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CELEBRATING WOMEN MAKERS: A Q&A WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS



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THE PROMISE OF MANUFACTURING

MARK DENZLER, PRESIDENT & CEO



I'm generally an optimist who looks at the glass half-full and there is absolutely no doubt that I am bullish on the future of American manufacturing. I strongly believe in the promise of manufacturing and the impact that our sector has not only on Americans but the world. And it's personal for me because manufacturing put food on our table growing up.

The message played out in bright lights in early March when I was cordially invited to attend a major announcement by Jim Stutelberg, CEO of Primient, a downstate food processor. Many of you know that I am a proud native of Decatur and love getting back to my hometown to celebrate successes in an industrial city that has seen its share of struggles over the years. In a historic and landmark investment, Governor Pritzker joined Primient's leadership to announce that the company is investing \$400 million in their facility as part of a "Rooted in Renewal" celebration.

Now, I've had the opportunity over the years to join numerous manufacturing leaders when they have made similar announcements across Illinois, but this one had a very special meaning and purpose for me. Decades ago, both my mom and dad worked for the then A.E. Staley Manufacturing Company which later became Tate & Lyle and is now Primient. My mom was a secretary, serving two executives in the Transportation Division while my dad was a blue-collar union worker who had the opportunity to work at the Decatur plant on several occasions.

The company was a cornerstone of the Decatur community. Founder, A.E. Staley, started the Decatur Staleys which are now known as the Chicago Bears. He was also the sole driver for the creation of Lake Decatur more than one hundred years ago, which allowed the region to grow and prosper. Today, the company is an integral partner of the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing (iFAB) Tech Hub stretching from Champaign to Decatur. It's estimated that biomanufacturing and fermentation will grow by \$200 billion and 1 million jobs in the next two decades.

This brings me back to the promise of manufacturing and jobs. My family – and thousands of others – benefitted from Primient which provided good, middle-class manufacturing jobs that afforded employees the ability to buy a house or car, take a vacation, and support a family. So, when we talk about creating 25 new jobs, retaining 100 jobs, or even losing 50 jobs, these are not nameless, faceless statistics. Each of these jobs has a name, a face, and a story behind it much like mine.

While the Decatur announcement focused on the investment allowing for modern equipment, infrastructure improvement, and a path to sustainability and a brighter plant-based future, it was really Primient doubling down on a bet in the future of Decatur, Macon County, and their employees who are the heart and soul of the company.

This same thing happens every single day at every single manufacturer, large or small, across Illinois and the United States – they are working toward a better future for their employees, customers, and communities. We may not know what is around the corner, or the next major challenger, but I'll bet that manufacturers and the women and men on shop floors will rise to face any challenge. That is the promise of manufacturing. ♦

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TOXIC RELEASE INVENTORY: THE COMMUNITY RIGHT-TO-KNOW SIDE OF EPCRA

SCS ENGINEERS

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to Know Act (EPCRA) is a rule under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). There are two parts to EPCRA. The emergency planning includes annual notification of hazardous chemicals present at your site to your state and local emergency planning and response organizations, and with your fire department. That information is used to help them prepare for emergencies such as chemical releases or fires.

The other side of EPCRA is the right of people to know about the hazardous chemicals that are present and/or released in their communities. This information is disclosed through the toxic release inventory (TRI). TRI covers a variety of industries based on their NAICS code, that employ 10 full-time equivalent employees or more.

What's in a Name?

This report is often referred to by a variety of names, including Toxic Release Inventory, TRI, SARA 313 report, Form R, or Form A. Do not be fooled by the nomenclature; these all refer to the same reporting requirement.

Step 1: First, you'll need to determine if your facility is required to report by identifying the amount of the reportable chemicals or chemical categories that you manufactured, processed, or otherwise used in the previous calendar year. Use these definitions:

- **Manufacture** means to produce, prepare, compound, or import, including incidental manufacture such as a byproduct.
- **Process** means to prepare an already manufactured product for distribution in commerce. This includes repackaging.
- **Otherwise Use** is defined as other chemical use that is not considered manufacturing or processing. If the reportable chemical is not part of the final product, it is considered otherwise used.

Some activities are not subject to reporting; among the exemptions are chemicals in items that meet the definition of "articles," chemicals for personal use,

chemicals used for building and grounds maintenance (the exemption does not apply to cleaning of process equipment), or chemicals for maintenance of motor vehicles. There is also an exemption for "de minimis" concentrations, meaning that the chemical constitutes less than 1% of the formula, or if 0.1% of the chemical is a carcinogen.

There are currently 790 individual chemicals and several chemical categories covered by TRI. USEPA's List of Lists can help you find reportable chemicals. Chemicals that are reportable under TRI are identified in the Section 313 column. Some common reportable chemicals are toluene, xylene, and 1,2,4-trimethyl benzene, often found in paints and cleaning solvents.

Chemicals that are considered persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBT) can be found both in the List of Lists, and on a dedicated web page <https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program/persistent-bioaccumulative-toxic-pbt-chemicals-covered-tri>. Chemicals in this category that may be emitted include polycyclic aromatic compounds, mercury, mercury compounds, and lead. Be aware that the de minimis exemption does not apply to PBT chemicals.

Certain chemicals that are identified by category may not be listed in the List of Lists; the USEPA has published separate lists for many of these categories. Glycol ethers and water dissociable nitrates, for example – fall into chemical categories.

In 2020, USEPA added some per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to the list of reportable chemicals. There are 189 PFAS that are reportable for the 2023 report year due July 1, 2024, and several more are being added for the 2024 reporting year. Another significant change for the 2024 reporting year is the removal of de minimis concentrations for PFAS calculations.

After you have identified the non-exempt chemicals and processes, you then need to determine how much of each was manufactured, processed, or otherwise used during the previous year. Each of these categories will be calculated separately for each chemical. The method for determining the totals differs from many other environmental regulatory calculations; USEPA does not require you to use the maximum concentration in all circumstances. For instance, if the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) expresses the concentration as

a range, you may use the midpoint. Many chemical manufacturers provide precise concentrations for TRI reporting in section 15 of the SDS.

Finally, check to see if you have exceeded any thresholds.

- **Manufacture:** 25,000 pounds
- **Process:** 25,000 pounds
- **Otherwise Use:** 10,000 pounds
- **Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxins:** Varies by Chemical

Complete the reporting in Step 2 for each chemical that exceeds a reporting threshold.

Important: *If you are in a covered NAICS code with at least 10 full-time equivalent employees, complete and document Step 1 every year, even if you do not have to file a report.*

Step 2: Forget (nearly) everything you did in Step 1. That step just helped you identify which chemicals are required to be included in the TRI.

For each chemical that exceeds a reporting threshold, the facility is required to calculate releases to the air, wastewater, and stormwater; and the amount of the chemical recycled or treated on-site, or sent off-site for treatment during the previous calendar year.

Choose your Form:

- **Form A:** Use this form if:
 - You are not reporting any PFAS or PBTs; and
 - The amount manufactured, processed, or otherwise used does not exceed 1,000,000 pounds; and
 - The total annual releases do not exceed 500 pounds.
- **Form R:** Use this form if you do not qualify to use Form A.

Complete a TRI report through the USEPA's Central Data Exchange (CDX) by July 1. Some states and tribes have additional reporting requirements.

The USEPA makes TRI submissions available to the public, and you can access them through the Environmental Compliance History Online (ECHO).◆

MANUFACTURING AND AI: TECHNOLOGY ENABLES PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

GLOBANT

For most of us in the maker space, quality and consistency are often our most important measures of success as we scale and maintain our businesses. To get to that output, manufacturing organizations make countless decisions on how to balance input quality with costs, optimize processes, and ensure long-term product performance. With artificial intelligence capabilities, namely machine learning, deep learning, and generative AI, manufacturing experts and engineers are seeing marked improvements in how manufacturing is conducted today.

During Globant's panel discussion on Generative AI in December 2023 with Rockwell Automation, we touched on four suggestions to which leaders in manufacturing organizations should pay attention.

1. Lead through transparency and engagement.

The availability of Generative AI to the general public brings new opportunities and challenges to the implementation of technology. Your leadership and teams have the same access to the tools to experiment, learn, and imagine what access to AI can do to drive major improvements in their work. Having access, though, can also bring fear and uncertainty as folks realize the power for themselves. This is why we strongly suggest an open and transparent policy, guidelines, and collaboration with a broader group within your organization. Enable teams to provide input and suggestions for how Generative AI can be used on a day-to-day basis and in major initiatives.

2. Focus on using AI for your people.

AI's value is in creating efficiency and effectiveness for humans, so every implementation of AI should benefit your employees in their jobs. Consider quality, efficiency, up-skilling, and other benefits you would normally seek, and ensure that your employees still know that they own this value. The only change is that they have this AI intelligence to help them do it.

How are companies ensuring their workforce is up-to-date with the pros and cons of artificial intelligence power in their tool chest? They're doubling down on education and creating accountability for all of their employees. Artificial intelligence education is at the core of Globant's internal education program, with dedicated training for all Globers on the technology, dating back to 2018.

3. Look to your most trusted partners to lower your cost of entry.

While you should be conducting your own experiments with AI, your trusted software and technology vendors most likely are way ahead of you. Proactively engage them for ideas, collaboration, and prototypes that can help you envision and act on the available technology. These trust partners can do the heavy lifting and look at data sets much broader than yours to help ensure you gain the largest benefit with the lowest upfront cost

4. Align with well-recognized ethical standards and values, as well as your company's values.

Andrea Ruotolo, Rockwell Automation's Global Head of Customer Sustainability and ESG, recommended quickly creating a policy for your company and sharing it with your entire organization. Ensure this

document follows the ethical standards and values in the market as well as the values of your company. Both are important for ensuring any use of AI brings value to your organization sustainably.

As you continue your journey, creating policy and alignment in your organization, consider Andrea Ruotolo's suggested sources for inspiration:

- [The IEEE's Ethically Aligned design document](#), published in 2019
- [World Economic Forum](#)
- [European Union's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI](#)
- [Globant's AI Manifesto](#)

The integration of AI into the manufacturing process is a complex journey, but with time and concerted effort, manufacturers are finding innovative ways to leverage the technology to save money and time, leaving human resources to value-added functions.

As a digitally native company, we are passionate about the way tech can change industries, experiences, and lives. For the last 20 years, we've bridged businesses and consumers through technology and creativity. Today, AI is the foundation upon which we design, develop and dream. We dare to go far, we dare to delight. ♦



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A GUIDE TO EMBEDDING NEURODIVERSITY WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

STANNUM CORE SOLUTIONS

Over the past year, I've shared insights and anecdotes from Illinois manufacturers that are paving a future that empowers workers across the full spectrum of neurodiversity. From Gilster-Mary Lee and Magnetic Inspection Laboratory Inc. leveraging neurodiversity to bolster a dependable workforce to G&W Electric Co. enhancing production through lean as a result of universal process, and Morrison Container Handling Solutions which recently launched their own neurodiverse workforce, Illinois Manufacturers are engaging with neurodivergent workers in their communities. As more companies work toward this goal, many are challenged with where to start. In this article, I will outline some key steps that lay the foundation for a successful neurodiverse hiring program.

Nancy Wilson is the CEO of Morrison Container Handling Solutions and plays a key role in spearheading MCHS' neurodiverse workforce initiative. In highlighting the diversity of talent, Wilson had this to share, "There's a lot of talented people out there that come from all different backgrounds. Hiring employees with neurodiverse backgrounds solves not only the workforce challenges manufacturers have right now but helps us fulfill a value important to Morrison - helping our community. We'd be missing out on valuable contributors to the workforce without embracing workforce initiatives like this that can make a difference in our organizations and the world around us." As she underscores, embracing neurodiverse backgrounds allows organizations to tap into a uniquely underutilized talent resource.

Oftentimes, neurodiversity may be viewed as "another to-do" for HR leaders and managers. Contrarily, however, implementing neurodiversity is centered on developing a holistic approach to hiring, training, and accountability which will produce positive results across an organization's workforce while future-proofing talent pipelines. Definitionally, neurodiversity comprises the entirety of neuropathy and is not

exclusive in scope to either neurodivergent or neurotypical workers. For this reason, embedding neurodiversity is not a "one-off," but rather, a re-envisioning of how to create systems that will best serve all employees and the business's bottom line.

"HIRING EMPLOYEES WITH NEURODIVERSE BACKGROUNDS SOLVES NOT ONLY THE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES MANUFACTURERS HAVE RIGHT NOW BUT HELPS US FULFILL A VALUE IMPORTANT TO MORRISON - HELPING OUR COMMUNITY. WE'D BE MISSING OUT ON VALUABLE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE WORKFORCE WITHOUT EMBRACING WORKFORCE INITIATIVES LIKE THIS THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WORLD AROUND US."

1. Nominate an Internal Champion:

Clear ownership of responsibilities is critical in building structure for neurodiversity. An effective champion is somebody who is able to oversee each phase of the project job identification, through onboarding, and long-term strategy at 90 days of employment and beyond. Generally, the strongest candidates for a project champion are members of the

HR team or V-level leaders. It's not imperative that the designated champion is spearheading each phase but, it should be somebody who can ensure accountability throughout the process.

2. Identify Areas of Opportunity:

Job identification is oftentimes severely under looked in neurodiversity initiatives, causing a rippling effect of pain throughout a project. Critically inspecting which jobs are most applicable for a neurodivergent candidate will best ensure success from the beginning. When assessing a variety of positions that might be applicable to a neurodivergent candidate, there are a number of points to consider:

- How much variability is there in the job process?
- What is the current communication and accountability structure for the position?
- How is productivity measured?
- How consistent is the shift schedule?
- What will happen if an employee overproduces in the role?

These questions will reveal the positions that are the most consistent, structured, and receptive to neurodivergent candidates. There is often a tendency to categorize jobs as "easy" vs. "difficult." This is not an effective way to assess job matches for neurodiversity; rather, it is best to assess positions based on "subjective" vs. "objective." A job may appear to be "difficult", but if it has a routine process, low variability in the day-to-day operations, and requires little-to-no independent decision-making, then it is likely to be a good candidate for a neurodivergent employee. Likewise, a position may appear "easy", yet have many different one-off situations which need to be accounted for or possess a poorly structured chain of communication; in which case, it is likely not a strong match for neurodivergence.

The best jobs to select for a neurodiverse hiring project are those that pos-

sess these themes of structure, routine, and low variability, while providing an immediate impact on your organization's workforce goals – achieving elevated flexibility for your most nimble employees, allowing them to operate in roles which best match their high-level skillsets.

3. Analyze the Positions:

Prior to engaging with neurodiverse job seekers, it is crucial to implement environmental support and universal process. To begin development, analyze the full scope of the position. Take into account all potential variables:

- How does work flow to/from the employee?
- What are the core competencies for the position?
- Who will be the go-to person for questions and check-ins?
- Are there any "one-off" aspects of the job? If so, how can they be systematically addressed?
- What is a reliable "backup" task in the event that there is a work stoppage for the position?

These questions, as well as any additional questions specific to the position, should be addressed and agreed upon by the internal champion and department manager. Ensuring alignment during this phase will help prevent future problems from appearing during onboarding. Environmental supports such as visual standard work, workplace labeling, and a leadership directory, will lay the foundation for the position while best preparing the new hire for success during onboarding.

4. Recruit & Match Talent:

As the project flows through the job identification and development stages, it is valuable to begin building partnerships through agencies and educational institutions. The Illinois Department of Rehab Services (DoRS) and the Department of Human Services (IDHS) are equipped to help businesses engage with neurodi-

verse talent in their community. To start, get in touch with your region's local DoRS office, which can be found by using the Office Locator on the IDHS website.

Once you have connected with your local office, share as many details of the job as possible, including scheduling, starting wage, and professional requirements. It is beneficial to provide a job description to best indicate the profile of talent you are recruiting for. This will also allow state rehab counselors to disseminate the open position to their community partners, which will include non-profit organizations and local schools. It is recommended to invite the candidates for a tour of the facility and offer an opportunity for a short job trial to skill-match the best candidate for the job.

Many neurodivergent candidates may not have the ability to confidently present their skills in a traditional interview format. Additionally, many HR professionals are not experienced in interviewing neurodivergent talent. For these reasons, offering a hands-on approach to skill-matching is the best way to identify the candidate who will best perform in the role. If it is determined, however, that a verbal interview is necessary, then the interviewer should do their best to deliver the questions to candidates ahead of time and avoid vague or unnecessarily complex questions while providing a comfortable and low-pressure interview environment.

5. Employee Success & Scaling:

Following candidate selection, invite the candidate(s) to apply for the position and guide them through the typical hiring process. Similar to the job analysis, it may be necessary to do a deep dive into your organization's hiring process. If you determine that there are a number of complex actions required to get the employee onboarded into your organization, then it is recommended to create a new hire checklist or process guide. It's also recommended to partner with training providers to educate the new hire's manager and team leads on the ba-

sic concepts of autism in the workplace. These can include:

- Communication
- Social Skills
- Sensory Processing
- How to teach a task

It is best to slowly introduce new people, tasks, and processes to neurodivergent employees so they can effectively acclimate at their own pace. Moving with intention during the early stages of training will help the employees gain comfortability so they can soon be producing at a rate comparable to their neurotypical peers.

As a rule of thumb, avoid thoughts such as, "The new hire is struggling to learn in this particular area, but they will catch on like everybody else." In these cases, it is best to assume that they will not be able to just "catch on" as many neurodivergent workers do not have the social inference skills to assimilate through indirect expectations. Being clear, direct, and consistent with directions and expectations will create the most successful and comfortable transition for the new hire.

Soon, the neurodivergent new hire will be fully onboarded and may be eager to learn new skills and tasks. Be judicious with cross-training and ensure that there is not an influx of variables after early signs of success. It can be tempting to start shifting the new hire into various tasks and responsibilities after a successful launch, but oftentimes this behavior results in a stressed employee with declining performance. As with the initial onboarding, scaling tasks and responsibilities is best done strategically. Encourage employees to advocate for themselves and contribute to team activities such as group ergonomic stretches, team problem solving, and being independently consulted for thoughts regarding continuous improvement. As your initiative grows, these early hires may likely become valuable assets and leaders for a continually scaling neurodiverse workplace. ♦

WHY TRANSITION PLANNING IS GOOD BUSINESS STRATEGY

CLIFTONLARSONALLEN LLP

In a world of supply chain disruptions, global competition, talent shortages, and rapid technology changes, owner transition planning often gets deprioritized. This is unfortunate because the initiatives that are required to prepare your organization for owner transition are often the same initiatives that will improve your organization overall. Whether you are considering passing the torch to the next generation in the family, selling your company to a competitor, or transitioning a portion of ownership to private equity, intentionally planning the transition can increase your likelihood of success while potentially improving your organization today. Ownership transition is inherently complex. It is most likely highly emotional for owners. And ultimately, execution of a transition plan will result in significant change. All three of these elements make good fodder for procrastination. With the right team behind you and a little information, however, transition can become a path to build your legacy and see your dreams become reality.

One trick to help create the mindset shift necessary to prioritize the process is to recognize that planning for owner transition is good business strategy. Through the process of building and executing such a plan, owners can improve financial and operational performance, create positive culture shifts, and even turn their organization into a talent magnet. Transition planning focuses on protecting wealth, creating sustainability, and increasing the value of the business. To further illustrate this point, here are several reasons why transition planning is good business strategy.

1. Reduces risk to the organization. The process of planning includes assessing and reducing current risks to the organization to lock in value and reduce the likelihood of unforeseen issues impacting the business.

2. A good transition plan minimizes the disruptions that can come from ownership change. These would be disruptions like operational complications or confusion for employees, customers, and stakeholders – all of which can reduce confidence in the business.

3. Preserves the business legacy. Family-owned or otherwise, a well-executed transition plan supports the preservation of the

founder's legacy and creates a path for their values, principles, and culture to continue.

4. Supports talent development and retention. An important and yet often overlooked contributor to the value and attractiveness of an organization is a solid leadership team. Therefore, succession planning is an important part of an overarching transition plan. A byproduct of succession planning is the impact on the culture. By encouraging the development of talent, organizations foster a culture of growth and engagement – both of which improve talent attraction and retention.

5. Builds enterprise value. By assessing readiness for transition, an organization can focus on the exact levers that need to be adjusted to increase value over time – things like increased operational efficiency, better inventory controls, strong leadership, and reduced dependence on the owner. This makes the company more appealing to investors, supports an easier handoff to successors, and creates a better position for the

owner upon exit.

Ultimately, owner transition planning is a proactive strategy that coordinates efforts to achieve the long-term goals and interests of the business and owners. It reduces risk, enhances value, and positions the company for success while also helping owners achieve a level of choice around their involvement in their business. They have more options and are more likely to be able to walk away from the business when the time is right, having accomplished their goals, and leaving a thriving organization and powerful legacy behind them.

The information contained herein is general in nature and is not intended, and should not be construed, as legal, accounting, investment, or tax advice or opinion provided by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP (CLA) to the reader. For more information, visit CLAconnect.com.

For more information on transition planning in Illinois Statewide, contact Garret Thresher at Garret.Thresher@CLAconnect.com or 815-847-7481. ♦



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THE BUSINESS CASE FOR UTILIZING APPRENTICESHIPS

SARAH HARTWICK, VICE PRESIDENT OF
EDUCATION & WORKFORCE POLICY



Manufacturers across the country continue to see progress with the number of manufacturing jobs increasing. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. manufacturing jobs are at the highest level since November of 2008, totaling upwards of 12.9 million with the unemployment rate remaining steady at 3.7%. However, there are still 625,000 open jobs in the manufacturing industry including tens of thousands of jobs in Illinois. How can manufacturers balance open positions with a relatively low unemployment rate?

The Department of Labor recently announced significant proposed changes to the rules that regulate registered apprenticeships across our nation. Discussions with the IMA's partner at the German American Chamber of Commerce and their ICATT program indicate that overall, the changes reflect best practices of current apprenticeship programs. There are some concerns regarding the new provisions, particularly around reporting, but there is hope that those will be addressed as the Rulemaking process concludes. These efforts are combined with significant funding streams as well to support the implementation and expansion of registered apprenticeships across the country. Most recently, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the availability of nearly \$200 million in grants for the expansion of registered apprenticeships across industries including manufacturing within supply chain sectors. This is the second round of funding as part of the Apprenticeship Building America tour. Manufacturers who are not utilizing apprentices in planning for their future workforce needs are leaving dollars on the table.

What is the business case for utilizing apprenticeships? The apprenticeship model has been utilized worldwide for generations. What is a common talent-pipeline strategy in other parts of the world is not being taken advantage of by employers across the United States, and more specifically the business benefits that come with utilizing apprentices. The COVID pandemic highlighted the tension that exists between an aging workforce and industries that struggle with appealing to the next generation of workers. All of this is exacerbated by the ever-widening skills gap and will only continue to widen as technologies and AI advance.

Apprentices are a solution to not only recruiting future employees but also elevating your current workforce up the company ladder. Illinois' apprenticeship work includes support for youth, pre-, and regular apprenticeship models. By taking advantage of each of these models, a manufacturer can appeal to a wide array of populations from high school students to opportunity youth (students who are between the ages of 18-24, not enrolled in school, and are also unemployed), to career changers and even their current employees. Apprentices benefit from the opportunity to learn from a leader within a company and learn a specific skill that will lead to a better career. Apprentices often become committed and loyal employees after the apprenticeship ends because of the time and attention the company paid to the individual in helping to incorporate them into the culture of their company.

State and federal funds are available and can be combined to cover both training and wages for apprentices. The IMA's Employer Training Investment Program, under which the state tripled funding for the IMA due to increased demand for the program, can be combined with federal grants that cover wages for apprentices working under a Registered Apprenticeship program through the U.S. Department of Labor.

The state and federal governments have also increased access to supports within their agencies including the navigator model under the U.S. Department of Labor as well as the Illinois workNet, an American Job Center, sponsored by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity which provides real-time access to workforce development resources.

How can companies get started? Reach out to Sarah Hartwick at the IMA to be connected to the wide array of support for beginning and building successful apprenticeship programs that will benefit your company for years to come. ♦

INCENTIVE PLANS - THE BASICS AND BEYOND

THE OVERTURE GROUP

Getting incentive pay right is tricky. What worked before may no longer be applicable, especially after a significant shift in company goals, business strategies, and business climate. As companies aim to refocus their businesses in a post-pandemic, inflationary economy, it is essential to review and potentially modify incentive plans to support the company's strategy and vision. Studies have proven that organizations that emerge healthy and stronger from a crisis typically have leaders who drive change by engaging employees. Now may be the time to revisit your company's incentive plans. And if you do not have a true performance-based plan this article can be helpful.

Business planning is crucial for the success of any company, regardless of its size. To ensure that management provides clear direction for achieving goals set out in the business plan, companies can implement a well-designed incentive compensation program. An incentive plan can help align management's performance objectives with the organization's goals and provide financial rewards for achieving key targets outlined in the business plan. Companies use incentive plans, also known as "variable pay" plans, for many reasons.

Incentive Plan Objectives

To create an effective incentive plan for your business, you need to align it with your company's most critical and measurable objectives. This means identifying the appropriate goals that the incentive plan will align with, such as increasing profits, improving quality and productivity, fostering teamwork, or developing new lines of business. It's important to ensure that the objectives of the incentive plan align with the key goals of your business plan.

You also need to make sure that all participants understand the goals established in the incentive plan, and that they can be reliably and objectively measured. This will help to ensure that the plan is effective in motivating employees to work towards achieving the goals.

Finally, it's important to have the support of senior management to help implement the incentive plan and engage staff to

support it within the workplace. With everyone committed to achieving the goals of the plan, your business can reap the rewards of increased productivity, profitability, and overall success.

Types of Incentive Plans

To determine the appropriate incentive plan for a company, it is important to first understand the purpose of the plan and what the company aims to achieve through it. There are various incentive plans available, and in this article, we will discuss four different types. Each plan has its unique advantages and works best in specific situations to support and reinforce a company's business plan. While both are valuable tools, we won't be covering long-term incentives or sales force incentives in this article.

Annual Management Incentive Plans

Management incentive plans typically apply to individuals in management positions. These plans usually link the incentive opportunities to 1-3 key operating metrics. The performance contributions of specific participants may also be considered to determine individual awards if the company wants to include individual performance as a factor. Key advantages of a management incentive plan include:

- Sets Expectations: Predetermined goals and objectives are established upfront and communicated broadly to all participants
- Emphasizes Performance: Incentives paid reflect performance at the company and/or division level, and if desired, individual manager/executive performance
- Reduces Fixed Costs: Fixed compensation costs are minimized since incentive payment is contingent on performance in key measures
- Motivates Participants: Energizes staff to focus on the key objectives of the company
- Inspires Involvement: People like to feel that they have some control over their compensation. Having the opportunity to earn more if they achieve more gives them that feeling.

- Promotes Teamwork: Plans that include company, division, or departmental goals improve cooperation and alignment

Individual Incentive Plans

Individual incentive plans are different from management incentive plans in that they are available to a broader range of employees, including staff and individual contributors. The criteria and payouts are based primarily on individual achievements, rather than overall company or division results. These plans are often tied to profitability goals to ensure that the company has the funds to support the incentive payouts and that participants remain focused on profitability. The advantages of this type of incentive plan include:

- Helps to recognize each participant on an individual basis
- Ensures payments are performance-based rather than discretionary
- Motivates and helps attract and retain talent as it gives them some control over their compensation and career and rewards them for their contributions to overall company results
- Focuses individuals on what they can do to support the achievement of company goals
- Is a variable expense that is only paid when desired results are achieved; takes pressure off base pay which is a fixed expense.

Gainsharing Plans

Gainsharing plans are incentive plans that reward groups of employees for achieving productivity gains, cost savings, and quality improvements. Unlike individual incentive plans, gainsharing plans establish performance criteria for a group of employees rather than individuals. The gains are based on a predetermined formula and are shared equally among all participating employees. The benefits of a gainsharing plan include:

- Coordination and teamwork are encouraged
- Employees learn more about the business and key metrics that drive success at the company
- It reinforces a participative work



environment fostering a culture of continuous improvement

- Employees focus on specific objectives that are important to the operations
- Incentive pay is self-funded by productivity improvement
- Promotes increased employee accountability, commitment, goodwill and company pride

Linking Incentives to Total Pay

The development of an incentive plan should be aligned with the company's total rewards strategy and programs. Important considerations include:

- How important will incentives be to the total pay package?
- How will the availability of incentive pay affect the base salary structure and merit pay adjustments?
- What is market practice for total pay mix—base versus incentives? Keep in mind that this will vary based on competitive practice for the industry, location, company size, life stage of the company, and a company's rewards strategy.

Other Factors

Other issues that need to be addressed when developing an incentive plan include:

- Size and importance of incentives to be offered
- Availability of individual, depart-

ment, or company performance criteria that can be reliably measured

- Establishment of meaningful performance goals
- Compatibility of company culture with the proposed incentive plan

What Type of Incentive Plan?

To determine the best plan for a company, it is important to address the issues mentioned above. The incentive plans discussed in this document are all cash reward plans, which can be enhanced with intrinsic rewards such as employee recognition programs, coaching and development programs for employees, special project assignments, promotions, and service awards. It is essential to consider intrinsic rewards while developing a comprehensive rewards strategy, as they play a vital role in motivating and engaging employees.

Why Do Some Incentive Plans Fail?

An effective incentive plan can be a powerful tool to support a business plan. However, if the plan is not properly designed, it can backfire and demoralize employees instead of motivating them. There are various reasons why incentive plans fail, including:

- Incentives are not consistent with the organization's business strategies, culture and/or management style
- The goals of the business plan and the performance standards are not measurable

• The earnings potential of the incentive is not meaningful to participants or the goals are unrealistic

- Proper "line of sight" to the incentive goals is not clearly established
- The incentive plan and achievement of annual goals are not well-communicated to participants throughout the year

- The incentive plan is a substitute for solving other organizational problems
- The plan is too complicated causing it to not be well understood and/or not focusing participants on the most important priorities.

A business plan can be an effective management tool to improve company performance. However, if not properly implemented, a business plan loses its effectiveness. Linking the implementation of the business plan to a variable pay incentive plan can help ensure that the business plan will not wind up in the circular file.

In Summary

People don't work for money alone, but they do respond to incentives. Incentives can motivate employees to challenge themselves to meet a goal that they understand, or even better, help to establish. This is when "true" engagement takes place, behavior starts to change, and business results improve. Winning and achievement are fun and rewarding, and when incentives are done well, it's a pay-off for all involved – employees, the company, and shareholders. ♦

REACHING SUSTAINABILITY GOALS THROUGH RENEWABLE ENERGY PROCUREMENT

CONSTELLATION

Understanding Renewable Energy Purchasing Models: The integration of renewable purchasing is a popular, but potentially complicated, a step in meeting sustainability goals that can significantly cut your company's market-based Scope 2 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. There are several models for organizations to leverage for offsite renewable energy procurement, each with its own structure and benefits.

Power Purchase Agreements and Virtual Power Purchase Agreements

Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and Virtual Power Purchase Agreements (vPPAs) are both important tools that enable businesses to procure renewable energy. The key difference between the two is the physical versus financial nature of the agreements. Generally speaking, PPAs involve the physical delivery of electricity and environmental attributes, while vPPAs replicate the financials of the underlying PPA and provide the environmental attributes without providing the offtaker with physical electricity.

Both agreements have their own set of advantages that align in several key areas. Each model provides a way for organizations to support renewable projects, such as the purchase of renewable energy certificates (RECs) to help reach sustainability goals and establish longer-term partnerships with developers, which can help reduce carbon footprints. Determining whether a PPA or vPPA better meets a company's renewable energy goals depends on the specific priorities and risk tolerances of each business.

Using Retail Supply Contracts to Integrate Renewable Purchases

Retail supply contracts allow companies

to purchase renewable energy bundled with their electricity service in competitive markets.

Constellation offers simplified retail solutions through our Constellation offsite renewables (COrE) products:

- COrE provides access to existing renewable projects, bundling the energy and RECs into retail power supply.
- COrE+ allows customers to support the development of new renewable energy projects and provides bundled RECs and load-following electricity in a retail supply agreement.

Constellation uses its extensive experience to find attractive renewable energy projects for customers. We review each project based on factors like cost, developer reputation and project status. Then, Constellation enters into a physical PPA with the developer of the project, handling the complex contract details and project negotiations. The end customer then signs a simplified retail power contract that provides the economic and sustainability benefits of the PPA. This provides customers an easy way to buy verified renewable energy from renewable projects, without having to take on the complexities of direct renewable energy contracts. And with Constellation's ability to size your offtake to meet your usage, COrE products also allow smaller customers that aren't able to contract for the full output of a large, offsite renewable development to still realize the economies of scale these opportunities provide.

- Contract Term: 10 – 20 years
- Price Structure: Option to elect a fixed rate for bundled electricity + RECs for portions of the term
- Emissions Reduction: Directly re-

duces market-based Scope 2 emissions from the electricity purchased

Choosing the Right Renewable Energy Solution

There is no one-size-fits-all strategy. The questions below can help businesses identify the model that best aligns with their sustainability goals and organizational priorities:

- Sustainability goals: Will purchasing RECs drive sufficient progress or are additional emissions reduction strategies preferred?
- Risk: Can you handle the hourly settlement risk associated with PPAs or vPPAs, or do you prefer being able to have fix pricing through a retail supply contract?
- Project preference: Do you want the ability to identify the specific source of renewable energy supply?
- Contract term: Can you commit to 10-20 years?

Organizations should analyze their specific needs and sustainability objectives to determine the optimal purchasing solution. The right approach will depend on factors like emissions reduction targets, budget, desired contract term, and sustainability goals.

Take Action Today

Make progress on your sustainability goals with Constellation's COrE and COrE+ products that provide flexible options to simplify renewable energy purchasing. Constellation's team helps businesses find the ideal purchasing strategy to meet their budget and sustainability goals, so you can focus on your business.◆



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

MANUFACTURING MILES RETURNS IN 2024

BLUECROSS AND BLUESHIELD OF ILLINOIS

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA) and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) are excited to bring back Manufacturing Miles for the fourth consecutive year in 2024. The program was created to promote health and wellness among manufacturing workers. Last year, more than 1,300 employees logged more than 605,000 miles in just four months compared to 600,000 in 2022 over the span of six months. Some participants saw the program as a way to reach personal goals and, while some lost weight, others used it to start a more active lifestyle by logging [any exercise that can be measured in miles](#), including walking, running, biking, swimming, and even playing mini golf.

During this friendly competition, co-workers and other manufacturing teams compete against each other to win prizes--and improve their health. In 2023, we recognized the top three individual winners and the top six company winners among five size tiers and one participation category.

2023 Top Individual Winners

1. Paul Dominguez of Tamarack Products, Inc. with 4,019 miles
2. Juan Perez of Tamarack Products, Inc. with 3,252 miles
3. Melissa Beauprez-Wilson of MTM Recognition with 3,201 miles

2023 Top Company Winners

- Tier 1:** (1-10 participants)
Gallagher Asphalt Corporation with 137,096 miles
- Tier 2:** (11-25 participants)
CNH Industrial with 137,096 miles
- Tier 3:** (26-50 participants)
Phoenix Inc. with 137,096 miles
- Tier 4:** (51-100 participants)
Hoffer Plastics Corporation with 137,096 miles
- Tier 5:** (101+ participants)
United Scrap Metal with 137,096 miles
- Highest Overall Participation:**
Thermal Care with 98% participation

Help Yourself While Helping Your Team

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends getting at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week, such as brisk walking, biking, swimming, or mowing the lawn. That's about 30 minutes a day, five days a week. If you prefer vigorous aerobic activity such as running, tennis, or aerobic dancing, the HHS recommends 75 minutes a week. Why not log your miles in the Manufacturing Miles competition, win prizes, and help your team while you also meet the HHS recommendations?

Your Health is the Biggest Prize

We've also picked out some exciting new prizes to motivate you to log as many

miles as you can throughout the competition. Once you've logged 200 miles (the width of the state), you'll win a cooling towel — great for hot, summer workouts. Once you've logged 400 miles (the length of the state), you'll win an LED light-up armband perfect to keep you safe for night-time exercises, and once you've logged 1,000 miles, you'll win a portable electric blender cup. Whether you log 300 miles a week or five miles a week, your health and well-being will be your greatest prize.

Wellness Can't Wait

Manufacturing Miles provides a friendly competition that can improve your health and encourage wellness in the workplace. But your wellness can't wait for a competition. Regular care visits are important to help you and your family stay healthy. Regular health screenings can detect problems early when chances for successful treatment are greatest. And now is the time to get caught up on annual exams and checkups, especially if you have chronic conditions such as COPD, diabetes, or high blood pressure. We want you to keep your health and wellness a top priority.

[Register today](#) for 2024 Manufacturing Miles. The competition begins tracking Manufacturing Miles from June 3 through October 13th. Please note that all teams and participants must be registered on or before May 28, 2024. Enter your team's miles each week and watch the leader boards to see how your company stacks up against the rest of the state. ♦



HOW EQUAL PAY & PAY TRANSPARENCY LAWS WILL IMPACT ILLINOIS EMPLOYERS

AMUNDSEN DAVIS, LLC



Across the country, states are increasingly passing pay transparency and Equal Pay laws which impact how employers advertise their positions, hire, and pay their employees. This article examines the trends, traps, and tricks to compliance with pay transparency and equal pay laws.

Currently, 10 states have active pay transparency laws, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington. This is a trend that is only increasing with many other states considering passing similar laws or which already have pending legislation in the works. This trend is not restricted to states and is also increasing on local levels with certain localities and cities passing these laws.

State pay transparency laws vary in their application, with some applying only to employers with 50 or more employees working in state, while others apply to employers with one or more employees working in state, or generally to all employers

conducting business in state. Illinois' pay transparency law, House Bill 3129 (HB 3129), goes into effect on January 1, 2025, and applies to employers with 15 or more employees, and essentially applies to all job positions because it covers positions where an employee will only partially be performing work in Illinois, and even includes remote positions for employees who work outside Illinois but report into a worksite or supervisor located in Illinois.

Pay transparency laws also vary in their requirements, with some requiring employers to disclose wage ranges on all job postings, including for internal promotions or job transfers, while others only require employers to disclose a wage range upon request by an applicant.

Beginning on January 1, 2025, Illinois employers with 15 or more employees will be required to post the pay scale and benefits for a position on all job postings or to disclose this information when requested by an applicant if the information isn't disclosed or advertised by the employer pub-

licly or internally. The required pay scale and benefits disclosures include things like bonuses, stock options, or other incentives, and all retirement and health benefits offered. Illinois employers can comply with the requirements of HB 3129 by providing a link to a public website that discloses the pay scale and benefits for a particular position.

Illinois' pay transparency law is also unique because third-party service providers who advertise and post an employer's job opportunities will be liable for failing to include pay scale and benefits information on an employer's job postings and advertisements.

Several states' laws even prohibit employers from requesting an applicant's wage or salary history. Though, Illinois' Equal Pay Act already prohibits Illinois employers from asking for an applicant's compensation history and from screening applicants based on compensation and benefits history.

Employers who operate and have em-

ployees working in multiple states must ensure compliance with each state's respective pay transparency laws for the various states in which their employees work out of and are based. And, if compliance with these laws wasn't challenging enough, pay transparency laws are changing the landscape of employment negotiations with respect to compensation, benefits, and incentive pay structures.

The most glaring problem pay transparency laws create for employers is managing an applicant's expectations once an employee knows the range of compensation available for a given position. Clearly, applicants who know the highest pay rate available for a position will demand or expect it and be upset if they aren't offered or don't receive it. This can sour the employment relationship from the start. Similarly, state laws requiring employers to disclose available benefits and incentive pay also create expectation issues because applicants may expect payment of a bonus if the possibility of one is disclosed in a job posting.

Though, employers can easily take control of employment negotiations and manage an applicant's expectations when required to disclose a position's pay range by taking the following steps:

First, and most importantly, carefully draft job advertisements and related communications. Clearly state on all job postings and in all communications regarding an available position or promotional opportunity that any disclosed pay range is based on a consideration of neutral factors and criteria such as required qualifications, experience, education, skill, training, certifications, seniority, etc.

Second, include a disclaimer on all postings and in all related communications informing applicants that the employer reserves the right to offer the selected candidate or applicant an hourly rate or salary at an appropriate level to be set and determined by the employer that is commensurate with the applicant's qualifications, experience, education, skill, training, certifications, or seniority.

Employers must also be mindful of any applicable notice requirements. The days of posting a job advertisement on an on-

line job board and waiting for applicants to apply are gone. For example, HB 3129 requires employers to notify their current employees of all opportunities for promotion no later than 14 calendar days after the employer makes an external job posting for the promotional opportunity.

Employers also need to consider the type of position they are advertising to ensure compliance with state transparency laws. State transparency laws can apply to all onsite and remote positions, depending on the state. Employers who aren't physically located in a state because they don't have a physical office or facility, but who have employees working remotely in state can still be required to comply with an applicable state transparency law.

The key to compliance with pay transparency laws, regardless of what state your business operates in or in which you have employees in, is to ask "who, what, and when."

Who does the applicable state pay transparency law apply to, meaning is your business required to comply with a state's pay transparency law because you have enough employees working within the state (i.e., 50 or more employees), and if so, to whom, as in which employees or prospective employees, is your business required to disclose information to—current employees, remote employees, applicants?

What information is required to be disclosed, i.e., the exact wage amount or a wage range, benefits, and incentive pay information? What type of employment opportunity does the required disclosure apply to, i.e., only job openings or promotional opportunities as well?

Lastly, when is the information required to be disclosed, i.e., at the time the job is posted, during the application process, when requested by an applicant or even after the selected candidate has started in the position like in Colorado?

As if pay transparency laws are not confusing enough, employers must also be cognizant of equal pay laws. Nearly all US states have passed equal pay laws requiring employers to pay employees performing the same or similar work the same hourly rate or salary regardless of the employee's sex and gender. While only a handful of

states don't have equal pay laws, virtually all US employers are covered by federal law under the federal Equal Pay Act. Equal pay laws prohibit employers from discriminating against employees in their terms, conditions, and payment of compensation based on an employee's sex and gender.

Employers can easily comply with equal pay laws and manage employee expectations by using neutral factors and criteria in negotiating and paying compensation, regardless of an employee's sex and gender, by taking the following steps:

First, carefully draft job descriptions so that they clearly identify the employee's job duties and responsibilities and any required prerequisites for the role, including any applicable qualifications, experience, education, skill, training, certifications, or seniority, etc. Again, ensure that you use neutral criteria and language.

Second, apply the same method of communicating with all employees within a position about their pay, including how and when incentives or bonuses are, or will be paid. Clearly and consistently articulate how bonuses will be paid or earned, again using neutral factors and criteria for earning bonuses or other types of incentives such as stock options, profit sharing, etc.

The easiest way to avoid multi-state compliance issues with complex and conflicting state equal pay and pay transparency laws is to have a uniform system and process in place for hiring and compensating employees, regardless of the states where your employees are located and work.

With the increasingly complex requirements involved in multi-jurisdictional compliance, including hyper-localized laws, it is difficult to remain abreast of the latest legislation, much less the latest trends. However, when examining equal pay and pay transparency legislation it is safe to say that these are two legislative trends that will only continue to increase and impact the way employers do business. Working with counsel to review your practices and knowing where you are advertising, where your employees are working (even remotely), and being consistent in your hiring practices is more crucial now than ever. A review upfront can save you from a multi-state lawsuit later. ♦

CELEBRATING WOMEN MAKERS: A Q&A WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS

In celebration of International Women's Month, we embarked on a journey through the annals of history, tracing the evolution of women's roles in the manufacturing industry in the United States. From the dawn of industrialization to the present day, women have been pivotal contributors to the growth, innovation, and success of this critical sector. Yet, their journey has been marked by challenges, perseverance, and triumphs, as they shattered barriers and ascended to executive positions.

The history of women in manufacturing is a testament to their resilience and unwavering determination to break free from societal constraints and carve out their space in a male-dominated realm. Initially relegated to domestic roles or limited to labor-intensive tasks within factories, women fought tirelessly for recognition and equality in the workforce.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, women faced formidable obstacles, including discriminatory hiring practices, unequal pay, and lack of access to educational and leadership opportunities. However, their resilience and tenacity propelled them forward, as they seized every opportunity to showcase their skills, expertise, and leadership potential.

The turning point came during World War II, when the demand for labor surged, and women stepped into traditionally male-dominated roles to support the war effort. Known as "Rosie the Riveters," these trailblazing women demonstrated their ability to excel in manufacturing and proved invaluable to the war machinery.

Post-war, although many women returned to more traditional roles, their contributions during the war laid the groundwork for future advancements in gender equality within the manufacturing sector. The feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s further fueled the push for equal rights and opportunities, leading to legislative reforms and cultural shifts that gradually opened doors for women in executive positions.

As we celebrate International Women's Month, we honor the trailblazers, innovators, and leaders who have transformed the landscape of the manufacturing industry. From the shop floor to the boardroom, women executives are driving change, fostering inclusivity, and inspiring future generations to pursue their dreams without limitations.

In this interview series, we delve into the experiences, challenges, and triumphs of women executives in manufacturing, exploring their insights, perspectives, and visions for a more diverse and equitable future. Join us as we celebrate the indomitable spirit and invaluable contributions of women leaders in one of the world's most vital industries.



Aneesa Muthana is CEO and co-owner of Pioneer Service Inc. and M&M Quality Grinding, both located in the Chicagoland area.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background in entering the manufacturing industry and working your way to your current position?

I was 8 years old when my father (and soon after, my mother) began Azteca with a group of nine others. I watched them as they were involved in all parts of a business from operations, HR, Marketing, Sales, Accounting etc. I decided that I wanted to be in Marketing, so I went on to receive my degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. Although I worked in many areas of the business while growing up, I began my career after graduation working in sales. We were then purchased by another company and I was able to move into a marketing role. Once our family and other investors purchased the company back, I continued to work in marketing and sales until I was selected to lead the business in 2009 when my parents retired. Being on the leadership team gave me a lot of exposure to the operations side of the business but I didn't have any responsibility over that side of the business until I became president.

What does it mean to you to be a Woman Maker?

Regardless of being a woman or a man, we are all makers in manufacturing. The process of bringing people together to MAKE something that will go on to serve a bigger purpose is where my passion lies. Knowing that the parts that leave my shop are contributing to the world at large, touching lives, and benefiting people fuels my passion.

What advice do you have for young women paving their way in Manufacturing?

The world may seem unfair, but it doesn't owe anyone anything. Work for what you want, and it will be yours, sooner or later. Learn to ignore those who find fault in everything you do. Don't let their negativity deter you from stepping outside your comfort zone! Remember, many women have achieved success in this industry – it's meaningful and definitely worth pursuing.



Beth Matthews is the Vice President of Operations at Illinois American Water Co.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background in entering the manufacturing industry and working your way to your current position?

I have a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Bradley University and a master's degree in Civil Engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology. I started my career holding various roles of increasing responsibility for a large nationally based engineering firm, including positions as project engineer and project manager. In these roles, the focus of my work was the water and wastewater industry. I have been involved in or have overseen numerous planning, design, and construction projects ranging in size and scope from small sewer and water main extension projects to water and wastewater planning studies, and the design and construction administration of large water and wastewater treatment plant improvement projects. From 2010 to 2019, I held various roles of increasing responsibility in the Illinois American Water Company engineering department ranging from planning engineer to Director of Engineering. From 2019 to 2020, I was employed by Missouri American Water Company as the Senior Director of Operations for the St. Louis County system. In January 2020 I was promoted to my current role of Vice President of Operations for Illinois American Water company. In my current role, I am responsible for all operations, including field services, production, maintenance, and regulatory compliance for water and sewer. I am also responsible for our business support services function, which includes water quality, environmental compliance, and safety.

What does it mean to you to be a Woman Maker?

Being a Woman Maker gives me pride. Solving problems and paving the way for our future generations provides me with great fulfillment.

What advice do you have for young women paving their way in Manufacturing?

Know your strengths and don't be afraid to be vulnerable. Compassion and empathy are key characteristics of strong leaders that are often overlooked.



Kara Demirjian Huss is the Vice President & Global Marketing Director of TCCI Manufacturing

Can you tell us a little bit about your background in entering the manufacturing industry and working your way to your current position?

My path in the industry began with cultivating trusted relationships that I've nurtured over the years. I hold a firm belief in valuing people above all else, seeing these connections as more than a mere Rolodex of contacts. Embracing diverse perspectives, understanding others' unique needs and aspirations, navigating various personalities, and fostering meaningful connections have all been instrumental in building lasting relationships, successful businesses, and friendships.

This emphasis on relationships seamlessly connects to another key learning over the years: the importance of listening to diverse voices and learning from individuals with varied backgrounds. By embracing inclusivity and fostering a culture of collaboration, opportunities for growth and community building become abundant. Reflecting on my journey, I credit my success to my support network, the meaningful relationships I've formed, and my passion for bringing individuals together in a collaborative environment.

I believe a person's superpower lies at the crossroads of finding your passion and your unique skills—this creates a powerful synergy that propels you toward achieving your goals with purpose and excellence. My superpower lies in being a strategic connector, effective communicator, and results-driven implementer. I got to where I am today in part because of my ability to build high-performing teams, actively listening to uncover opportunities, and leading actionable change by developing innovative ideas and driving them to successful implementation.

What does it mean to you to be a Woman Maker?

Being a Woman Maker to me means recognizing my strengths and weaknesses and embracing the courage to make decisions with conviction. Leading by example, with integrity and transparency, is essential for trust and credibility, both internally among colleagues and externally within my community of clients, partners, and stakeholders. It also means building a culture

of empowerment, mentorship, and lifelong learning—inspiring others to unleash their full potential.

What advice to you have for young women paving their way in Manufacturing?

Women tend to put a lot of pressure on themselves to find that perfect work/life balance and it can hold them back in their growth. My advice to the next generation of women leaders is to think of work life as “harmony” rather than “balance” and be sure that you define yours—not someone else. When we talk about balance, there is often an implication of equal distribution of time and energy between work and personal life. This can create a sense of pressure to juggle and maintain a perfect equilibrium, which can be challenging and unrealistic at times.

On the other hand, viewing work life as “harmony” suggests a more fluid and integrated approach. It’s about finding the right blend and rhythm that works for you, rather than striving for a rigid balance. This perspective encourages flexibility, creativity, and adaptability in managing your time and energy. It allows for a more holistic approach to well-being, where work and personal life are not seen as separate entities competing for your attention, but as interconnected parts of a fulfilling and meaningful life.

A few other tips that my mentors always preached:

- Define your goals, believe in yourself and others, and use your resources to help you achieve your highest potential.
- Be confident and work hard. Don’t just walk into a room—walk with confidence, poise, and positivity.
- Have your ducks in a row. Do your research, be prepared, and challenge yourself with hard projects.
- Find networks and mentors in and out of your industry and nurture them—it takes time and effort. I guarantee this support network, peer-learning, and commitment to growth will help you develop both personally and professionally.



Linda McGill Boasmond is the President and owner of Cedar Concepts Corporation.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background in entering the manufacturing industry and working your way to your current position?

I applied for my first meaningful position as a chemist in quality control for the construction division of a prestigious global chemical corporation. Four years later, I joined an international manufacturer of chemical and petroleum products. Superiors took notice when I used my own time to study and write procedures for a new quality program from Europe.

I juggled classes with earning money in a variety of capacities – administrative assistant to bank president, retail sales-clerk, bookkeeper, and radio dispatcher for transportation companies. At one point, I worked three jobs on the same day, with no time left for sleep. I didn’t sleep on Tuesdays for almost 3 years.

After locating a job at a Fortune 500 chemical manufacturing company, I progressed through a succession of positions from the bottom of the ladder to operations manager to a partner in the company. Not long after, the founder died, and they decided to sell the company. The importance of owning and manufacturing something was one of my dreams – not only just for myself but also to help others make a difference in their lives.

Whatever my ideas in that area, I certainly hadn’t planned to spend my money on a chemical company, but my accountant introduced me to a banker who created a package that convinced me I could do it. I made an offer to the surviving partner, who was waiting for me to come to the recognition that I could do this. Not only that, but I realized there was a plan after all! In retrospect, it looks like one of those old “against all odds” movies you picture yourself in but are surprised to discover the hero is you!

What does it mean to you to be a Woman Maker?

The chemical manufacturing industry is heavily male dominated. The discouragement amongst female chemical entrepreneurs inspires Cedar Concepts to spread the importance of diverse manufacturers in the industry. I am proud to be the first and only African American woman in the United States to own and operate chemical manufacturing plants. My modus operandi is to embrace challenges and make happen what’s possible by reacting, adjusting, and proceeding with what is put in front of me.

What advice to you have for young women paving their way in Manufacturing?

Manufacturing is a growing industry where there is a demand for a talented workforce, such as young women. It is so important to be in a positive environment, surrounded by people who matter and inspire you to excel and treat achievement as a perfectly natural goal. I would encourage people who cannot see what is possible to believe that others can teach and support them.



Nirel Inman is the Co-President of Chicago Glue & Machine.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background in entering the manufacturing industry and working your way to your current position?

I joined our family business in 1993. Apart from our administrative team, I was the only woman. It was very normal to be the only woman in most business meetings both internally and externally. While it never really bothered me, I was aware that I stood out as the “one of these things is not like the others” piece. I no longer feel that way and while there are still meetings where I am the only woman, they are fewer, and sometimes it is appropriate that I be the only woman. Today, our company is 54% women. We have women in almost every department including sales, service, production, accounting, and admin. Our LT is 60% women.

What does it mean to you to be a Woman Maker?

It means we still have work to do. Until we are known as “makers” without the need for additional labels when applied to women, equity for the success of our businesses and market has room to grow. We must continue to actively work together to make manufacturing the strongest it can be every day regardless of labels used for previously underrepresented lenses whether they be gender or another label.

What advice do you have for young women paving their way in Manufacturing?

I will not give advice as I have no idea what it is to be in someone else’s shoes. I will, however, share my experience which has been that imposter syndrome is real. To overcome that, it is critical to surround myself with people I share values with, not people who say yes and agree with everything I say. Having mentors, peer groups, and a diversity of lenses makes us stronger. I know that I don’t have all the answers. We ALL have biases, implicit and learned, but I know I can only control myself and my response.



Maureen Powell is the Site Head of Communications at CSL Behring LLC’s Kankakee site.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background in entering the manufacturing industry and working your way to your current position?

I’ve worked in the manufacturing industry for nearly 30 years. My experience has been with my current employer, CSL Behring, and its predecessor companies at the Kankakee, Illinois site since 1994. I started my career at CSL in Human Resources in an entry-level position. I had positions of increasing responsibility in HR over the next 20 or so years, eventually becoming the site head of HR. I then had the opportunity to move to become the site’s first site head of Communications, where I’ve been for nearly 8 years. In my current role, I am responsible for internal and external communications, media relations, community engagement, and charitable giving for the Kankakee site.

What does it mean to you to be a Woman Maker?

It’s really exciting to be a woman in manufacturing. I never thought that would be where my career would take me. My Dad worked in manufacturing and truthfully it never appealed to me. Working at a manufacturing site for CSL puts me in the heart of where it all happens – making lifesaving

medicines for our patients. I say all the time that I learn something new every day. I’m not sure I could say that in another environment.

What advice do you have for young women paving their way in Manufacturing?

I’d say go for it. There is so much opportunity in manufacturing. Learn about the business and keep asking questions. Speak up and offer your feedback and insights. Be open to opportunities. ♦

HOW TO PROPERLY TERMINATE AN EMPLOYEE

BARNES & THORNBURG LLP



All good things come to an end. Employers provide great opportunities for individuals to grow and develop into leaders and sometimes even executives. However, when the market ebbs and flows, it impacts corporations' financials which may require difficult decisions, such as employee termination. Conducting terminations can be challenging under the best of circumstances; this is even more so in a virtual environment. At the beginning of the year, one of Cloudflare's former employees recorded a conversation with company representatives who laid her off virtually.¹ The video went viral and is a textbook example of what employers should not do. This article will guide employers on how to terminate an employee.

Employers should consider the following factors when terminating an employee. First, employers should plan the logistics of the meeting. The meeting should be in a neutral, private space. Whenever possible, do not conduct the separation meeting in the manager or employee's office. When termination meetings occur in familiar locations, it may contribute to the employee wanting to linger and not leave the premises. A termination done virtually can add a challenge. Although the employer representatives can plan to be in a private location, the employee's location cannot be guaranteed to be the same. The employer should ask the employee if he/she is in a private location.

The timing of the conversation should also be considered. Generally, delivering the conversation earlier in the workday

is better so that the employee does not perceive that the employer is taking advantage of the employee by making the employee work a full day, followed by termination.

The person delivering the news must be a decision-maker within the company. It is customary for the employee's manager and a human resources representative to facilitate the meeting together. Two people should always host the meeting, and the secondary person should be there to serve as a witness and take notes. The manager should be the individual who delivers the message of the termination, and the HR representative should conclude the conversation with information regarding the transition of benefits, final compensation, and the like. If the employer is small and does

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not have a human resources department, the manager should ask another manager within the company to assist with the conversation.

Although unnecessary, a script can benefit individuals facilitating the conversation. The facilitators need to be clear on what will be said. Typically, the manager would open the conversation and state that they have bad news to share with the employee and that the employee will be terminated. The manager should avoid delivering the message in a roundabout way; the message should be short, direct, and concise. The employee will likely ask why the decision occurred, and the manager and HR representative should ensure that they are clear on the rationale and that it aligns with the documentation and company policy used to support the decision. It is critical that the employer provide an accurate reason for the termination and not “sugarcoat” the termination rationale.

Facilitating remote terminations has become customary for companies that employ fully remote employees. In this instance, conducting the conversation via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another similar platform is advisable. If you are delivering an employee separation remotely, we recommend that the facilitators express that the conversation is not being recorded and request that the employee not record either. However, the employee may likely record the conversation anyway; there is little an employer can do about that and it is best to not make it a big deal since you are being recorded. In such a situation the employer’s representatives on the call should be aware that everything they say or do on the call including facial expressions or an inadvertent laugh or comment could become fodder for a social media post. The best advice is to prepare for the call and be mindful of your actions.

The HR representative should spend additional time discussing final paycheck calculations, including vacation pay. If possible, provide the employee with the final check during the meeting. Other topics that need to be explained are termination of health and life insurance;

Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) information; the plan for returning the employee’s items; outplacement opportunities; termination of access to the company’s software and systems; return of company property; and whether the company will provide the employee a reference or recommendation letter.

OVERALL, COMPANIES SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DELIVER SENSITIVE INFORMATION AS IF THE WORLD IS WATCHING, BECAUSE THEY VERY WELL MAY BE TUNING IN.

Many items on this list are self-explanatory, but two need to be highlighted as they require additional judgment. The company may allow the employee to retrieve their personal items if it feels that the employee will not disrupt the business. However, arrangements made during non-business hours will likely be less disruptive. If there is any uncertainty about whether the employee will act professionally, it may be best for the company to send the belongings directly to the employee’s residence. Lastly, the company should decide whether it will provide an employee with a reference or letter of recommendation before the meeting so that it is not a last-minute decision. If an employee is terminated for cause, the company should agree to merely confirm the employee’s employment dates.

Employees with employment agreements, filed internal grievances, or other special considerations should be handled with extra care. In some instances, the termination includes a severance agreement in which the employee agrees to release the company of claims for consideration or some additional benefit. This conversation will consist of extra

steps, including advising the employee to seek legal counsel before signing the release agreement. The company should also seek advice on whether there are legal implications for these circumstances to ensure compliance with the law and proper handling of the situation.

Regardless of the reason, it is always difficult to terminate an employee. These conversations have a range of emotions for each participant - the employee, manager, and Human Resources. The range of emotions at play includes stress, loss of identity, and embarrassment. The company should always treat the terminated employee with dignity and respect regardless of how the employee acts. The meeting facilitators should remain professional and refrain from engaging with the employee’s disagreement with the decision. When in doubt, repeat the rationale and restate that the decision is final. We encourage managers and HR representatives to remain compassionate and respectful but do not apologize, say that “everything will be okay,” or offer to assist the employee with finding another job.

Once the meeting is complete, the company should maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the employee. Details of the employee’s separation should not be discussed; colleagues within the organization should only state that the employee no longer works with the company. Companies should work to ensure that all terminations are handled appropriately and consistently. If terminations are handled inappropriately, it can create legal liability, including questions of discrimination, unfair treatment, or retaliation. To avoid these issues, we encourage corporations to seek advice from internal or external counsel to assist in mitigating the risk to the company. Documentation supports the corporation’s decisions and helps reduce the increased risk of litigation when documentation doesn’t exist.

Overall, companies should be prepared to deliver sensitive information as if the world is watching, because they very well may be tuning in. ♦

50-YEAR-OLD ILLINOIS MANUFACTURER CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

INTEGRIS GROUP

Quality Metal Products, Inc (QMP) in Peoria is a family-owned and operated company that has seen a lot of changes in its 50 years of operation. From its humble beginnings with Gene and Jo-Ellen Dunbar machining parts in a garage to their current home on 13 acres with 7 buildings and 125,000 square feet of space, fifty years of experience has proven one thing for certain, that change is inevitable.

Like many first-generation manufacturers, a transition strategy is a top priority for QMP to ensure continued growth and sustainability for the next generation of leadership and employees. President, Jo-Ellen Dunbar, recognized that QMP would need help to accomplish their goal and tasked Operations Manager, Jeremy Casper, with increasing engagement and presence in the local manufacturing community to identify resources that would aid in the process. Through Jeremy's efforts, QMP strengthened its current relationships and made great new connections while networking through the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC), Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center, (IMEC), Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA), CareerLink Illinois, Illinois Central College, and other local businesses to discuss solutions to ongoing and common issues in manufacturing. One of the most common issues dispersed across the manufacturing ecosystem proved to be the lack of additional skilled workforce and the amount of growing work, so a lot of resources are being put toward developing solutions. While QMP has been investing in these solutions, they also decided to make the jump into robotic automation.

Automation can be a daunting undertaking, especially for a 50-year-old company, so QMP made sure that this was a strategic and well-calculated decision. The Management Team spent a couple of years researching automation and talked with several robot integrators, in turn, understanding that their first robot would be the most critical, so it would be key to find the right automation partner. QMP had a difficult time finding that after being met with hard sell pitches for standard solutions from integrators rather than custom solutions from partners that would walk them

through the process, listen to their concerns, and provide them with a sense of ownership in the final result. Eventually, Jeremy Casper found the right partner when he met Andy Berberich, President of INTEGRIS Automation, at a Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network (GPMN) meeting which both companies are founding members and longtime promoters of.

WHILE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE CTA SEEM SIMPLE ON THEIR FACE, COMPLIANCE CAN BECOME COMPLICATED IN A NUMBER OF CIRCUMSTANCES. IF A REPORTING COMPANY IS OWNED BY OTHER ENTITIES OR OTHERWISE HAS A COMPLEX OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE, THE REPORTING COMPANY SHOULD SEEK LEGAL ADVICE TO ENSURE PROPER COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW.

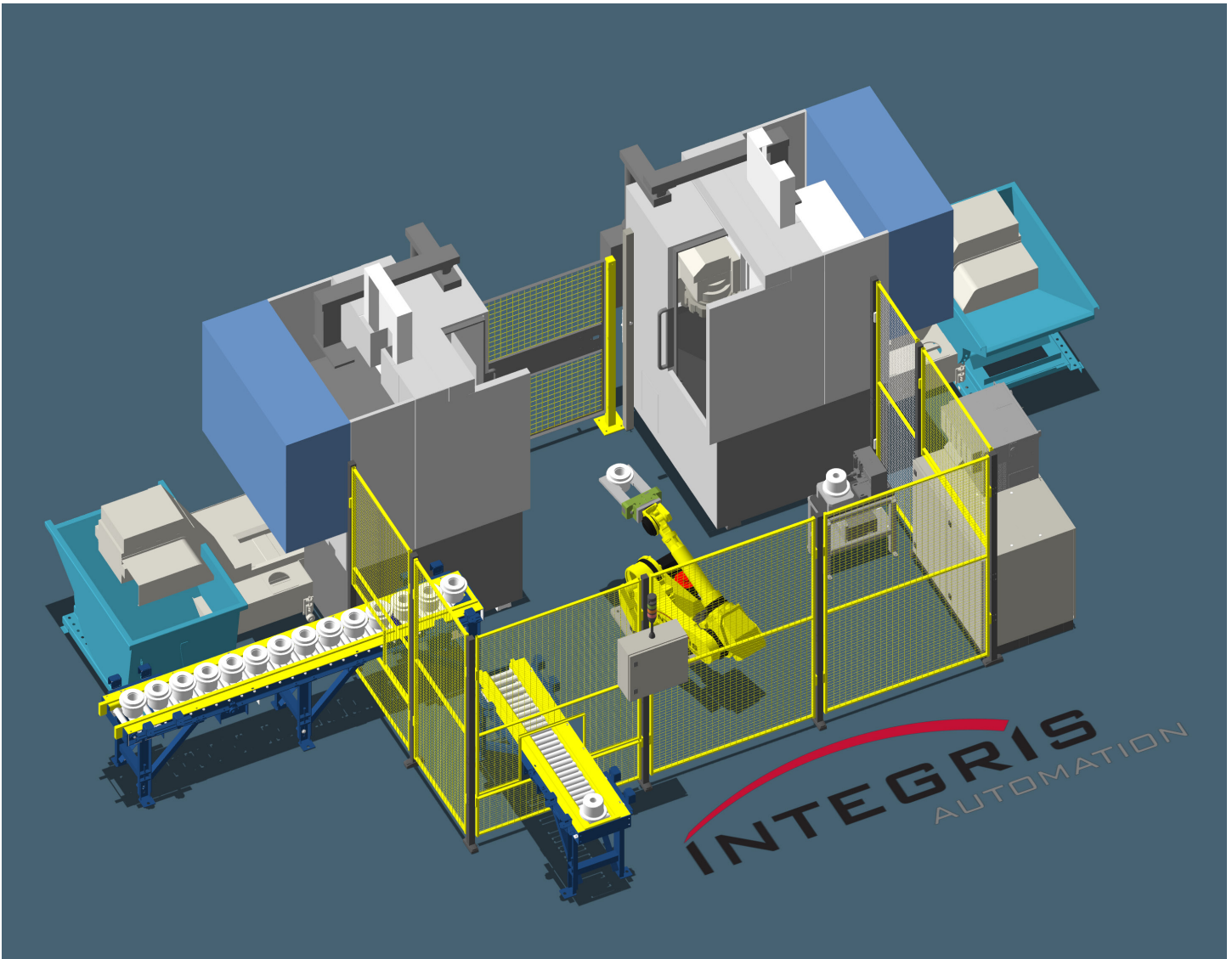
INTEGRIS is an engineering company that utilizes tools and best practices commonly seen in product development. This approach provides flexibility and increased confidence that the solution will be successful in the final installation. Ultimately, the QMP team needed a partner to work together to make decisions in layout and functionality, and to give them not only what they wanted but also what they needed to make the project successful. QMP chose INTEGRIS as its automation partner based on location, competitive pricing, per-

sonnel, set-up of mock cell at their location, and their multiphase approach to the project. This approach allowed flexibility for numerous variables as the team moved through the project.

The QMP team selected an application that was prime for automation based on volume, operations, and part commonality. Even with sound research and decision-making, there was still some skepticism within QMP's management team, and to expect anything less is unrealistic. Several members of the Management Team shared legitimate concerns after hearing many automation horror stories, and their input was necessary to ensure overall success. In the end, the management team allowed their shared goals of wanting to see the company grow, be good stewards of the company's money, and support the core values and culture that make QMP a great place to work to guide them throughout the process.

QMP found INTEGRIS' Phase Zero to be a critical step in the process. Phase Zero sets the foundation for success by defining the requirements and generating initial designs. A key component of this phase is optimization through simulation. INTEGRIS iterated the design concept with feedback from QMP and generated 3D simulations of the cell. These simulations were shared with the QMP Management Team in order to easily communicate the direction and gather valuable feedback. INTEGRIS and QMP went through 6 different iterations before settling in on the final design. Robot end-of-arm tooling, machine layout, conveyor layout, and future expansions are some of the changes made throughout the process. More specifically, the orientation of the two CNC machines was changed to better utilize the space available.

"We changed the configuration to take advantage of the extra space we have in our plant," said Jeremy Casper. "The simulation really made the idea come to life and played a key role in making sure the solution is optimized for us." The simulation also helped address safety, throughput, and workflow concerns. Each subsequent Phase also produced opportunities to adjust and improve. Input from QMP's Quality Manager identified the opportunity to add an engraving operation to the robot cell



that was not originally in the scope of the project. This addition reduced part handling and nonvalue-added part movement throughout the plant.

All of the parts that were selected for the cell were considered heavier parts to load and required three machines and operators. Robot automation did not replace a person, it improved the work balance of three. There isn't much energy left for family time after handling and loading heavier parts all day, and QMP is able to give that back to their employees with this change. Overall, labor cost decreased by 2/3, WIP

was reduced to zero, shop flow improved, and scheduling improved as well.

The jump into automation has provided opportunities for upskilling employees and customer acceptance has been positive as well. QMP has already been awarded new work because of their visible commitment to continuous improvement and ability to scale. With success measured in employee, customer, and company satisfaction, the investment in automation satisfies them all.

Quality Metal Products and INTEGRIS Automation understood the importance and sensitivity of the first robotic automa-

tion installation. Many times, if the first installation is not successful, there will not be a second. The successes experienced by this 50-year-old Illinois company come from the top. A family-owned company that takes care of its employees fosters employees who care about the company. Excitement is high at QMP, and everyone is looking forward to where the future will take them. For manufacturers curious about taking the leap into automation, contact Jeremy Casper, Operations Manager at QMP at jcasper@qmpillinois.com, or the author below. ♦

Constellation – Visit constellation.com/IMA

2024 BONUS TRENDS: FROM WINDFALLS TO STRATEGIC PAYOUTS

MILLER COOPER & CO, LTD



In 2021, bonuses were about retaining employees. Since then, the labor market has loosened, with the pandemic-induced shortages largely behind us. As businesses strive for growth and resilience, now is an opportune moment to explore incentives as a strategic tool. Bonus plans that apply financial metrics align compensation with company objectives. Properly structured plans can drive performance and motivate your workforce.

This article explains the four steps of plans commonly used by middle-market firms. While managers often receive bonuses based on periodic performance assessments (typically at year-end), factory labor may benefit from production incentives or alternative pay models. However, the template described here can be adapted to suit all personnel, ensuring a fair and motivating compensation framework. For leaders seeking customized solutions, specialized compensation consultants can assist.

Step #1: Choose the Right Metric

Rather than an assumed annual entitlement, bonuses should reward performance improvements. When designing bonus plans, leaders must select the triggering metric carefully.

In the metrics landscape, the two most prevalent approaches are operating profit and earnings before interest, income taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA):

- **Operating Profit:** This metric excludes interest, income taxes, and defined non-operating items. It provides a snapshot of a company's core profitability, excluding financial nuances. However, it does not account for non-cash items like depreciation and amortization.
- **EBITDA:** Going a step further, EBITDA removes both depreciation and amortization. It acts as a surrogate for cash flow. Middle-market valuations often apply a multiple to EBITDA to estimate business value.

Others include:

- **Revenue:** Easily communicated and understood, the revenue metric dominates salespeople compensation. Employees share in the company's top-line growth. However, profitability and collectability of sales also need consideration.
- **Non-financial operations metrics:** Productivity or quality metrics are meaningful, but usually maintained outside the accounting system. Additional controls can ensure dependability. Cost accounting can assign a dollar value.

Metrics should align with what is directly within the team's grasp. For instance, multi-location businesses might narrow the metric to factors within each manager's four walls and exclude corporate allocations. In some businesses, measurable departmental contributions, or performance relative to budget might be best.

Step #2: Set a Threshold

Establishing a performance threshold ensures that bonuses come from better results. Otherwise, the payouts are an unnecessary added expense for the company. Beyond an operating profit or EBITDA amount, bonuses can link to margin percentages that start only from a given percentage of sales.

The profit margin threshold derives from dividing the chosen metric by sales revenue. This margin typically ranges from five to fifteen percent. An EBITDA margin exceeding 10% is particularly appealing to lenders, investors, and buyers. For instance, applying a 10% EBITDA margin as the threshold for a \$20 million annual sales company requires achieving \$2 million in EBITDA.

While less often used, thresholds ideally should also reflect supporting investment. For example, extending payment terms or increasing inventory may boost sales but could yield inadequate returns on the added assets. These strategies must align with their overall fiscal impact. In response to profit metrics, Warren Buffett famously asked, "Does the tooth fairy pay for capital expenditures?" This highlights the need to scrutinize how investment levels impact returns.

The metric EBITDA Return on Operating Assets (EROOA), coined by the article's author, delves deeper by factoring in operating asset turnover. Turnover measures sales relative to operating assets (including working capital, excluding cash and debt), along with the book value of property and equipment used in the business. Unlike return on equity or investment metrics, EROOA focuses strictly on the operating assets needed to generate EBITDA. The EROOA metric (EBITDA / Operating Assets) is the percentage derived when multiplying EBITDA margin (EBITDA / Revenue) by asset turnover (Revenue / Operating Assets).

Step #3: Compute the Bonus Pool

When structuring bonus plans, the potential payout is a critical consideration. Beyond the threshold metric,

thoughtful planning reflects the base compensation of eligible employees in determining the percentage applied to calculate the bonus pool.

Carrying forward the \$2 million EBITDA from the example and assuming a base eligible compensation of \$1 million, a \$100,000 bonus (10% of base) is a sensible starting point. This bonus corresponds to 5% of the computed EBITDA threshold and could continue at that rate. On the other hand, graduated bonuses expand with margins. A higher percentage, say 6%, might apply when the EBITDA margin reaches 12%. For instance, achieving \$2 million at a 12% margin would elevate the bonus pool to \$120,000.

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Another strategy is to initiate the bonus at zero upon reaching the threshold and then apply a fixed percentage, such as 25%, to generate the pool. While the \$100,000 payout would not occur until \$2.4 million EBITDA, the bonus accumulates quickly with growth. To maintain fiscal prudence, leaders might cap the bonus at 30% of base pay, for example.

Step #4: Allocate the Bonus

Having arrived at the bonus pool, the last step distributes it among individuals based on various considerations. A common way is to allocate it over base pay. In the example, the \$120,000 pool relates to eligible compensation of \$1 million. A manager earning \$100,000 would be allocated \$12,000.

Other approaches include dividing the pool equally among eligible individuals, or over hours worked. Often, allocation can apply a percentage scale based on factors like team performance, seniority, or other subjective evaluation. For instance, a manager with a \$100,000 base might receive \$9,000, representing 75% of the \$12,000 bonus after applying the evaluation factor.

Leaders should keep the allocations simple. Overcomplicating them disconnects bonuses from actual performance, defeating the purpose. Even if using annual goals, bonus reporting or payout can proceed as reasonable estimates become available. More frequent payouts clarify the relationship between effort and reward. However, one challenge is lessening the impact. For example, \$12,000 seems less significant when paid \$1,000 per month.

Bonus plan elements include eligibility criteria, performance metrics, and payout timelines. Recapping the example:

- Sales: \$16.7 million.
- Compensation pool eligible for bonus: \$1 million.
- EBITDA: \$2 million (12% margin).
- Threshold: 10% EBITDA margin.
- Bonus pool: \$120,000 (6% of EBITDA at 12% margin).
- Sample manager's base pay: \$100,000.
- Sample manager's share: \$12,000 (10% of the pool).
- After Evaluation: Bonus payout of \$9,000 (75% factor). ♦



2024 MAKERS MADNESS: “THE COOLEST THING MADE IN ILLINOIS” KOMATSU MINING TRUCK

Chosen by voters from an initial field of more than 200 entries, the Komatsu mining truck made by Komatsu in Peoria has been crowned the winner of the 2024 “Makers Madness” contest, earning the title of The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois.

Hosted by the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association and sponsored by Comcast Business, the bracket-style competition celebrates the incredible work of manufacturers across Illinois. Manufacturers have long served as the backbone of our state’s economy and produce everything from nutritious food and snacks to life-saving vaccines and medical treatments. Manufacturers also make electric vehicles, sporting equipment, and structural products like steel, rebar, and motors, as well as chemicals, high-tech gadgets used for national defense, and energy to power homes and businesses. Manufacturing is the largest contributor of any industry to the state’s Gross Domestic Product, supporting nearly a third of all jobs in Illinois and contributing more than \$580 billion to the state’s economy each year.

With nearly 315,000 votes cast throughout the eight-week competition, the Komatsu mining truck was awarded the title of The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois by Gov. JB Pritzker on Wednesday during a ceremony at the Governor’s Mansion in Springfield. Manufactured by Komatsu, a leading maker of construction, mining, forestry, and industrial heavy equipment in Peoria, the truck is a rugged, large-capacity vehicle used for construction and mining. With a capacity ranging

from 30 to 400 tons, the Komatsu truck is built to meet productivity targets and it comes equipped with new innovations in suspension, transmission, electric drive technology, and autonomous operation. It is engineered for reliability, operator efficiency, high performance, fuel efficiency and has a reduced carbon footprint, meeting U.S. EPA Tier 4 emission standards.

“Congratulations to Komatsu’s mining truck for being named the 2024 Coolest Thing Made in Illinois. This magnificent construction and mining vehicle is a shining example of the innovation and creativity that drives the manufacturing sector, where big ideas become products that can change the world,” said Mark Denzler, President and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association. “We applaud all the manufacturers that participated in this year’s competition and commend the skilled workers on our shop floors whose contributions guarantee that these fantastic products are made to the highest standards.”

“Komatsu’s ‘Coolest Thing in Illinois’ mining and construction truck takes something fundamental to our economy and infrastructure and continues to improve and innovate on a basic and essential concept—the absolute best of what manufacturing does for our state and a truly exceptional product,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Congratulations to the team of Komatsu and to all the contestants for your exceptional work in continuing to elevate our state’s manufacturing industry.”

“Komatsu is honored to receive this incredible recognition, which is a testament to the talent and skill of our team, who

are the best in the business,” said Dan Funcannon, VP of North America Engineering and Development, Komatsu. “We are proud of our contributions to Illinois’ strong legacy of manufacturing, where human ingenuity transforms raw materials into modern marvels.”

Other finalists for the title included the Mullen’s Imitation French Dressing, a delicious food dressing made by Mullen’s in Palestine; the MQ-25 Stingray (Drone Refueler), an unmanned aircraft with aerial refueling capabilities built by Boeing in Mascoutah and Mod Box by Enviro Buildings, a strong, insulated outdoor building with standardized panel sizes manufactured by Craig Industries in Quincy.



“Comcast Business congratulates Komatsu’s mining truck for earning the title of The Coolest Thing Made in Illinois. It was exciting to watch this year’s contest as it progressed,” said Sean McCarthy, Comcast’s Regional Vice President of Business Development and Strategic Initiatives. “We are proud to support the Makers Madness competition and partner with the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association to showcase the awesome products manufactured across the state.”

Previous contest winners include the Rosenberg Moon Habitat, a 3D printed polymer structure designed to house humans on the moon, manufactured by Ingersoll Machine Tools in Rockford; Rivian’s all-electric R1T truck made in Normal, the first all-electric truck in production featuring four motors, with one powering each wheel; the Self-Regulating Traffic Signal Heater by Termico Technologies in Elk Grove Village, which uses conductive particles to heat traffic signals so they remain free of ice and snow and traffic can safely navigate our roadways; and the 797F Mining Truck manufactured by Caterpillar, Inc. in Decatur, the world’s largest mechanical truck.

Presented by Comcast Business, the Makers Madness competition shines a light on Illinois’ diverse manufacturing sector, which played a critical role in the state and nation’s response and emergence from the coronavirus pandemic. Manufacturers have and are developing life-saving vaccines and treatments, producing needed personal protective equip-

ment, keeping store shelves stocked with important goods and nutritious foods, and powering our homes and businesses.

This year’s top 16 finalist products included:

- ActivWall (Aurora Storage Products Inc., Aurora)
- BoulePro 200AX (USACH, Elgin)
- Continental Truck Tire (Continental Tire, Mt. Vernon)
- D11 Dozer (Caterpillar, Peoria)
- Driver Assist System – 100 Degree Camera (ZF, Marshall)
- Gindo’s Hot Sauce (Gindo’s Spice of Life, St. Charles)
- JAWS Pinball Machine (Stern Pinball, Elk Grove Village)
- Komatsu Mining Truck (Komatsu, Peoria)
- Mod Box by Enviro Buildings (Craig Industries, Quincy)
- MQ-25 Stingray (Drone Refueler) (Boeing, Mascoutah)
- Mullen’s Imitation French Dressing (Mullen’s, Palestine)
- Nature Valley Bars (General Mills, Nature Valley, Belvidere)
- Nerds Gummy Clusters (Ferrara Candy Company, Forest Park)
- P15 Tamper Evident Cap and Spout for Flexible Pouch Packaging (Hoffer Plastics Corporation, South Elgin)
- Smart Handle (Aisin Mfg. Illinois/Aisin Electronics Illinois, Marion)
- Vulcan Rocket Thruster Launchers (Chemring Energetic Devices, Downers Grove)

The Top 4 finalist products competed for the championship in a single weeklong contest:

- Komatsu Mining Truck (Komatsu, Peoria)
- Mod Box by Enviro Buildings (Craig Industries, Quincy)
- MQ-25 Stingray (Drone Refueler) (Boeing, Mascoutah)
- Mullen’s Imitation French Dressing (Mullen’s, Palestine)

Makers Madness is an annual competition hosted early each year by the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association. The 2025 contest will open for nominations early next year at www.MakersMadnessIL.com. ♦



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CUSTOM DIRECT, INC.

**MANUFACTURING
MAVERICKS**


Reagan T.
QC Lead

**“MANUFACTURING IS
APPEALING BECAUSE
IT’S A REAL-WORLD
APPLICATION FOR
ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE
INDIVIDUALS LIKE ME.”**

I imagine you have a team member, a couple of years out of high school, with this perspective on their manufacturing career. If you are lucky enough to have someone like Reagan, QC Lead at BTM Industries, and the author of this quote on your team, how do you share this incredible perspective with current high school students, and grow your workforce with equally passionate team members?

Approaching workforce challenges from an even broader perspective, how do we, as an industry, promote the tremendous manufacturing career opportunities that exist for high school graduates, while we have a national culture focused on college as the predominant path to a successful career?

The answer to both of these questions

begins with the simple fact that the power of seeing someone you can relate to, in a manufacturing role they love, has a tremendous impact in changing preconceived notions, or complete disinterest, in a manufacturing career.

Built on this premise, and the natural marketing success of storytelling, a new initiative was introduced last October during Manufacturing Month, called Manufacturing Mavericks. The concept: showcase the success stories of young adults who have excelled in manufacturing without a traditional 4-year college degree. By highlighting the skills, dedication, and achievements that have contributed to their career growth, Manufacturing Mavericks reinforces the idea that success comes in many forms and is not limited by educational paths.

As the passion project of the Custom Direct, Inc. team, a marketing agency committed to promoting sustainable business growth for manufacturing firms, Manufacturing Mavericks celebrates the next generation of manufacturers, while providing insight into the incredible career pathways that exist in manufacturing – in the Mavericks’ own words.

Taking this concept online, ManufacturingMavericks.com is a resource for students and their parents, providing detailed profiles on the Mavericks, including information about the companies who provide these Mavericks with incredible apprenticeship/internship opportunities, the community college manufacturing programs some of the Mavericks have attended, and the organizations which exist to help bring new manufacturing curriculum opportunities to school districts.

What do these career pathways look like? Take Reagan, for example, she is delighted to experience firsthand the dynamic capital investments Kyra Tillman, owner of BTM, has driven over the last few years. As a 3rd-generation-strong job shop located in Woodstock, Illinois, Kyra has leaned into expanding the company’s portfolio of services while simultaneously replacing all of the original company equipment. Kyra appreciates the need for a robust workforce in order to continue

growing not only her company, but the manufacturing industry as a whole. And so, with her steadfast determination to bring greater interest in manufacturing careers, BTM supports the Rotation Internship through Manufacturing Pathways Consortium, a program that invites McHenry County high school students to participate in a 10-week paid rotational internship, providing insight into careers in manufacturing and engineering. Over the course of their support of this program, BTM has provided summer internships to 6 students, and the program overall has produced 17 interns who have all gone on to manufacturing careers.

While summer internships are helpful in bringing students through specific manufacturing experiences, Kyra understands that company-based apprenticeships are necessary for BTM’s sustained workforce development.

With this in mind, BTM has developed their own Department of Labor accredited Apprenticeship Program, which provides a DOL Journeyman Certification upon completion of 4 years of study and hands-on training. After looking into several options for the educational component of an apprenticeship program, Kyra reached out to a trusted colleague for insight and ultimately chose to develop a custom education plan utilizing ToolingU.com, where she has selected the online study modules which correspond to the hands-on training program BTM has in place.

The BTM Apprenticeship Program at a glance:

- Team members are invited to participate after 1 year of employment at BTM and have expressed interest in achieving DOL Journeyman Certification.
- 1 to 1 mentorship for apprentices.
- Online ToolingU.com coursework is completed during non-work hours.
- Shop Foreman reviews capability benchmarks.
- Cross-training milestones coincide with online coursework.
- BTM pays the ToolingU.com training costs.

Kyra offers this advice for anyone considering an apprenticeship program for their own company, “We tried working with established programs and found the best fit in one we developed ourselves. For other companies, established programs can work well, it just didn’t for us. We didn’t give up on the idea, we kept looking for the best solution. We also learned there is tremendous benefit in waiting until a team member had acclimated to working in manufacturing, and specifically here at BTM, for 12 months before we began the apprenticeship process. There is so much to learn about working in manufacturing, those initial months help build interest and confidence in their career decision.”

**“I HAVE CHOSEN
A CAREER IN
MANUFACTURING
BECAUSE I AM
PASSIONATE ABOUT ITS
DYNAMIC NATURE AND
THE VITAL ROLE IT HAS
IN OUR COUNTRY. EVERY
DAY THERE IS SOMETHING
NEW TO LEARN, A
CHALLENGE TO SOLVE.”**

This insight comes from Manufacturing Maverick, Zachary, a Welder with Ace Metal Crafts Company. Zachary learned his natural creative abilities, coupled with a desire to work hands-on in bringing concepts to reality, provided a fantastic career opportunity in manufacturing. At Ace Metal Crafts, he found the company culture which has provided him an encouraging environment with a robust training program – and an expanded career pathway.

Ace Metal Crafts Company, located in Bensenville, Illinois, provides fabrication,

machining, and contract assembly. Their trust-based culture embodies everything they do — including their “Own Your Own Development” program, where team members actively work on their career goals. Zachary is currently working toward his goal of becoming an engineer.

While workforce development continues to be one of the top concerns for manufacturing firms, Ace Metal Crafts has found their commitment to team member training and recognition means more than 1/3 of their new hires are referred by current team members. Equally impressive, many of their new team members actively pursued a career at Ace Metal Crafts while employed elsewhere, because the Ace Metal Crafts company culture was what they were looking for in their career and life.

Last year alone, Ace Metal Crafts team members completed over 15,000 hours of training. With 7 different recognition programs, team members celebrate big successes and small victories alike, earning Ace Metal Crafts recognition as one of the Best and Brightest Companies to Work for in Chicago, and nationally, in both 2022 and 2023.

Deb Benning, Chief Relationship Officer at Ace Metal Crafts, explains how their trust-based culture begins with the Ace Purpose to Create Joy Through Kindness, and commitment to company values, “Our purpose is so much more than what we do, it’s why we exist, and we live this purpose of creating joy, by being kind to ourselves and recognizing the importance in being kind in all of our interactions with each other. We incorporate our Ace Values (Trust, Respect, Care, Clarity, Discipline) in everything we do – how we communicate with each other, how we conduct ourselves and trust each other.”

Ensuring new team members find their onboarding experience aligns with Ace Metal Crafts’ Purpose and Values, a robust onboarding process has been developed, specific to the role, and ranges from 6 to 12 months to complete.

Ace Metal Crafts New Team Member Training at a glance:

- Onboarding Plan Review on start date
- Ace Culture Class within first 3

months

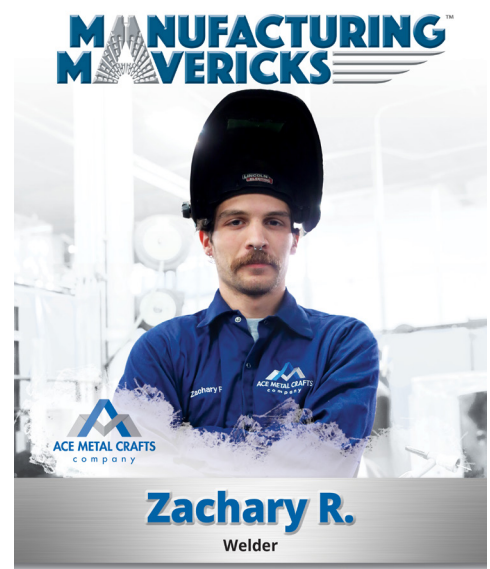
- Custom Training Program (based on skill level and role)
- Daily Review with Team Lead
- Weekly Assessment with Team Lead

Recognizing the success they’ve experienced in referral applicants; Ace Metal Crafts has embraced the vision “Recruitment is Everyone’s Goal.” As a result, Ace Metal Crafts added team member videos to the company’s website Careers page. These videos, and the employees’ enthusiasm for their roles within the team, are often brought up in interviews, with applicants citing their favorite quote, or insight on a specific role.

This bears repeating: the power of seeing someone you can relate to, in a manufacturing role they love, has a tremendous impact in changing preconceived notions, or complete disinterest, in a manufacturing career.

Whether your manufacturing firm is considering an apprenticeship program or looking for actionable steps to build your workforce through company culture development – the path to successful recruitment begins with a new generation of candidates interested in manufacturing.

Manufacturing Mavericks will continue to celebrate the next generation of manufacturers and spotlight the incredible opportunities that exist for everyone. ♦



Constellation – Visit constellation.com/IMA

COMPLYING WITH THE NEW REPORTING REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY ACT

UB GREENSFELDER LLP

Under many states' laws, disclosure of a corporate entity's owners is not required. Congress determined that this privacy is routinely utilized by criminal enterprises and presents an obstacle to federal law enforcement in the investigation of money laundering and other financial crimes.

The Corporate Transparency Act (the "CTA"), which went into effect January 1, 2024, requires "reporting companies" in the United States to disclose information regarding its beneficial owners, i.e., the individuals who ultimately own or control a company, by filing a Beneficial Ownership Information ("BOI") report to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network ("FinCEN"). Under the CTA, reporting companies include both domestic and foreign entities. Domestic reporting companies include corporations, LLPs, or any other similar entities that are created by the filing of a document with a secretary of state or any similar state agency office. Foreign reporting companies include privately formed entities and any other similar entities formed under the law of a foreign country that are registered to do business in the United States. The CTA's reporting company definition is exceedingly broad and describes many Illinois manufacturers.

The CTA identifies certain exempted entities that are not considered reporting companies. Examples of exempted entities include banks, credit unions, SEC-reporting companies, insurance companies, public accounting firms, non-profit status, and other enumerated categories. A specific exemption exists for an entity that (i) employs more than 20 employees on a full-time basis in the United States; (ii) filed in the previous year's Federal income tax returns in the United States demonstrating more than \$5 million in gross receipts or sales, excluding gross receipts or sales from sources outside the United States; and (iii) operates and

has a presence at a physical office within the United States. Illinois manufacturers should pay special attention to the "in the United States" element of the large operating company exemption. When an entity qualifies for one of the exemptions, that entity does not

WHILE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE CTA SEEM SIMPLE ON THEIR FACE, COMPLIANCE CAN BECOME COMPLICATED IN A NUMBER OF CIRCUMSTANCES. IF A REPORTING COMPANY IS OWNED BY OTHER ENTITIES OR OTHERWISE HAS A COMPLEX OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE, THE REPORTING COMPANY SHOULD SEEK LEGAL ADVICE TO ENSURE PROPER COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW.

need to file a BOI report.

A beneficial owner of a reporting company is an individual who, directly or indirectly, through any contract, arrangement, understanding, relationship, or otherwise (i) exercises substantial control over the entity, or (ii) owns or controls at least 25% of the equity interests of the entity.

"Substantial control" encompasses individuals who (a) serve as a senior officer of the reporting company; (b) have appointment or removal authority over the senior officers and board of

directors; (c) can direct, determine, or have substantial influence over important decisions within the company; and (d) have any other type of substantial control over the company. For purposes of determining whether an individual's ownership interest meets the 25 percent threshold, an individual's entire ownership interest is placed in the numerator, and the entirety of the company's outstanding ownership interests are placed in the denominator. In this equation, profits interests, capital interests and all other classes of ownership interests are consolidated as ownership interests. The rule also consolidates a natural person's ownership interest held both personally and indirectly through intermediaries. Further, any options or privileges held by an individual are treated as though exercised.

There is no maximum number of beneficial owners who must be reported, but beneficial owners do not include the following five types of people:

- A minor child if the information of a parent or legal guardian is reported pursuant to the CTA.
- An individual acting as a nominee, intermediary, custodian, or agent on behalf of another individual.
- An employee of the reporting company who is not a senior officer and whose control over or economic benefits from the company is derived solely from the employment status of the person.
- An inheritor whose only interest in a reporting company is a future interest through a right of inheritance.
- A creditor of the reporting company unless the creditor exercises substantial control over the entity or owns or controls at least 25% of the equity interests of the company.

Reporting companies subject to the CTA are required to provide the following information regarding the entity: (a) full legal name; (b) trade names



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or d/b/a names; (c) address of the entity; (d) the jurisdiction of formation or registration; and (e) the federal taxpayer identification number.

Reporting companies subject to the CTA must include the following in the BOI report for all beneficial owners: (a) full legal name; (b) date of birth; (c) complete residential address; (d) unique identifying number (either a driver's license, U.S. Passport, or other identification document issued by a State, local government, or Tribe); and (e) image of unique identifying number document (e.g. individuals can apply for a FinCEN identifier number, after which the individual is permitted to use the identifier number on subsequent filings).

Reporting companies that were formed prior to January 1, 2024, must file their BOI report before January 1, 2025; reporting companies formed after January 1, 2024, must file their BOI report within 90 days of receiving notice of their creation or registration. After the initial filing is made, there is no

annual or quarterly filing requirement. However, reporting companies have an ongoing duty to maintain the accuracy of their BOI report. For example, if an identified beneficial owner ceases to be a beneficial owner, a new beneficial owner is added, or any information regarding a beneficial owner changes, the BOI report must be updated within 30 days. Additionally, if a reporting company's CFO moves to a different residential address, the BOI report must be updated to reflect that change. It is expected that the ongoing responsibility to maintain an accurate BOI report will prove to be more demanding and precarious than making the initial filing.

BOI reports are filed online through a portal maintained by FinCEN. The filing can either be made directly on an online form, or through an interactive PDF form issued by FinCEN. Many find the PDF form to be the preferable method of filing because it allows the filer to save their progress and, after filing, keep a copy for their records.

While the basic requirements of the CTA seem simple on their face, compliance can become complicated in a number of circumstances. If a reporting company is owned by other entities or otherwise has a complex ownership structure, the reporting company should seek legal advice to ensure proper compliance with the law. The CTA is violated when an individual willfully causes a reporting company to either file a false or fraudulent BOI Report or to not file a BOI Report. Violations are punishable by a \$500 daily fine with a maximum fine of \$10,000, and up to 2 years of imprisonment. Manufacturers should determine whether they meet the definition of a reporting company, and if so, discuss with their counsel what must be done to comply with the CTA.

Constellation – Providing tools to create a customized energy strategy for your company

THE PERILS OF COMPLACENCY: ENSURING YOUR STAFFING PROVIDER MEASURES UP TO YOUR KPIS

ALL ABOUT PERSONNEL



In the dynamic realm of staffing solutions, complacency is a silent menace that can undermine the very foundations of client-provider relationships. For manufacturers reliant on staffing agencies to meet their recruitment needs and align with their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), the stakes are high. Yet, when a staffing provider becomes complacent, failing to adequately measure up to their clients' KPIs, the repercussions can be profound and far-reaching.

The Dangers of Complacency:

Complacency breeds stagnation. When a staffing provider grows complacent, they risk falling into a pattern of inertia, content with maintaining the status quo rather than striving for continuous improvement. This complacency can manifest in various forms, from a lack of proactive communication and responsiveness to a failure to innovate and adapt to evolving client needs.

The Importance of Alignment:

Central to the client-provider relationship is alignment with the client's KPIs. Manufacturers rely on staffing agencies not only to source qualified candidates but also to understand and support their overarching business objectives. Whether it's reducing time-to-fill, improving reten-

tion rates, or enhancing workforce diversity, the effectiveness of a staffing provider is measured by their ability to align their efforts with the client's KPIs.

Signs of Complacency:

Identifying complacency within a staffing provider requires vigilance and discernment. Signs may include a decline in the quality of candidate placements, a lack of proactive suggestions for process improvement, or a failure to meet agreed-upon performance metrics. Additionally, complacent providers may exhibit a reluctance to seek feedback or address client concerns, further exacerbating the disconnect between client expectations and provider performance.

The Impact on Client Success:

When a staffing provider falls short of measuring up to their client's KPIs, the consequences can be profound. Manufacturing operations rely on a skilled and reliable workforce to meet production targets, maintain quality standards, and drive business growth. A staffing provider that fails to align with these objectives jeopardizes the client's ability to achieve operational excellence, leading to decreased productivity, increased turnover, and ultimately, diminished competitiveness in the marketplace.

Navigating Towards Excellence:

To mitigate the risks associated with complacency, manufacturers must adopt a proactive approach to managing their relationships with staffing providers. This entails setting clear expectations, fostering open communication channels, and holding providers accountable for meeting agreed-upon performance standards. Additionally, manufacturers should periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their staffing partnerships, soliciting feedback from internal stakeholders and conducting performance reviews based on objective metrics.

Conclusion:

In the competitive landscape of manufacturing, the success of operations hinges on the strength of partnerships forged with staffing providers. Yet, when complacency takes root within these relationships, the results can be detrimental to both parties involved. Manufacturers must remain vigilant in ensuring that their staffing providers measure up to their KPIs, holding them to account for delivering results that drive business success and foster long-term growth. Only through a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement can manufacturers navigate the complexities of staffing solutions with confidence and assurance. ♦

LEADERSHIP COACHING AS ESSENTIAL AS WORKPLACE CULTURE

ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE CENTER
DAVID BOULAY, PRESIDENT



Leaders naturally prioritize growing revenues, enhancing efficiency, developing talent, and improving profitability. The linchpin for progress in these areas lies in the skills and talents of leaders themselves. Amidst a leader's ever-changing responsibilities, it's crucial not to overlook the leader's capacity to adapt, grow, and connect for overall success. The effectiveness of an engaged team is directly tied to the leader's skills.

While the term "workplace culture" is often associated with qualitative aspects, leadership stands out as a key foundation. A strong workplace culture, characterized by respect, inclusion, and community, is shaped by the qualities of strong leadership. Leadership coaching plays a pivotal role in continually advancing this culture.

Contrary to being solely about criticism, leadership coaching involves a personal examination to drive continuous improvement across the entire organization. Taking time to explore leadership qualities may seem challenging, but coaching can be seamlessly integrated into daily activities, emphasizing communication and relationships.

Leadership coaching can start with some fundamentals, such as improving a leader's focus during conversations. Providing opportunities for employee growth through effective feedback is another essential leadership responsibility. Even if you think you already exhibit strong leadership qualities in areas such as these, coaching serves as a catalyst for continuous growth. Leaders themselves must also seek feedback on their approaches to listening and providing feedback.

Leadership coaching extends into the leader team and continuity. Building a cohesive leadership team and preparing for succession necessitates planning and focused attention. A combination of internal talents and external perspectives is crucial for elevating the team's performance. Leadership coaching becomes a guiding force for success in the present and future, ensuring that a leadership team models and instills essential qualities in the next generation.

Attributes like a leader's focused attention, providing feedback, and leader succession planning, coupled with coaching, embed excellence into the company's DNA. This rings particularly true for small to mid-sized manufacturers, where nimbleness and strong internal connections make leadership growth and coaching even more critical.

The manufacturing landscape is undergoing unprecedented changes with automation, workforce dynamics, and shifting supply chains. Leaders remain the constant that can provide the necessary agility to navigate these transformations. Companies adopting robust approaches to leadership growth and coaching are poised for a successful path forward in this evolving environment.◆

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Boulay". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

MEMBER NEWS

DIAGEO North America

Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) and Diageo North America Kick Off Partnership to Tackle Impaired Driving in the U.S.

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) February 8, 2024 — Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) and Diageo North America have agreed to a new partnership to collaborate on public awareness and education campaigns aimed at ending drunk driving.

In late 2023, MADD created the MADD Network, a first-of-its-kind campaign that aims to unite diverse supporters of MADD who share the commitment of creating a future of No More Victims. Diageo, which has a proven track record of effective programming to prevent impaired driving, is an inaugural member in the launch of the MADD Network.

Their first partnership initiative will be to jointly send a clear “don’t drink and drive” message to football fans throughout the U.S. and beyond as the big game approaches, encouraging everyone to celebrate and enjoy the game safely while refraining from drinking and driving.

“In recent years we have witnessed a surge in drunk driving. Just since 2019, alcohol-related traffic fatalities have increased by 31%. MADD and Diageo are acutely aware that lives are at stake,” said MADD CEO Stacey D. Stewart. “We all want to savor the big game, but no one should get behind the wheel after consuming alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs and substances that can impair driving. Our partnership will help carry this message far beyond what either of our organizations could reach alone.”

Having a great time before, during and after the big game is wonderful, say MADD and Diageo, but no one should put lives at risk by drinking and driving. Impaired driving deaths and injuries are a concern that affects Americans in both urban and rural areas and from all walks of life. “We are proud to join forces with MADD on the shared commitment to address impaired driving, and extremely honored to become the inaugural member of the MADD Network,” said Stephanie Childs, Executive Vice President, Corporate Relations, at Diageo North America. “With our combined expertise, networks and educational resources to address alcohol-related harm, together we are stronger to raise awareness and help save lives.”



Flex-Line Automation, Inc. to Shine on National Television

Chester, IL — 1/31/24 — We are thrilled to announce that Flex-Line Automation, Inc., a family-owned business in southern Illinois, has been selected to feature on a national television program.

For 17 years the World’s Greatest TV Show has been taking viewers on a fast-paced tour around the world, by providing behind-the-scenes footage and interviews of some of the most amazing and unique companies, products, services, technologies, people, and travel destinations the world has to offer. On 2/17/24 they will be showcasing the remarkable journey of Flex-Line Automation, Inc. and the legacy of excellence it has cultivated over the years.

Flex-Line Automation, Inc. is a shining example of integrated innovation in the manufacturing industry, and demonstrates unwavering commitment to customer service and creative thinking. Rhett Rinne founded Flex-Line Automation with his parents and wife Cathy in the early 1980’s when he saw an opportunity to his rural ingenuity to provide excellent material handling solutions for manufacturers. His daughter, Lauren, joined the company upon graduation. The company has become well known in the industry for creative conveyer and robotic solutions.

The segment on Flex-Line Automation, Inc. will provide an insightful look into the behind-the-scenes operations, the dedication of our employees, and our ongoing commitment to advancing innovation in rural America.

“We are extremely honored and excited to be featured as one of the World’s Greatest!...,” said Cathy Rinne, president and majority owner of Flex-Line Automation, Inc. “Our selection is a testament to the hard work and creativity of our team. We are excited for this opportunity to represent the mission and values that make Flex-Line Automation stand out in our field.”

The episode featuring Flex-Line Automation, Inc. is scheduled to air on Saturday February 17, 2024 at 1:00pm CST on BLOOMBERG TV. We encourage our suppliers, customers, collaborators, friends, and supporters to tune in and witness the remarkable story of our family business.



Ingredion Named to World’s Most Ethical Companies List for Tenth Year

WESTCHESTER, Ill., March 04, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Ingredion Incorporated (NYSE: INGR), a leading global provider of ingredient solutions to the food and beverage industry, today announced it has been recognized as one of the 2024 World’s Most Ethical Companies® by Ethisphere, a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices. This marks the Company’s tenth appearance on the list.

“We’re honored to once again be recognized as one of the world’s most ethical companies by Ethisphere. This award reflects the deep commitment of our teams around the world who lead with integrity and prioritize ethics across our organization,” said Jim Zallie, Ingredion’s president and CEO. “We are committed to maintaining a values-based culture that includes the highest standards of ethics and integrity and guides our everyday actions for all stakeholders.”

“It’s always inspiring to recognize the World’s Most Ethical Companies®. Through the rigorous review process, we see the dedication of these organizations to continually improving their ethics, compliance, and governance practices to the benefit of all stakeholders,” said Erica Salmon Byrne, Ethisphere’s chief strategy officer and executive chair. “Companies that elevate best-in-class cultures of ethics and integrity set a standard for corporate citizenship for their peers and competitors to follow. Congratulations to Ingredion for achieving this honor and demonstrating that strong ethics is good business.”

Ingredion is one of only nine honorees in the food, beverage and agriculture industry. In 2024, 136 honorees were recognized, spanning 20 countries and 44 industries.



Google, Microsoft, and Nucor announce a new initiative to aggregate demand to scale the adoption of advanced clean electricity technologies

Google LLC, Microsoft Corporation, and Nucor Corporation today announced they

will work together across the electricity ecosystem to develop new business models and aggregate their demand for advanced clean electricity technologies. These models will be designed to accelerate the development of first-of-a-kind (FOAK) and early commercial projects, including advanced nuclear, next-generation geothermal, clean hydrogen, long-duration energy storage (LDES) and others. As a first step, the companies will issue an RFI in several US regions for potential projects in need of offtake, and encourage technology providers, developers, investors, utilities and others interested in responding to get in touch here.



S&C Electric Company's Chief Financial and Strategy Officer Wins 2024 Women MAKE Award

CHICAGO, IL – March 11, 2024 – The Manufacturing Institute (MI), the workforce development and education partner of the National Association of Manufacturers, has announced that Aurelie Richard, Chief Finance and Strategy Officer at S&C Electric Company, has been recognized as a 2024 Women MAKE Awards Honoree. This annual national awards program honors women who have demonstrated excellence and leadership in their careers and represent all levels of the manufacturing industry, from the factory floor to the C-suite.

“On behalf of the S&C family, we are thrilled to see Aurelie receive this well-deserved recognition,” said Anders Sjoelin, President and CEO of S&C Electric Company. Aurelie is a collaborative leader and mentor who has been instrumental in growing our business and driving our strategy. She champions team member diversity, equity, and inclusion and inspires and empowers other women in their careers. Her dedication has helped make S&C a place for team members to grow meaningful careers and give back to our communities.”

As S&C's Chief Finance and Strategy Officer, Aurelie provides valuable guidance as the company grows to meet global demand for its products and services. She positively impacts the company's market growth, strategic direction, financial health, and ability to provide the highest levels of customer service and support.

Additionally, Aurelie is a role model, mentor, and strong advocate for helping women at all levels to establish and advance their

careers. At S&C, she is the executive sponsor of the Women's Empowerment Group. Locally, she supports the Chicago Network's Launchpad Committee, which develops high-potential women for senior leadership positions, and the Women 4 Women mentoring program at the French American Chamber of Commerce of Chicago.

“I am proud to receive this honor alongside this impressive group of women,” said Aurelie. “I love working in manufacturing because it is a place where I can use my problem-solving skills to influence, execute, and deliver results. More importantly, our work at S&C to transform the grid for a sustainable, electrical energy future makes a difference.”



Siemer Milling Company pledges \$1 million gift to propel wheat research

During the 2024 Double Crop Farmers' Forum on Monday, Siemer Milling Company announced a \$1 million gift to launch the Siemer Milling Company Professorship and the Illinois Wheat Initiative within the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Founded in 1882, Siemer Milling Company is a family- and employee-owned business based in Teutopolis, Illinois, that specializes in crafting wheat flour, bran, and germ for grain-based foods. Their grain milling operations purchase 28 million bushels of locally-grown wheat and produce 840,000 tons of processed wheat products annually.

“We're delighted to be able to give back to the Illinois wheat growers who make our business possible,” said Richard Siemer, president of Siemer Milling Company. “Business has been good, and we look forward to partnering with the ACES wheat research team to make it even better for producers, processors, and consumers.”

College of ACES Dean and Robert A. Easter Chair Germán Bollero said Siemer Milling Company's vision aligns with the college's land-grant mission.

“Following three record-breaking years for Illinois wheat yields, this investment is critical to maintaining the industry's momentum,” Bollero said. “This generous commitment will fuel our efforts to cultivate

top-performing wheat varieties, optimize management practices, and unite academia, agriculturalists, and industry to safeguard access to a staple ingredient: wheat flour.”



Good food. Responsibly.®

Smithfield Foods Employees Donate More than \$700,000 to Local United Way Campaigns

Smithfield, Va., Feb. 27, 2024 — Smithfield Foods employees in South Dakota, North Carolina, Illinois and Virginia have raised more than \$700,000 through employee-driven campaigns to support their local United Way organizations.

Smithfield's Sioux Falls employees led the way with the company's contributions, raising more than \$521,000 for the Sioux Empire United Way, their partner of more than 30 years. Its mission is to lead, sustain and nurture a unified, effective response to community needs.

Monmouth employees' contributions to the United Way of Greater Warren County totaled more than \$135,000, a 30% increase from last year. The organization works with local agencies and develops new programs that enhance the wellbeing of the entire community, with a focus on providing a sense of trust, understanding and belonging to every individual.

Employees in Clinton, North Carolina, raised more than \$45,000 for the United Way of Sampson County this year. United Way of Sampson County works to advance the common good by focusing on education, income and health to create long-lasting changes for everyone in the community.

Smithfield's Wilson, North Carolina, employees raised \$10,000 for the United Way of Wilson County, which provides support to 24 nonprofit agencies in the county. The organization's goals are to improve education, help people achieve financial stability and promote healthy lives.

Smithfield's employees in Smithfield, Virginia, financially support both the United Way of South Hampton Roads and the United Way of the Virginia Peninsula. These nonprofits focus on education, health and financial stability and provide services to children, support for veterans and investments in local nonprofits. ♦

NEW IMA MEMBERS

ALSIP MINIMILL LLC

Alsip, IL

ASSOCIATION OF EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS

Milwaukee, WI

BRYNOLF MANUFACTURING

Rockford, IL

BURKE TOOL & MANUFACTURING INC

Du Quoin, IL

CALMER CORN HEADS, INC.

Lynn Center, IL

CH HANSON CO

Naperville, IL

CORE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Lewisburg, PA

CREATIVE WERKS LLC

Elk Grove Village, IL

CROKE FAIRCHILD DUARTE & BERES

Chicago, IL

CURI RMB CAPITAL

Oakbrook Terrace, IL

EVBOX

Libertyville, IL

FARNSWORTH GROUP, INC.

Peoria, IL

FOLLETT CONTENT COMPANY

River Grove, IL

GENERAL ASSEMBLY & MFG CORP

Cary, IL

GIESECKE & DEVRIENT (G+D)

Bolingbrook, IL

GOTION

Manteno, IL

HARDINGE

Elgin, IL

HERITAGE PACKAGING CORP

Lincoln, IL

ILLINOIS FERTILIZER & CHEMICAL ASSOCIATION

Bloomington, IL

INNOVATIVE RAIL TECHNOLOGY

Minooka, IL

INSPIRE TRAVEL LUGGAGE

Bloomington, IL

LUDLOW MANUFACTURING, INC.

Waukegan, IL

MCCARTHY BUILDING COMPANIES

St. Louis, MO

MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY

Davenport, IA

MITSUBISHI POWER AMERICAS, INC.

Lake Mary, FL

MOTIVE POWER RESOURCES, INC.

Minooka, IL

ONE EARTH ENERGY LLC

Dayton, OH

ORBUS LLC, DBA ORBUS VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

Woodridge, IL

SALT FLATS

Chicago, IL

SOCIETY OF MANUFACTURING ENGINEERS

Southfield, MI

STRATMARKETING GROUP LLC - DBA STRATMG

Downers Grove, IL

TECHNETICS GROUP

Harwood Heights, IL



Manufacturing buildings with a competitive edge

Find the right location for efficient assembly and distribution

Who We Are

Link Logistics is the largest U.S.-only owner and operator of last-mile industrial real estate.

539M

square feet of logistics real estate across the U.S.

183

Chicago properties serving manufacturing and distribution

One-Third

of our Chicago portfolio is home to manufacturing businesses

Chicago and Wisconsin Availability

ADDRESS	CITY	SF	CLEAR HEIGHT	# DOCKS	DATE AVAILABLE	LEASING AGENT
O'HARE						
901 West Oakton	Des Plaines	100,000	17'	6	Immediate	NAI - Terry Herlihy
LAKE COUNTY						
2000 USG Dr	Libertyville	144,000-242,200	28'	16	Immediate	CBRE - Sam Badger
13820 W. Business Center Dr	Green Oaks	101,172	28'	11	Immediate	CBRE - Sam Badger
Amhurst Lake Business Park	Waukegan	15,608-74,734	Varies	Varies	Immediate	Colliers - Pat Hake
RACINE						
901 Renaissance Blvd	Sturtevant	551,759	32'	57	Immediate	CW - Jeff Hoffman
KENOSHA						
7809 100th St	Pleasant Prairie	144,281	26'	10	Immediate	Colliers - Pat Hake
8505 100th St	Pleasant Prairie	256,239	28'	13	Immediate	CBRE - Sam Badger

Contact

Caitlin Sullivan, SVP, Market Officer
312-798-5478 | csullivan@linklogistics.com

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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