out. Who on your team stepped up in ways you didn't expect? What type of leadership qualities do you need to move to the next level in your company's evolution? Take a look at your workforce and assess who managed unpredictable change better than others. Who displayed confidence in expressing solutions for unforeseen problems? Who was able to communicate in an effective way so others could embrace a new, immediate direction?

After identifying those with innate leadership behaviors and matching them to the needs of your organization is the first step. Making an intentional decision to invest in these future leaders and giving them the tools to build on their leadership qualities the next commitment in this process. Leadership development is an ongoing process as company needs change, so having resources you can rely on in this area is critical.

The IMA's Next Wave in Manufacturing Leadership group is working to provide resources you can access to compliment your leadership development plan. Next Wave served as a networking opportunity last year as manufacturers from around the state needed a touch point with their peers to see how others were managing through the pandemic. As we transition out of this crisis, we will be offering resources you can include in a robust, comprehensive leadership development strategy.

As with any crisis or downturn in the economy, we have seen over and over again, those companies with a solid foundation and a plan for long-term organizational health have a better chance to weather any unforeseen challenge in a stronger position.

If you have ideas on leadership development resources we can bring to you, please contact me directly. And, keep your eyes open for future announcements for the Next Wave in Manufacturing Leadership. ♦

Cindy Tomei

MAPPING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

COMCAST

Manufacturing is a process-driven industry, with continuous improvements to help companies work more efficiently and reduce costs. From the first Industrial Revolution in the 1700s to today, change has been a constant in the manufacturing space – and technology has played a large part in the industry's drive toward greater efficiencies.

The digital transformation efforts of manufacturers are proving their worth as more organizations use technologies like big data and analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), cloud services, as well as the Internet of Things (IoT) – the network of physical objects that connect to and exchange data with other devices and systems over the Internet – to help uncover new opportunities and take their businesses well beyond their traditional boundaries. Now, as organizations embark on their digital transformation journeys, the manufacturing space is poised to take great advantage of a data-driven business model to gain insight to streamline processes, improve product quality and increase customer satisfaction.

Connectivity is the New Backbone of Manufacturing

IoT and edge computing, which is computation and data storage located close to the source of the data, are becoming important pieces of the manufacturing process effectively making network connectivity services a must-have in any industrial space.

"Manufacturers are increasingly leveraging the technologies available to them, and we see it pushing the industry towards innovation and deeper efficiencies," said Haven Allen, President and CEO of mHUB, the nation's largest hardtech innovation center, located in Chicago. "mHUB was built to remove the barriers for entrepreneur and start up manufacturers to innovate but also to help existing manufacturers adopt advanced technologies that propel their businesses forward. Two foundational resources each of these groups need are connectivity and access."

For example, IoT networks are being used to collect data to add intelligence to decision-making, which can help companies work smarter and more efficiently. Beyond helping organizations determine ways to streamline their operations to reduce operational overhead or uncover processes that

can hamper customer satisfaction, IoT-connected devices can also send performance data from customers back to the manufacturer, which helps a company improve the customer experience.

Edge computing can help the massive amounts of information collected become actionable data more quickly. By enabling the processing of data collected by IoT sensors on networking devices located at the "edge" of the network, manufacturers receive relevant data faster without overwhelming their network, which not only lessens the stress on the network but also aids in better-informed decision-making.

Data analytics and AI can also help companies make more intelligent decisions regarding their manufacturing processes. When coupled with automation, AI can improve the employee experience by enabling them to focus on more value-added tasks, and the customer experience, by offering goods and services that are more relevant to their situation based on their buying history.

Technology Innovations Also Support Sustainable Practices

Most manufacturers have realized the critical role sustainable business practices play in protecting the environment, from energy-efficient practices to waste management and more. Beyond the obvious environmental imperatives, customers increasingly value brands that are socially responsible and work to do good in the world, which includes being environmentally friendly and practicing sustainability. These practices can help improve an organization's reputation within its industry and among its customers, which can also improve customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately the bottom line.

Manufacturing companies are embracing sustainability by building factories that incorporate automation and connected devices to achieve greater efficiencies at lower cost and less overhead. In smart factories, intelligent sensors, motors and robotics are present on production and assembly lines, each collecting data that the company can use to drive further efficiencies, such as performing proactive maintenance on systems to keep them from breaking down and ensuring energy consumption is optimal. Data

is at the heart of the smart factory, collected automatically from machines and applications, and transformed into actionable insights.

One common way in which smart factories are helping reduce environmental impact is by monitoring energy consumption through smart meters and IoT-connected devices. Using such devices, companies not only have a firmer grasp on managing their energy use more effectively, they also receive data they can analyze to discover ways to further reduce or be more efficient in their energy consumption.

The adoption of a cloud-based infrastructure can also go a long way in helping organizations reduce their carbon footprint by enabling their current physical footprint to stay the same or even be reduced. A cloud-based infrastructure also reduces the amount of physical hardware necessary on-site, which helps reduce waste down the line. And, by enabling the access of information anywhere, it also supports workforce flexibility such as work-at-home initiatives, reducing carbon emissions created by the daily commute to the office.

A Strong Network will Bolster Manufacturing 2.0 Transformations

Manufacturers have much to gain from digital transformation, whether they are just starting their transformation journey or are looking to expand their existing transformation efforts to create even more opportunities and address new challenges. Gone are the days when the focus in manufacturing was on creation of the end product; companies today must focus on the processes involved and leverage the insights from big data analytics and other transformational technologies to work smarter and more efficiently and find new areas of opportunity.

As the implementation of IoT devices and analytics expands, so too will the number of connected devices and amount of data flow through networks. The need for networks that support high-volume, high-speed data and edge computing to support these data-intensive operations is driving many organizations to reconsider their current IT strategies. As they look to the future of manufacturing, companies should be building network foundations that are future-proofed for a connected world. ♦

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TOP FIVE RISKS FACING MIDSIZE MANUFACTURERS

ZURICH

Manufacturing is poised for transformation. Technological advances like artificial intelligence, machine learning, 5G, the Internet of Things, smart manufacturing and expanding applications for 3D printing will continue to drive tremendous innovation. And while the coronavirus pandemic has impacted business activity in all segments, the global manufacturing outlook is bullish for 2021, with effective vaccines and new treatments on the horizon promising eventual victory over the pandemic.

For U.S. manufacturers, the prospects for growth and expansion at home and abroad are growing. But with expansion come risks that demand attention and action. Based on Zurich's own claims data and external insights, the following are among the top business risks that midsize manufacturers must manage as they look forward to a brightening future:

Fleet Maintenance

Fleet maintenance is the process of making sure that all company-owned vehicles are fit for use and are in good working order. It is important to ensure that every vehicle in your fleet is safe, reliable and roadworthy to continue to move product and satisfy customer needs. A vehicle laid up in the shop due to deferred or skipped maintenance is not delivering value. Worse yet, a poorly maintained vehicle may one day be responsible for a crash that may cause liability due to injuries or deaths.

If a company depends on a vehicle fleet — whether long-haul trucks, local delivery vehicles or automobiles used by sales reps, technicians and other employees — it should have a formal fleet maintenance program in place and scheduled based on manufacturer recommendations.

Water Damage

According to Zurich Claims data, water damage is a leading cause of commercial



property losses from the standpoint of frequency and severity. Water-related losses due to severe weather events are only part of the story. Buildings over 20 years old may be at greater risk of water damage due to aging infrastructure and internal leaks. Deferred maintenance of structures and systems also accounts for many water-related losses. And contractors working in buildings are often the cause of water-leakage events.

Due to the potential for extensive damage to property and production in a manufacturing setting, manufacturers need to assess their risks and draft detailed plans covering what to do in a water-leakage event. Train employees on all shifts how to respond immediately to the discovery of a leak and provide a call list to contact and alert all appropriate management and emergency personnel.

Property Fires

According to the most recent fire statistics from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an average of

37,000 fires occur at industrial and manufacturing properties every year. These incidents result in up to \$1 billion in direct property damage.

The causes of fires run the gamut. Combustible dust as a byproduct of manufacturing or chemicals used in the production process are hazards in many manufacturing environments. Electrical overloads are a frequent cause of fires. Hot work, such as welding, can be a real danger if not properly protected.

As manufacturing ramps up as the global economy recovers from the pandemic, every company should receive a thorough risk self-assessment to uncover and respond to any apparent fire risks. Facilities must be equipped with adequate alarms and fire suppression equipment such as sprinklers, along with safety personnel trained in preventing fires and what to do until help arrives if a fire breaks out.

Workplace Injuries

In any manufacturing environment, the risks of workplace injuries are ever

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Dean Popovich 877-938-7948
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present. After a thorough analysis of Zurich's claims data, slips, trips and falls and strains account for nearly 50 percent of all WC claims - with strains taking the lead - in terms of frequency.

Back injuries had the highest severity and the longest time away from work. In 2018, the total cost of all workplace injuries was \$170.8 billion. In 2019, manufacturing accounted for 15 percent of all private industry nonfatal injuries and illnesses.

According to the National Safety Council, the top three leading causes of work-related injuries — overexertion and bodily reaction; slips, trips and falls; and contact with objects and equipment — account for more than 84 percent of all nonfatal injuries involving days away from work. All three are hazards to be found in virtually all industrial and manufacturing settings. Per Zurich's claims data, slips, trips and falls accounted for 27 percent of the top 10 workers' compensation injury claims.

And with a growing number of older workers, employers in all industries, including manufacturing, are facing elevated risks of worker injuries and illnesses. A recent report by the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said 41.3 percent of 55-to-64-year-olds who were on the job in 2018 had had a work-related health issue. That contrasts with a 21.7 percent rate reported by 18-to-24-year-old employees. Among those 64 or younger, the rate rose with each decade measured, ranging from 34.5 to 39.5 percent from ages 25 to 54.

All of which means that a commitment to worker health and safety programs in manufacturing environments must only increase in the years ahead as midsize companies grow and expand their business horizons.

Cyber Risks

A growing risk facing all businesses, manufacturers included, are the threats of network intrusions, malware and other high-tech hazards. The growth of the Internet of Things in manufacturing is one of the most serious, potential vulnerabilities. Reliance on web-connected devices can dramatically expand the organization's "attack surface," especially when new components are added to the production and control environment. The infection of industrial control systems (ICS) by malware can shut down

manufacturing processes, corrupt data and cause physical damage to vital production equipment.

Manufacturers must be aware of the cyber risks they face, especially from increasingly sophisticated ransomware threats. Networks need to be evaluated and assessed to determine whether undetected breaches have already occurred. Network monitoring resources and advice can help intercept and prevent future cyber attacks. And insurance solutions such as Zurich's Cyber Insurance Policy can provide an essential, frontline defense against the financial impacts of cyber risks.

A Future Built on Resilience

These are certainly not the only risks manufacturers may face in the normal course of operations. By being aware of the broad spectrum of industry-specific risks facing manufacturers, and by taking affirmative steps to mitigate them through prudent risk management and appropriate insurance solutions, mid-size manufacturers will build resilience that will help deliver a powerful future of growth, customer focus and profitability. ♦

NEW HR LAWS IMPACTING ILLINOIS MANUFACTURERS

SMITHAMUNDSEN LLP



As the Illinois manufacturing industry adjusted to unprecedented challenges in 2020, a new wave of regulation appears to be setting in for 2021 and beyond. While legislative initiatives, executive orders and administrative agency priorities in Springfield and Washington will usher in many new changes, restrictions on an employer's use of criminal convictions as well as innovative equal pay compliance mandates are now a reality in Illinois; greatly impacting most Illinois manufacturers.

On January 13, 2021, the Illinois Legislature passed SB1480 with an eye on securing major legal reforms. SB1480 amends the Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA) to limit an employer's use of a criminal conviction. SB1480 also amends the

Illinois Business Corporation Act (IBCA) to require "large" corporations to submit an annual report containing its employee makeup by gender, race and ethnicity. Finally, SB1480 amends the Illinois Equal Pay Act (IEPA) to require "large" employers to obtain an Equal Pay Registration Certificate from the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL). Governor Pritzker signed SB1480 into law on March 23, 2021.

Restrictions on the Use of Criminal Convictions

As of March 23, 2021, the IHRA prohibits all employers, unless otherwise authorized or required by law, from considering an employee's or job candidate's criminal conviction history when making an adverse employment decision unless:

1) there is a "substantial relationship" between the conviction and the position sought or held; or

2) the individual's employment raises an "unreasonable risk" to property or to the safety or welfare of specific individuals or the general public.

According to the IHRA, an individual's criminal conviction history has a "substantial relationship" to the position applied for, or currently held, if the employment position creates an opportunity for the individual to conduct the same or similar offense for which the person was convicted and whether the circumstances leading to the conduct that resulted in the conviction will recur in the position. While an "unreasonable risk" is not defined in the legislation, the phrase certainly places the

burden on the employer to demonstrate such risk.

Additionally, employers must consider six (6) different factors in reaching its decision. These factors are:

- (i) the length of time since the conviction;
- (ii) the number of convictions;
- (iii) the nature and severity of the conviction and its relationship to the safety and security of others;
- (iv) the facts or circumstances surrounding the conviction;
- (v) the age of the employee at the time of the conviction; and
- (vi) evidence of any rehabilitation efforts.

If after considering these factors the employer wishes to take adverse action, the employer must next engage in an interactive assessment and provide written notice to the individual identifying the conviction history and the rationale for why it disqualifies the individual from employment or continued employment. Such notice shall also include a copy of the conviction report and give the individual at least five business days to respond. If the employer still decides to take adverse action, it must then provide a second written notice informing the individual of the final basis for the decision, any processes in place to challenge that decision as well as notifying the individual of their right to file a charge of discrimination with the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

In reviewing the laws created in other states, Illinois' new law would be the most restrictive in the country. Employers should also understand that these new mandates would be in addition to Illinois' "Ban the Box" law as well as the general prohibition on the use of arrests or convictions sealed or expunged. Additionally, this new mandate is separate and distinct from any and all obligations employers have under federal law, including the consent, notice and adverse action procedures pursuant to the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).

Annual Business Reporting Requirement

SB1480 also amends the IBCA and requires corporations organized under Illinois law or authorized to conduct business in Illinois, who must file an annual EEO-1 report with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (employers with at least 100 employees or, certain federal contractors with 50 or more employees), to submit additional data to the State of Illinois relating to the composition of its employees by gender,

race and ethnicity. This mandate would impact all such annual filings from January 1, 2023 on. The data submitted will be published on the SOS's official website within 90 days of receipt of a filed annual report or as soon as practicable. Failure to comply can result in the corporation being unauthorized to transact business in Illinois and no longer have "good-standing" status.

Equal Pay Compliance Registration Certificate

SB1480 also requires all private employers with more than 100 employees in the State of IL to obtain an Equal Pay Registration Certificate from the IDOL. This certification must be obtained within three years from March 23, 2021 and must be re-certified every two years thereafter.

Employers must apply for an equal pay registration certificate for a fee of \$150, and submit an equal pay compliance statement to the IDOL. Any employer that is required to file an annual EEO-1 report with the EEOC must also submit a copy of that report to the IDOL for each county in which the business has a facility or employees. The employer must also compile and submit a list of all employees during the past calendar year by gender, race and ethnicity and report the total wages paid to each employee during the past calendar year.

In order to receive the certification, a corporate officer, legal counsel or authorized agent of the employer must attest to the following:

- a) it is in compliance with state and federal anti-discrimination and equal pay laws;
- b) the average compensation for its female and minority employees is not consistently below the average compensation for its male and non-minority employees and taking into account factors such as length of service, requirements of specific jobs, experience, skill, effort, responsibility, working conditions of the job, or other mitigating factors;
- c) it does not restrict employees of one sex to certain job classifications and makes retention and promotion decisions without regard to sex;
- d) that wage and benefit disparities are corrected when identified to ensure compliance with applicable laws; and
- e) identifying how often wages and benefits are evaluated to ensure legal compliance. The employer's equal pay compliance statement must also indicate whether the employer, in setting compensation and benefits, utilizes a market pricing approach, follows state prevailing wage or a

union contract, adopts a performance pay system, undergoes an internal analysis or adopts an alternative approach. If the business uses an alternative approach, the business must provide a description of its approach.

The IDOL must issue an equal pay registration certificate, or a statement of why the application was rejected, within 45 calendar days of receipt of the application. Of course, the issuance of a registration certificate will not be considered a defense to any adverse equal pay finding by the IDOL. Also, the certification can be suspended or revoked by the IDOL upon the finding that the employer failed to make good faith efforts to comply with anti-discrimination and/or equal pay laws or if later found to have violated such laws. The IDOL may also subject any employer to an audit, at any time, to ensure compliance with the new mandates.

Any employer who does not obtain the registration certificate as required, submits any false information or makes any misrepresentation to the IDOL, or upon any suspension or revocation by the IDOL will be penalized an amount equal to 1 percent of the employer's gross profits. The amendment would also provide enhanced whistleblower protections to help ensure individuals are free to complain, report, participate or testify concerning any aspect of the IEPA. The remedies available to any whistleblower include reinstatement, 2x any back pay, interest, reinstatement of full fringe benefits and seniority rights and payment of reasonable costs and attorney's fees incurred.

Make no mistake, the use of criminal convictions in the employment arena and pay disparity issues are front and center in Springfield and Washington. With that in mind, employers of all sizes should consider taking the following action:

- Evaluate policy re: the use and prohibition of criminal convictions and arrests in line with local, state and federal guidance and mandates.
- Identify positions for which a criminal conviction history may or may not matter.
- Audit Equal Pay compliance annually. This includes creating credible compensation systems that are in line with applicable laws.
- Update job descriptions annually. Under Illinois law, "substantially similar" work within a county is what's relevant to any disparity inquiry.
- Evaluate performance reviews; especially if performance is used as a factor in compensation decisions. ♦



2021 MAKERS MADNESS: SELF-REGULATING TRAFFIC SIGNAL HEATER FROM TERMICO TECHNOLOGIES NAMED “THE COOLEST THING MADE IN ILLINOIS”

Traffic signals – red, yellow, and green – are some of the most ubiquitous items of our everyday routines. We take direction from them as we travel about our communities for work and play. Until recent years, those traffic lights have remained largely unchanged. However, recent emphasis on energy efficiency and easier maintenance has led to large-scale deployment of traffic signals with LED light bulbs. LED bulbs consume less energy than traditional incandescent lights, and the bulbs last much, much longer and so need to be changed much, much less frequently.

One of the efficiencies of LED bulbs versus the old incandescent style is that LEDs don't waste energy emitting heat, as you quickly realize if you've ever changed a warm bulb in your own home. This heat, while normally a waste byproduct of the incandescent light, did offer a pleasant side effect during Illinois winters: incandescent bulbs in traffic signals melted away any snow and ice that other-

wise would have covered the light fixtures and obscured the signals from drivers and pedestrians. LED bulbs, because they don't waste energy emitting heat, are unable to melt off snow and ice and can be more difficult to see during inclement weather.

Termico Technologies has solved this problem with a Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater, and is a fitting winner in the Illinois Manufacturers' Association second annual Makers Madness contest to name "The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois," presented by Comcast Business.

The Makers Madness contest was launched by the IMA in February and for three weeks, the public was invited to nominate any product made in Illinois. Over 260 unique nominations were received, and voting opened online at MakersMadnessIL.com. For more than two weeks, voters could vote – five times per day – for their favorite items. At the end of the nominations round, almost 100,000 votes had been cast, and the top 16 products advanced to

seeded, bracketed, head-to-head contests. Voters narrowed those top 16 products to eight, and then from eight products again to a Final Four. Finally, the last week of March, these Final Four products competed against each other, with the winner earning the title of "The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois."

In the end, the winner is the Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater.

Presented by Comcast Business, the competition shines a light on Illinois' diverse manufacturing sector, which has played a critical role in the state and nation's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Manufacturers are developing life-saving vaccines and treatments, producing needed personal protective equipment, keeping store shelves stocked with important goods and nutritious foods, and powering our homes and businesses.

Manufactured by Termico Technologies in Elk Grove Village, the Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater uses conductive particles to heat traffic signals so they remain visible and free of ice and snow so traffic can safely navigate our roadways. As municipalities and departments of transportation around the country have transitioned away from traditional traffic signals to new LED versions, this innovative technology has become vital to protecting motorists and ensuring our transportation system continues to operate efficiently during winter weather.

The first two intersections installed with the Termico Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater were in Elk Grove Village, at the intersections at Commercial/Biesterfield and Leicester/Biesterfield in November 2019. To date, heaters have been installed in Cook, DuPage, LaSalle, Kane, and McHenry counties in Illinois. There are more than 300,000 signalized intersections in the United States alone.

"The Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater is an outstanding example of the innovation and ingenuity of our state's manufacturing sector and has rightfully earned the title of The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois. This unique, energy efficient product from Termico Technologies impacts our lives every day by making sure the people and goods that travel on our roadways get where they're going safely and efficiently," said Mark Denzler, president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association. "Manufacturing has always played a vital role in Illinois, especially during the pandemic when manufacturers ramped up production to produce supplies needed to combat the virus. The men and women on factory floors across the state deserve our recognition and appreciation and the Illinois Manufacturers' Association is proud to advocate on their behalf each and every day."

"We are honored and proud to have the Termico Technologies Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater win the IMA's 2021 Makers Madness contest as 'The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois,'" said Mike Cubon, Termico's chief technical officer. "Our traffic safety innovation keeps drivers safe and saves lives by eliminating the snow and ice buildup on LED traffic signals."

Voters chose the Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater from a field of 311 individual products initially nominated from across the state, with over 300,000 votes cast over the course of the competition. The 311 nominations were initially narrowed by voters to a top 16 products, which competed weekly in bracketed, seeded contests. The top 16 products:

- 4000-RL-CO2DX Flake Ice Machine (Howe Corporation, Chicago)
- 980E-5 Electric Drive Truck (Komatsu America Corp., Peoria)
- Accuchiller KSE Series Packaged Outdoor Chiller (Thermal Care, Inc., Niles)
- Azteca Form, Bake and Fill Crispy Shell (Azteca Foods, Forest View)
- Blistex Lip Ointment (Blistex Inc., Oak Brook)
- Caterpillar D11 Dozer (Caterpillar, Inc., East Peoria)
- Custom Tooling (Deco Manufacturing Company, Decatur)

- Ford Bronco Headlight (North American Lighting, Inc., Paris)
- Giant Magellan Telescope (Ingersoll Machine Tools, Inc., Rockford)
- HD IP Display (Advanced Network Devices, Arlington Heights)
- Jessup The Original Griptape (Jessup Manufacturing Company, McHenry)
- Nerds Gummy Clusters Candy (Ferrara Candy Company, Bellwood)
- Nuclear Power (Exelon Corporation, Braidwood, Byron, Clinton, Dresden, LaSalle, and Quad Cities.)
- Orion Spacecraft Command Module Control Switches (OTTO Engineering, Carpentersville)
- Robotic Assembly (Versatech, LLC., Effingham)
- Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater (Termico Technologies, Elk Grove Village)

The top four products competed for the championship in a final, single contest: Blistex Lip Ointment, Custom Tooling, Accuchiller KSE Series Packaged Outdoor Chiller, and Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater.

The IMA had planned to announce the Makers Madness contest winner at a special awards ceremony in Springfield on March 24, but COVID-19 restrictions continue to prohibit large gathering and forced the online contest to be concluded via video, with Illinois' senior US Senator Dick Durbin participating, and the champion named by Comcast Regional Vice President Sean McCarthy.

"Manufacturing is a cornerstone of our state's economy and this contest is a wonderful showcase for the many innovative products made here in the Land of Lincoln," said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL). "Time and again, manufacturers have risen to the challenge, including playing a vital role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past year. I'd like to extend my congratulations to all the participating businesses and to the Illinois Manufacturers' Association and its partners for the success of this year's Makers Madness Contest."

"Seeing Makers Madness unfold first-hand has been really exciting, and Comcast Business is proud to help the IMA make it happen," said Sean McCarthy, Comcast's Regional Vice President of Business Development and Strategic Initiatives. "The contest created a showcase for Illinois manufacturers and the innovative products they're bringing to the world stage. Congratulations to Termico Technologies for earning the title of The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois this year."

Makers Madness is an annual competition hosted early each year by the Illinois Manufacturers' Association. The 2022 contest will open for nominations early in 2022 at www.MakersMadnessIL.com. ♦



DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

ICATT

Certain qualities are valuable in any business and industry, such as integrity, work ethic, adaptability, and problem-solving and decision-making skills. Veterans bring these traits and many others to their new companies when they enter the civilian workforce.

Many companies express interest in hiring veterans as apprentices for their skilled positions, in order to leverage these desirable skills into success in high tech manufacturing.

Translating Military Experience into Manufacturing Excellence

For manufacturing companies to reap the benefits of veteran employees, there must be a good culture fit. If the work environment fails to meet veterans' needs, they tend to leave an organization faster.

Eric Asmussen, Deputy Regional Administrator for the U.S. Department of Labor, recommends that to create a successful apprenticeship for transitioning service members, companies must reflect on their current processes and be willing to adapt them.

"Veterans, especially, want to get things done and can get frustrated when they notice a problem and have a solution, but the company doesn't seem to be open to change."

Jason Wasikowski, Senior Manager for Corporate Technical Training and Talent at Mauser Packaging Solutions, an ICATT Network Company, said he has had many conversations with veteran employees that have helped him understand the culture contrast between the military and the private sector.

"In the military, everything is regimented; there are clear expectations about your time and duties every single day. But in a private company, expectations aren't clear, and schedules are always in flux. It can be a huge paradigm shift. If veterans think that the company is undisciplined and employees aren't dedicated, they may start looking elsewhere."

Following up on promises made is also extremely important for veteran employees. "If you say you're going to do some-



thing, a veteran wants to know that you will," said Wasikowski. "If something changes and you can't, it's essential to follow up and explain." Employers that make even well-meant promises but don't follow through on them may be seen as untrustworthy. "It's about integrity," says Joshua Barron, U.S. Army Veteran and Second Year ICATT Apprentice.

The U.S. Department of Labor has developed an Employer Guide to Hiring Veterans which includes these recommendations:

An understanding of the missions and impact of the organization.

A clear set of expectations for the current position.

A mutual understanding of what clear and open verbal/written communication looks like.

A known pathway for advancement within the organization. Barron explains, "I want to know what I need to do to reach the next level. And once I'm there, I want to know that my abilities are being fully utilized."

A mentor who can help veterans integrate into the organization's culture. Asmussen states, "It's extremely helpful to have another veteran on the team that the transitioning service member can go to, to ask questions like, 'Is this actually a problem, or just civilian life?'"

Building Structure in an Apprenticeship

A well-planned apprenticeship program can offer the structure and milestones that veterans expect.

The building blocks of college courses are one important element of this for veteran apprentices. More important for retention is the apprenticeship's plan for the on-the-job learning; this should also include specific objectives, as well as milestones to be reached.

A veteran-friendly training plan shows the big-picture progression over the duration of the apprenticeship, as well as the skills that will be learned in each short-term module. When changes inevitably occur, the training plan serves as a communication tool as well as an aid to the supervisor to ensure that the skills in the changed modules are taught at a different time.

"I wish I would have known about apprenticeship programs when I got out of the military. For anyone similar to me, ICATT would be a good fit. The things I have experienced in my apprenticeship remind me of the close-knit 'brotherhood' that you find in the military. You have the opportunity to learn and grow. The sky is the limit with this career." – Joshua Barron, U.S. Army Veteran and Second Year ICATT Apprentice. ♦

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BUILDING A MOAT AROUND YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

BANNER WITCOFF

Warren Buffett once quipped: “In business, I look for economic castles protected by unbreachable ‘moats.’” One significant “moat” that a company can build to protect its business is its Intellectual Property (IP) portfolio.

Indeed, IP protects a business in many critical ways: it creates barriers to entry for competitors; it enhances a business’s reputation as an innovator; it encourages internal innovation; it discourages litigation; it increases access to competitor innovations; and it increases valuation. But to build a successful IP portfolio that yields these protections and benefits, it’s helpful to first understand what falls within the universe of IP rights.

What is a Patent?

A patent is a government grant for new, non-obvious products, methods, processes, machines, and designs. To obtain a patent, the applicant must disclose its invention to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, with the understanding that the information will eventually be available to the public. In exchange for that information, and if the invention is deemed new and as having not been an obvious change from earlier inventions, the government awards the applicant with a patent on the invention—a right to exclude others from making, using, offering to sell, selling, or importing into the U.S. anything that infringes the patent.

There are two basic types of patents:

- (1) utility patents, which cover new, non-obvious, and useful products, methods, processes, or machines; and
- (2) design patents, which cover new and non-obvious ornamental designs. It is common for products or processes to be protected by multiple patents—both utility and design. Take a modern vehicle, for instance. It may be protected by utility patents directed to the materials, to mechanical structures, to electrical systems, to batteries, to methods of production, and so on. It may also be protected by design patents directed to ornamental features, like the front grill



or the wheels.

A patent is a temporary right. Utility patents, for example, give the patent holder the right to exclude others for 20 years from the filing date of the earliest U.S. or international application priority date. A design patent gives the patent holder a right to exclude for 15 years (14 years if the patent was filed before May 13, 2015) from issuance. Once a particular patent expires, the owner no longer has the exclusive right to the patented inventions in that patent, which is also why it is common to have different patents covering different inventions in the same or similar products or processes.

What is a Trade Secret?

A trade secret is any information that provides a competitive advantage and is kept secret. It’s that simple; it’s that broad. Famous examples of trade secrets include the KFC and Coca-Cola recipes. But there are all types of trade secrets. From confidential manufacturing processes, to products (like WD-40), to client and customer lists. If a business looks closely enough, it will probably find it has protectable trade secrets—

some process or information that is part of its business and that other companies could not easily discover or replicate.

There is a certain natural tension between patents and trade secrets. That is because when a business develops an invention, it has to decide whether to keep the invention a trade secret or seek patent protection for it. That decision often comes down to a balance of tradeoffs. Trade secrets, for example, have certain advantages over patents: they provide a perpetual right (so long as owner takes reasonable steps to keep them secret); they do not require any application or formal filing process and associated costs and fees; and they do not require any disclosure of the invention to the public. On the flipside, competitors can freely copy and use the trade secret if they are able to reverse engineer it, and a trade secret is generally more difficult to enforce than a patent.

What is a Trademark?

A trademark is a source identifier. In other words, trademarks identify and distinguish goods and services from those manufactured, sold, or offered by

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others. At its core, a trademark right is based on use in commerce and prevents others from using trademarks that are confusingly similar or that dilute the distinctiveness of a trademark.

Trademarks include brand names; letters or numbers; slogans; logos; colors; sounds; and even fragrances. Trademarks can also extend to what is called “trade dress,” which protects the look and feel of, for example, products (the Hummer grill), product packaging (like the Coke bottle), buildings, store layouts (like Apple stores layout), and restaurant motifs that have “acquired distinctiveness” (i.e., recognition that the trade dress comes from a single source) and that are non-functional.

There are two main types of trademark rights: common law rights and federally registered rights. A business obtains common law rights to a mark just by using the mark in commerce; it need not apply for any registration to obtain those rights. The common law right, though, is geographically limited—it extends only as far as the use extends (think of a restaurant that operates only in a single city). Federal registrations—where the mark is registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office—convey many important benefits. For example, they provide a presumption of protectability to the trademark holder; they provide nationwide priority (the presumption that you first used the trademark everywhere in the U.S. before anyone else); they prevent others from also registering confusingly similar marks; they provide protections to stop counterfeit trademarks, and they generally provide greater remedies than common law rights.

Unlike a patent right or copyright (discussed further below), a trademark, like a trade secret, is a perpetual right so long as it continues to be used in commerce.

What are Copyrights?

Copyrights protect an original work fixed in a tangible medium—or in layman’s terms: software code; literary works; music/movies/TV shows; art; and even architecture. Like trademarks, a copyright arises simply from the creation of an original work. But to enforce a copyright and to obtain additional benefits under the law, you want to register your copyrights with the U.S. Copyright Office. Like patents, copyrights are granted by the federal government for a limited time.

Why Should You Build a Moat Around Your Business with These IP Rights?

With the various IP rights in mind, let’s take a closer look at how businesses can use the IP universe to build a protective moat.

Perhaps most obviously, IP rights create barriers to entry for competitors or would-be competitors. If others attempt to copy the protected IP, for example, they risk being sued—which means they risk having to spend time, money, and resources litigating; they risk facing potential monetary damages; and they risk damaging their reputation. And if they want to compete fairly, they will have to design around your IP protection. That will require them to spend time, money, and resources on R&D—all to end up with a product or process that is likely inferior to the products or processes protected by your IP.

Businesses that obtain IP also end up enhancing their reputation as innovators and thought leaders. That leads to attracting more talent and customers. And businesses that reward their employees for obtaining IP also see an increase in internal innovation within the

company.

Having IP also discourages others from suing you, at least because they know that if they do so, you may be able to countersue them. That in turn decreases your potential exposure and increases the chance of reaching a settlement on more favorable terms.

With a strong IP portfolio, a business can also increase its access to a competitor’s innovations. Indeed, a business with a strong IP portfolio will have more opportunities to license or cross-license its technology and to enter into joint ventures or joint development activities.

Finally, having an IP portfolio also increases a business’s valuation because IP assets—individually and taken together—have value. An IP portfolio also makes a business more attractive to venture capitalists and private equity, and it increases the amount a business can get in a merger or acquisition.

Given the many protections and benefits that IP provides, the time is now to evaluate your IP portfolio. Talk to key innovators and employees at your company and find out what you have today. Build your moat! ♦

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY UPGRADES: REDUCING COSTS, MEETING STATE-MANDATED GOALS

CONSTELLATION

In light of the economic downturn experienced this year, many businesses across the country are looking to reduce energy costs. Energy efficiency upgrades are one way in which a business can both lower its energy bill and contribute to the positive momentum of carbon emissions reductions currently being experienced across the globe. However, implementing efficiency measures may be challenging when upfront capital, expertise, and resources are limited or unavailable.

So, given the constraints on financial and technical resources, how can an organization gain control of their energy usage and lower their energy cost?

Today, many businesses can avail themselves of a variety of options to overcome these limitations including design/build programs and on-bill funding programs. The on-bill funding option is suited for customers whose capital and timeframes are tight and when short-term results and simplicity are required.

On-bill funding allows the customer to fund the cost of energy efficiency upgrades and recoups the cost as a line item on a commodity (i.e., the power and/or gas) contract. This allows companies to more easily realize total energy cost savings and meet sustainability goals by reducing energy consumption over time

using their current energy budget.

Many companies find on-bill funding as a means to achieve corporate compliance with regulatory requirements, meet established sustainability goals, improve electricity load profile, realize energy cost savings, increase asset valuation and reduce operation and maintenance (O&M) costs.

Through on-bill funding, companies can also replace aging equipment with ENERGY STAR®-rated equipment or improve their ENERGY STAR rating which, in many markets, can help establish a competitive market advantage or meet the requirements of their stakeholders. For example, a law in Washington, D.C. requires commercial and multifamily buildings to meet or exceed the District's median ENERGY STAR score for each property type or face alternative compliance penalties with reporting to begin in 2021. Learn more about this requirement.

The Benefits of On-Bill Funding

1. No upfront capital or financing is needed; this preserves the organization's capital budget.
2. The cost of the energy efficiency upgrades is included on the organization's electricity or gas commodity bill.

3. The energy service company may offer one-year warranty coverage on the entire installation — and even longer warranties may be available on some equipment. This warranty, combined with the longer life of the new assets, is expected to yield additional maintenance savings for many years.

4. The organization owns the energy efficiency equipment from the start of the contract and retains the full benefit of the energy efficiency measures at the end of the contract.

The energy efficiency measures that are typically employed in this approach include projects that provide rapid payback periods with relatively low capital investments. Some typical efficiency measures for on-bill funding include:

- LED lighting (e.g., Germicidal ultraviolet (UV) lighting may be a common installment in businesses that wish to take further precautions to prevent spread of communicable disease.)
- HVAC and cooling (The Environmental Protection Agency recommends modifying ventilating, cooling and heating systems to increase minimum efficiency reporting value (MERV) levels and increase use of outdoor air, among other methods, to reduce the spread of COVID-19.)

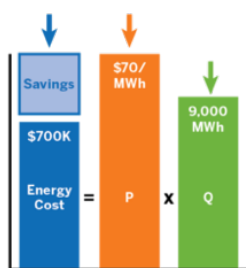
- Building automation controls
- Motor replacement with high efficiency motors and utilization of variable frequency drives

However, efficiency and renewable energy measures can also include higher capital cost projects and don't always require a positive cash flow. These may include:

- Boilers
- Chillers
- Solar
- Back-up / emergency generation
- Submetering and monitoring equipment

To understand how on-bill funding works, contact your Constellation sales representative. For more information on our Efficiency Made Easy solution, visit www.constellation.com/EME. ♦

Two Options for Companies Seeking to Improve Energy Efficiency



On-Bill Funding

- No upfront capital
- Funding via energy cost savings over 3 to 5 years



Design/Build Programs

- Upfront capital required
- Organization funds the project

ATTRACTION OF BENEFITS

NAROD CONSULTING GROUP

If 2020 taught us anything, it's to expect the unexpected. Businesses and employees found themselves in uncharted territory. Employee benefits, a key "golden handcuff", came into the spotlight during the pandemic... How to protect and retain talent while keeping our business alive? How to be competitive on the job market stage with increasing expectations from benefits?

Those that had stable jobs and no need to worry about the financial well-being of their family suddenly were filled with concerns of what might happen in the wake of business shutdowns. Others, confident of their perfect health, now faced the reality of what would happen if they contracted COVID-19 and were hospitalized for an indefinite amount of time, left incapacitated, or worse. As we continue to fight the pandemic, it is apparent that its impact on business and the global economy will last beyond the foreseeable future. Companies with more nimble shifts in attitude toward employees' quality of life and changing needs, will be able to attract higher caliber of talent at a faster pace. Allowing workers to create personalized benefits packages based on their individual needs, provides ROI of company benefits dollars.

It is a known fact that one of the most impactful ways employers can improve employees' lives is through the benefits being offered. A well-balanced menu of competitive salary plus a variety of comprehensive insurance options attracts the skilled and intelligent workers. The plans should support the demographic need, address current important issues, as well as create culture of positivity and health for all employees. The significant stress of the pandemic, created unprecedented need for mental health support, and employees are using this benefit like never before. By conducting a thorough review of what is currently being offered, companies can maximize the ROI of insurance premium dollars.

Today it is no longer enough to offer just the basics - health, dental, and vision. Employees are looking at benefits in a whole new light and making deci-

sions on "what if" scenarios. For example, critical illness, short term disability, long term disability, legal counsel and will creation, and of course life insurance are more top-of-mind than in the past.

Voluntary benefits are becoming especially pivotal. Since they are optional and usually entirely paid for by the employee, they carry no cost limitations to the employer, while simultaneously offering large variety of choices to the worker.

AS BUSINESSES REOPEN, RESTRICTIONS SUBSIDE, AND THE ECONOMY STRENGTHENS, EMPLOYERS WILL NEED TO STAY NIMBLE AND CREATE THE BENEFITS PACKAGE THAT WILL ATTRACT QUALITY NEW HIRES AND RETAIN CURRENT TALENT.

In addition, they can provide employees with deeply discounted rates only available through employers, and may provide automatic approval. In fact, during initial enrollment, medical underwriting may be waived, allowing everyone to participate without having to pass medical questions or tests. Voluntary are the perfect add-ons to any benefits package.

In today's unprecedented climate of uncertainty, employees are looking for more customized packages to meet their specific needs. Today's workforce includes Millennials and Generation Z employees who want more - choice, flexibility, and the ability to meet their personal goals. They want to offset the rising costs of health insurance with coverages that will not break the bank, rather fill in the gaps of higher deduct-

ibles, copays, and out of pocket costs. Instead of the cookie-cutter approach, agile employers can now tailor a combination of the "right" products to meet specific needs, thereby ultimately attracting top talent and creating positive company culture.

Consider the following approach to evaluating and improving your employee benefits package:

- Establish goals and priorities of benefits - reevaluate current offerings, consider demographics, answer "what are employees worried about"?
- Ask a trusted professional insurance advisor / broker for recommendations based on your employee needs and missing coverage to create a customized package - keep in mind not all policies are the same and not all benefits need to be with the same carrier.
- Add a voluntary customizable package based on individual needs of employees - cost to employer is zero, while offering valuable benefits with deep discounts and possibly without proof of insurability
- Create plan of action - consider best timing of introducing new benefits, prepare effective communication tools / technology to educate employees, engage professional insurance advisor
- Enrollment methods during open enrollment - leverage technology, online tools, create opportunity for individual Q&A with professional advisors to meet with employees.

Agility and strategic planning will enhance a company's ability to recover and thrive beyond the recovery of the pandemic. As businesses reopen, restrictions subside, and the economy strengthens, employers will need to stay nimble and create the benefits package that will attract quality new hires and retain current talent. Addressing acute concerns and offering the right variety of voluntary benefits will allow companies to retain and attract quality talent. ♦

SNAPPING BACK TO A NEW NORMAL: WHERE WILL U.S. IMMIGRATION GO UNDER THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION?

BARNES & THORNBURG LLP



The Trump Administration's immigration policies marked one of the most chaotic periods in U.S. immigration in decades. During this four-year period, U.S. immigration policy changed in dramatic ways, including but not limited to significant increases in visa denial rates for highly-skilled workers, increases in I-9 audits and a return to worksite raids (last used under the George W. Bush administration), and decreases in international student enrollment at various Universities and Higher Education institutions. Coupled with the effect of the pandemic travel bans and a variety of regulatory and policy changes, these policies made it significantly more chal-

lenging for foreign workers to legally work in the U.S. with visas and for U.S. employers and manufacturers to legally sponsor and employ foreign workers. Further, processing times for many immigration applications have slowed to historic low levels, causing further disruption.

The Biden administration inherits an immigration policy apparatus that has focused more on enforcement than granting benefits over the last four years. While the Biden administration has indicated its intention to restore certain core values and the notion of America as a country of immigrants to the forefront of U.S. immigration policy, the devil truly is in the details.

I-9/Workplace Enforcement

An area of potential change with the greatest significance to Illinois manufacturers is workplace enforcement. The Trump Administration telegraphed early on its intention to enforce strictly federal laws requiring employers to affirmatively verify employment authorization of its entire workforce by completing a Form I-9 correctly with original documents within 3 days of hire. Between 2016 and 2020, the Trump administration significantly increased the number of I-9 audits it conducted. In 2020, the Trump administration also increased fines for I-9 penalties assessed after June 17, 2020 where the associated violation occurred after November 2, 2015.

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The schedule for these violations is the following:

Substantive/Uncorrected Technical (Paperwork) Violation Fines:

- Minimum fine per individual increased from **\$230 to \$234**
- Maximum fine per individual increased from **\$2,292 to \$2,332**

Unlawful Employment of Unauthorized Workers:

- First offense increased from **\$573 – \$4,586 to \$583 – \$4,667**
- Second offense increased from **\$4,586 – \$11,463 to \$4,667 – \$11,665**
- Subsequent offenses increased from **\$6,878 – \$22,927 to \$6,999 – \$23,331**

USCIS continues to follow its penalty “matrix”, which can increase or decrease penalties by up to 25 percent. These considerations include business size, good faith, seriousness, unauthorized aliens, and company history.

The Trump administration also returned to the type of workplace raids that previously occurred during the George W. Bush administration. These raids often led to mass arrests and detentions of workers, and spread fear and anxiety among workforces.

Finally, the Trump administration returned to another common practice from the George W. Bush administration – it began issuing Social Security “No-Match” letters again. While these letters do not automatically mean that an individual is unauthorized for employment, they have potential implications for a recipient and place an employer in a difficult quandary. How far should the employer go in evaluating whether the No-Match letter is “constructive evidence” that an individual is unauthorized for employment? They also exacerbate a climate of fear and anxiety among immigrant workers that can be disruptive even without further agency action.

In each of these areas, we may witness significant changes in policy under the Biden administration. We may see the new administration conduct I-9 audits at the same levels as the Obama administration. While employers are bound to continue following federal law and the change in administration has no impact on the I-9 guidelines, the likelihood of broader sweeps for employers with I-9 paperwork violations may decrease.

Further, the Biden administration is likely to reduce or eliminate any workplace raids. Many advocacy groups heavily criticize these raids due to their indiscriminate impact on Latinx and immigrant communities and the Biden administration is expected to no longer rely upon them. Further, we also expect the Biden administration to reduce the use no-match letters by the Social Security Agency and a restoration of practices that the Obama administration followed in this regard. This would be welcome news for many employers.

One area of potential change under the Biden administration is the use of E-Verify. Over the last two decades, both political parties have used E-Verify as a carrot to incentivize various benefits, such as access to federal contracts and the STEM OPT extension. The Trump administration was unsuccessful in introducing a nationwide mandatory E-Verify bill, but the Biden administration may treat a mandatory nationwide E-Verify enrollment bill as a concession to conservatives in exchange for some of the strongly advocated for legislative proposals on earned legalization programs.

Employer-Sponsored Visa Policy

Another area of expected change is with respect to the treatment of employer-sponsored visa categories, such as the H-1B, H-2B, and TN visas. Employers in all industries have struggled to make sense of the constant regulatory and policy changes over the last four years. The Biden administration has already taken significant steps to undo certain Trump policies, such as the rescission of the Buy American Hire American (“BAHA”) executive order. Its replacement is a directive that focuses more on the sourcing of goods, titled “Ensuring the Future is Made in all of America by all of America’s Workers”. BAHA had resulted in significant increases of visa denials, the denial of petitions by USCIS, and other changes affecting U.S. immigration negatively. The Biden Administration has also rescinded guidance from the Trump administration that made it very difficult to sponsor a computer programmer for an H-1B, or specialty occupation visa. In a companion action, the Biden Administration restored prior guidance

that gave deference to a previous agency decision on a petition by the same employer with the same set of facts. This brings some much-needed stability to the system. Further, the Biden administration has chosen not to advance a proposed Trump administration regulation that would significantly restrict the availability of H-1B visas to a limited number of professions by tightening the standards to qualify as a specialty occupation.

However, one area where the Biden Administration may choose to continue rather than entirely reject Trump policies is with prevailing wages for an occupation within a geographic area. These wages represent the minimum salary that a U.S. employer must pay to foreign workers on H-1B, E-3, H-2B, and H-1B1 visas, and to foreign workers in the green card process. There appears to be a bipartisan view among some legislators that required salaries for H-1B workers should increase, particularly for the H-1B lottery selection process. The next event to provide more insight on the Biden administration’s position on this issue will be later this month with the expected enactment of a new regulation to increase the prevailing wages. If it goes into effect, that regulation will significantly increase prevailing wages on the first day when the new schedule goes into effect, namely July 1, 2021.

Finally, and on a related note, the Biden administration must also decide whether to adopt the proposed changes to the H-1B visa lottery that the Trump administration proposed. These changes would have awarded H-1B visas in the lottery based on the offered salary – those positions offered a higher salary would receive the best probability of selection. The Biden administration has postponed the earliest implementation of this regulation to at least December 2021. Already, Senator Durbin from Illinois has sent a joint letter with Senator Grassley from Iowa encouraging USCIS to adopt this regulation. The business community and most universities strongly oppose this regulatory change. We may therefore witness continuing conflict and litigation trends in certain areas of U.S. immigration firmly ensconced during the Trump era.



IMPROVING EMPLOYEE MORALE WITH AUTOMATION

eALLIANCE CORPORATION

A Harvard Business Review survey confirmed the single most important factor in determining employee satisfaction is not compensation, benefits or security, as one might think. The survey found the most important factor in employee satisfaction is the ability to contribute as a team member on a meaningful project that is adding value to the organization. The average employee wants to be adding value to the company they work for, giving them satisfaction, fulfillment and self-esteem, while also challenging them and utilizing their strengths.

The future of work is changing, in large part due to automation. In year 2015 McKinsey & Company claimed the average business has 900+ business processes, and that 85 percent of those processes can be automated. Organizations today realize automation has many benefits and plays a large role in remaining competitive and thriving.

Automation technologies such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Machine Learning and Chatbots (virtual assistants) are experiencing rapid acceptance in the marketplace. According to Gartner in a 2019 survey, 87 percent of organizations are implementing or have already implemented RPA.

Automation is enabling companies to repurpose employees for higher value tasks, the type of work they signed up for, by eliminating time consuming data entry tasks. Examples of repurposing is more time for interacting with customers, suppliers and teammates, and more time for innovation and analysis. These higher value tasks have a dramatic impact on employee morale, improving morale by 43 percent according to one study. The intent of this article is to explain how and why employee morale improves with automation.

"I knew there was a better way."

Automating a business process requires working with the front line business people, users who are currently performing these tasks manually. These

users are referred to as subject matter experts (SME), because they are the true experts regarding the how the business process is currently performed.

A common response from SMEs after seeing their solution automated is, "I knew there was a better way." They were not concerned for their job, as was the case five or six years ago when automation of office work was first emerging and ominous articles were stating that software robots will be replacing humans. They were relieved and excited that a task that took them one to four hours daily was now being semi-automated or completely automated, being completed faster with less data entry errors, as software robots type faster and more accurately than us humans.

Process improvement frequently takes place when automating a business process. During the scope, requirements and design stages of automation, the manual business process is examined closely, and inevitably a better way to perform the business process presents itself.

Example: An AR invoice automation use case consisted of users submitting an AR invoice into the customer portal. The invoice sometimes had errors, causing kickout from the customer portal, required touches with the customer, and additional time and effort by the user. The automated process consists of the software robot validating the AR invoice BEFORE it is submitted to the customer portal, eliminating time and effort by the user and customer, improving the customer experience.

Most employees are now welcoming automation as opposed to resisting it. They knew there was a better way to get the job done. They appreciate and understand that it is better for them and the organization that these business processes can now be completed in substantially less time with less errors and less human intervention.

Work-Life Balance

Two of the most common factors causing a poor work-life balance are

increased responsibilities at work and working longer hours, causing an adverse impact on employee morale. Automation addresses these factors.

Example: A month end Trial Balance consolidated report was manually performed by an AP manager, requiring 12 hours of work. She retired, and the company could not find a qualified replacement for her. The company automated this process to plug the workforce gap and this process now takes a half hour, shortening the month end close process. Seeing the efficiency of this automation, the VP of IT reached out to all employees, asking, "Tell us what causes you to work late at night or on the weekends." This focus on the employee's work-life balance immediately boosted morale and created a positive attitude as the employees began identifying and automating business processes which caused long working hours.

Example two: The pandemic caused workforce reduction in some industries. The affected businesses ended up with the remaining employees facing increased responsibilities and additional working hours. These same companies are now using automation to handle the tasks performed by laid off employees, preventing the additional workload from being assigned to the remaining employees.

Automation can play a key role in addressing overworked employees by identifying tasks being performed by the overworked employee and automating the tasks well suited for automation. This creates a healthier work-life balance, benefiting the employee and the company.

Growth & Creativity

The future of work and business in general is changing at an accelerated pace. The pandemic, climate change and increased global competition, combined with big data, analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, deep learning and intelligent automation are facilitating this change. Research points out that companies that adapt to



this change and harness the new technologies will not just survive, they will thrive. Conversely, organizations and industries that cannot or will not harness the new technologies, will struggle to remain competitive and survive.

This forces companies and workforces to analyze and innovate more than ever. Repurposing the workforce for analysis and innovation will be a crucial next step for businesses. This stimulating, fulfilling and challenging work is what the workforce wants to be doing, what they signed up for, and it directly impacts employee morale.

Surveys show that employees see automation as an opportunity to free up their time to make meaningful contributions, which they find more rewarding. 72 percent of survey respondents say they would use the time saved through automation to perform higher value work. Similarly, 78 percent say that automating manual, repetitive tasks would allow them to focus on the more interesting and rewarding aspects of their jobs.

The majority of the workforce wants to perform the more interesting, challenging and rewarding higher value work, such as innovation and analysis. This benefits the company and impacts employee morale.

The Human Touch

Some people were born with communication and listening skills. Businesses need these people representing them for interaction with customers, suppliers, team members and other organizations,

as these individuals convey the organizational vision and message well and create positive perception of the company, sometimes the first impression.

These same people get energized and motivated by this human interaction. It is fulfilling and satisfying for them, providing a sense of accomplishment and reinforcing self-esteem. Some of these individuals are not currently interacting with others, because they are too busy working on high volume, manually intensive tasks which could possibly be automated.

As some transactions between customers, suppliers and team members become more automated, there are times when someone simply wants to speak to a human being, and not dig through FAQs for a solution, and not answer questions electronically before they get to a human being that can help them in a subjective manner.

Companies are becoming increasingly aware of this and addressing this issue by the repurposing of their skilled communicators to communication tasks and responsibilities, which benefits the employee, employer and the organization needing that human touch.

Some of the more successful companies today consider providing access to a human being as a differentiator for the customer and employee experience.

Repurposing people to the type of work they excel at improves that person's morale and self-worth. Human interaction is a key component of business and repurposing individuals with communication skills to maximize this skillset is possible through automation,

benefiting the employees, employers, customers and suppliers.

Improving the Resume and Skillset

In a typical automation project, the managers, SMEs and technology team work closely with experienced partners on all steps required to automate the business process.

These individuals inevitably learn valuable automation skills and best practices during the project lifecycle. For this reason, those involved in automation projects are now highlighting their experience on their resumes as one of their skillsets, possessing valuable knowledge and experience regarding automation.

In addition to this, concept of the Citizen Developer has emerged. Software development tools for automation are now being designed to enable the non-technical resources to create their own automations, without help from IT.

This "low code, no code" technology and tools enable development without requiring programming language skills. SMEs and other non-technical resources can now automate low complexity business processes.

Employees working on automations become familiar with what is required to automate a business process, increasing that employee's knowledge and experience with automation and making the employee more versatile and valuable. ♦

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Dennis Bringuet of Ace Sign Co. Receives DSI's Wally Henderson Lifetime Achievement Award



From The State Journal-Register: Dennis Bringuet, the retired president of Ace Sign Co. and one of the founding members of Downtown Springfield Inc.'s board of directors, was presented with the Wally Henderson

Lifetime Achievement Award at DSI's annual fundraiser and awards ceremony.

Ten other awards were presented over the course of the evening.

Bringuet spearheaded in DSI's early years renovation of the Old State Capitol Plaza, the city's streetscape design program still used to this day, expansion of the downtown banner program and establishment of signature DSI events including the Old Capitol Holiday Walks and Old Capitol Farmers Market.

CLC Plans to Turn Former Gurnee Loew's into Advanced Technology Center



From Daily Herald: College of Lake County officials presented a closer look at their plan to turn the former Lowe's store at Rollins Road and Grand Avenue in Gurnee into the college's first Advanced Technology Center.

The center is designed to be a place for students to earn degrees in machining, manufacturing, welding, fabrication and industrial maintenance. College officials offered board members and the public a look at designs by Waukegan-based Legat Architects.

Plans call for the center to have an open, industrial feel. It will feature a V-shaped atrium that officials said will provide a wow factor while remaining a functional gathering space for students.

The center will be light on traditional desk and chalkboard learning spaces; most learning will be done through

hands-on training with the some of the same machines used at modern manufacturing plants.

Cope Plastics Celebrates 75th Anniversary



Cope Plastics of Alton, IL is celebrating its 75th year in business in 2021. The company was founded

by Dwight & Mozelle Cope in 1946 in their basement in St. Louis, MO. Now owned by 2nd and 3rd generation and run by Cope's granddaughters, the company supports a nationwide customer base and is recognized as one of the largest woman-owned businesses in the St. Louis region. The current owners, Don & Sharilyn Beem, have been with the company for over 60 years. Don is currently Chairman of The Board and Sharilyn, who is the daughter of Dwight and Mozelle Cope, is currently the major stockholder.

Cope's growth has continued over the decades, expanding to 19 locations across the United States with customers from coast to coast. Cope remains the supplier of choice for over 8,000 companies and OEM's in the heavy equipment, agriculture, food service, oil & gas, aerospace, medical, transportation, retail, and graphics industries. The company now employs over 370 people nationwide.

Diageo Plans Ready-to-Drink Cocktail Facility in Plainfield



From Crain's Chicago Business: Liquor giant Diageo is building a facility in Plainfield that will be able to crank out more than 25 million cases of ready-to-drink cocktails per year, amid a growing craze for the canned drinks.

Diageo plans to spend about \$80 million on the 225,000-square-foot facility, which should be ready for production this summer, the company said. Eventually, it will employ about 50 people full-time.

Diageo's new Plainfield facility will

produce recently launched ready-to-drink whiskey cocktails from Crown Royal and vodka cocktails from Ketel One Botanicals, as well as Smirnoff seltzers—another alcohol category that continues to grow.

The new facility will have two production lines, one of which can churn out 500 cans per minute and the other 1,200 cans per minute, according to a news release. It will supplement the company's existing ready-to-drink production capabilities throughout North America.

Ford's Historic Chicago Plant to Build New Texas-Style Explorer King Ranch



From Chicago Tribune: Ford announced in February it is rolling out a new version of its Explorer

SUV — the King Ranch Edition — with the "authenticity" of a Texas ranch and a made-in-Chicago label.

The Explorer King Ranch, set to hit showrooms in the spring, will be built exclusively at Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant on the city's Southeast Side.

Ford has more than 5,200 hourly employees working three shifts at its Chicago plant. No new hires or retooling is expected to begin production of the King Ranch, Ford spokeswoman Kelli Felker said.

Named after a 168-year-old cattle ranch in southern Texas, the new SUV will feature a "rugged premium appearance" with leather and wood interior, a stone gray-painted mesh grille, 20-inch aluminum wheels and quad chrome exhaust tips.

Hydrogen Trucks Get a Boost on GM Fuel-Cell Deal with Navistar



From Crain's Chicago Business: General Motors Co. has agreed to supply its hydrogen fuel-cell system to Navistar Inter-

national Corp. as the semi-truck maker rolls out plans to build a zero-emission long-haul freight business starting in 2024.

Navistar's deal with GM gives it one of the key pieces the truckmaker needs to start building and selling big rigs that use hydrogen. In addition to working with GM, Navistar also announced on Wednesday a partnership with startup OneH2 Inc. to develop a hydrogen-fueling network. Shipper J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc. will use the trucks and fueling system in a pilot program.

IMEC Launches Move Ahead Faster Initiative to Advance Illinois Manufacturing Competitiveness



From PR Newswire: In February, IMEC, the Illinois affiliate of the U.S Commerce NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network, launched the Move Ahead Faster Projects for Illinois small and mid-sized manufacturers. This initiative provides the necessary assessments and technical assistance to improve key drivers of their organizational success. Presented with fully funded projects to address their most critical needs, eligible Illinois manufacturers can receive support led by industry experts to help them plan, implement and excel. Projects vary in focus and were developed based on insights and immediate needs reported from over 1,200 manufacturers. These projects are fully funded through the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Funds.

Illinois manufacturing is a major contributor to the Illinois economy. In fact, the Illinois Manufacturers Association's Manufacturing Matters report highlights that Illinois manufacturing is 12.0 percent of the Gross State Product and creates 592,200 jobs. In many cases, these manufacturers are at the heart of their community and their success drives the success of the people and places where they reside.

The Move Ahead Faster Projects, valued at \$5,000 each, emphasizes topics such as: Industrial Hygiene, Global Market Presence, Maintenance, Leader-

ship, Finance, and Technology. Existing small and mid-sized Illinois manufacturers with less than 500 employees are encouraged to apply for one project that best suits their immediate needs. Selected projects must be conducted in Illinois and completed by July 30, 2021 and projects are limited to one project per company.

Ingersoll Machine Tools to Help Giant Telescope Reach for the Stars, Peek at the Universe



Machine Tools

From Rockford Register Star: Ingersoll Machine Tools is expanding its campus for a project that is truly out of this world. Ingersoll broke ground in March for a building where employees will assemble an 1,800-ton mount for the Giant Magellan Telescope, which is scheduled to be installed in an observatory in the remote mountains of Chile beginning in 2027.

Magellan will measure 80 feet in diameter and is billed as a next-generation giant optical infrared observatory capable of altering the history of space explorations.

Ingersoll also broke ground in March for a separate building to be used to support the company's contract manufacturing business.

The building will house a MasterMill, which Ingersoll Machine Tools CEO Chip Storie said will be the largest machine tool installed in Illinois to support Ingersoll's work for the U.S. Navy.

The two new buildings on the Ingersoll Machine Tools campus will total 40,000-square-feet and are scheduled to be completed by early 2022.

Ingersoll is working with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Rock Valley College to recruit talent for newly created jobs.

Pfizer Begins Human Trials of New Pill to Treat Coronavirus



From Bloomberg: Pfizer Inc. said in March it has begun human safety testing

of a new pill to treat the coronavirus that could be used at the first sign of illness.

If it succeeds in trials, the pill could be prescribed early in an infection to block viral replication before patients get very sick. The drug binds to an enzyme called a protease to keep the virus from replicating. Protease-inhibiting medicines have been successful in treating other types of viruses, include HIV and Hepatitis C.

The new protease inhibitor is the second such medicine Pfizer has brought into human trials to treat Covid-19. Pfizer is testing another given intravenously to hospitalized virus patients.

If everything continues to go well, Pfizer could begin a much larger combined phase 2-phase 3 trial early in the second quarter, Dolsten said, potentially allowing it to apply for emergency-use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration by the end of this year, depending on how the pandemic evolves.

Walmart to Pump \$350 Billion Into American Manufacturing



From The Motley Fool: Making a splashy bid on U.S. manufacturing, retail titan Walmart in March said it is planning a major investment in the sector over the next decade, totaling \$350 billion. This sum stacks atop \$250 billion the company said it would use to bankroll American manufacturers in 2013, a pledge it says it is "on track to deliver." Together, the promised amounts will add up to \$600 billion in investments.

While this is Walmart's second round of large-scale investment in U.S. manufacturing, this latest foray includes a new feature, dubbed "American Lighthouses." The lighthouse is a strategic regional organization through which manufacturers, suppliers, local government officials, and other groups and organizations can communicate and work out ways "to identify and overcome barriers to U.S. production" in their area. ♦

NEW IMA MEMBERS

BEYOND SAVINGS IMPACT INC.
DBA EXPENSE REDUCTION ANALYSTS
Cicero, IN

CARR MACHINE & TOOL INC
Elk Grove Village, IL

CHI OVERHEAD DOORS INC
Arthur, IL

CHICAGO GLUE MACHINE & SUPPLY
Bensenville, IL

CNHI AMERICA, LLC
Burr Ridge, IL

eALLIANCE CORPORATION
Naperville, IL

FIRST AMERICAN EQUIPMENT FINANCE
Rochester, NY

FLEX-O-GLASS INC
Chicago, IL

GETZ FIRE EQUIPMENT CO
Peoria, IL

GIBBS MACHINE CORP.
Milledgeville, IL

GOLD EAGLE COMPANY
Chicago, IL

H & B MACHINE CORP
Chicago, IL

HARDIN INDUSTRIES, LLC
Oak Brook, IL

MELIORA CLEANING PRODUCTS
Chicago, IL

NIGHTHAWK VIDEO LLC
DeKalb, IL

NOVELIS
Lincolnshire, IL

NYHAN, BAMBRICK KINZIE & LOWRY, P.C.
Chicago, IL

PRINCE INDUSTRIES INC
Carol Stream, IL

R R STREET & CO INC
Naperville, IL

RICHARDS ELECTRIC MOTOR CO
Quincy, IL

ROCK CREEK FARMS
Gridley, IL

SILKWORM INC
Murphysboro, IL

TAYLOR STUDIOS
Rantoul, IL

TRI-PAR DIE & MOLD CORP
Streamwood, IL

Discover the right benefits solutions to meet your business objectives

Leverage the buying power of Illinois Manufacturers' Association

Navigating the challenges of delivering benefit solutions to meet a diverse, multi-generational workforce is easier when you make the most of your membership.



Employer and employee-paid benefit solutions

- Dental
- Vision*
- Basic Term Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- Supplemental Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- Short Term Disability
- Long Term Disability

* Vision benefits are underwritten by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York, NY. Certain claims and network administration services are provided through Vision Service Plan. Vision Service Plan is not affiliated with Metropolitan Life Insurance Company or its affiliates.

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association and MetLife are dedicated to helping you recruit and retain top talent with a strategic benefits offering. Working together, we can help you deliver the right mix of options to fit employee needs as well as your budget.

Economies of scale

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association relationship with MetLife enables us to band together all member groups with 2-99 employees. With this buying power, you have access to a range of products and robust plan designs at competitive group rates you may not otherwise be able to get on your own.

Committed to your success

MetLife's team of dedicated experts work to ensure you'll have a simple experience from underwriting through implementation and ongoing service. Plus, with MetLife's specialized focus and experience, you can have confidence you've made the right decision for your business and your workforce.

Learn more

For more information on these valuable member benefit solutions, please visit www.imahealthplan.com.

Like most group benefit programs, benefit programs offered by MetLife and its Affiliates contain certain exclusions, exceptions, reductions, limitations, waiting periods and terms for keeping them in force.

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How can I get all my utility data in one place?

Constellation has the products and strategic relationships to proactively take control of your energy data. The Pear.ai platform can help you generate energy insights in a single place helping streamline and reduce operating costs for Utility Expense Management.

To learn more about the Pear.ai platform please contact Rich Cialabrini at richard.cialabrini@constellation.com or **847.738.2510**.



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