Buy American 2.0

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To say the least, a flourishing manufacturing sector is important to America's economy, as well as providing good jobs for future generations. Chris Kilcullen is a self-proclaimed average American who just wants his economy back. As countless manufacturing jobs have been lost during the recession and companies have decided to outsource, Chris has become more and more unsettled with the status of things.

Instead of sitting idly by, Kilcullen has decided to involve himself in the fight to keep jobs in America. He recently started a website, America's Got Product [1], where products are rated based on the economic benefit that each purchase provides this country. Its overall purpose is to help consumers make better purchasing decisions that positively and directly impact the American economy. Manufacturing.net [2] talked to Kilcullen, where he discussed his startup and offered perspective on manufacturing in America.

Manufacturing.net: What prompted you to start this website, and when was it officially launched?

Chris Kilcullen: I was inspired to create this site out of a passion for this country and to talk about what I felt was a void in the national discussion of our core problem: our nation's profitability as we compete in the global economy. The consumer needs to recognize his role and become personally accountable for our nation's profit or loss. This is not an "anti-import" message but a message to simply manage our expenses (imports) by pulling the throttle back on our consumption of imports. I launched the site in September when I published my study of the auto industry but am constantly re-launching the site with every revision.

M.net: What do you believe differentiates your website from others that link to sites with American-made products?

CK: There are several great sites that are similar and I have added them to my "shop" page, as we are all in this together. I think what makes us unique is that we are articulating the problem and demonstrating the solution. We are in a much more complicated economy, which can be very confusing. After all, it is hard to tell who owns what these days. We rate products based on the economic footprint that each purchase leaves on this country. We have just completed rating every car and truck sold in America, and we are moving onto appliances, cell phones, computers, and more. Our 4-star rating system provides one star for domestic manufacturing facilities, a second star for 50 percent or more American parts, a third star for corporate profits in the United States, and a fourth star for corporate payroll in the United States. This represents four distinct segments of spending that ripple back through this economy—or not—based on the consumer's decision. As an example, we did a study of the auto industry last Fall. In September, there were 997,000 cars and trucks sold in America. After we removed the foreign and domestic brands manufactured in the U.S., there were 242,000 pure imports. With an average price of just $30,000, we sent over $7 billion out of this country. And remember, that was just one month and just one industry. M.net: If you had to sum it up in one sentence, what is your philosophy regarding the site and its purpose? CK: Our mission/purpose is to engage the American consumer in our recovery by supporting the products and companies that support this economy, one purchase at a time; the more money that leaves the country, the less money there is to earn in this country.

M.net: How do you believe your site engages (or will engage) consumers?

CK: We are doing two things. First, we are building a rapport between the consumer and the communities that manufacture goods all across this country. We are going local by reducing this vast economy by showing the direct impact each purchase has on real people and real paychecks. Second, we are using social media to connect the manufacturer, the community, and the consumer with links on each product listing in our directory using Facebook [3], Twitter [4], and YouTube [5] pages. We are then posting press releases, human interest stories, and news on our state blogs for everyone to comment on, showing consumers how every purchase produces paychecks.

M.net: Can you tell readers what you're currently working on for the site?

CK: As far as what's new, we are adding new products from every industry and completing new studies of each. We are also rating industries where we have no manufacturing left to help consumers find the best cell phone or TV that subsequently leaves the best economic footprint on this country. We are in the early stages of rebuilding our entire site to include the state blogs/forums I mentioned above and to make our directory easier for consumers to navigate and search with a "Buy Now" e-commerce feature to help facilitate transactions. I think what we are most excited about is our YouTube contest titled "What's Made in

America! [6]" We are in discussions with sponsors to provide a sizable cash prize for the best video of a product from our directory. "What's Made in America!" is a viral campaign to sell products that produce paychecks by forwarding videos for votes: old school supply and demand meets new school social media!

M.net: How do you believe readers and manufacturers can help?

CK: First, send this article to your friends, family, employees, and vendors and ask them to do the same. Most importantly, submit your products for a free listing on my site so I can tell consumers all around this country about your products. Our goal is purely to increase demand for your goods which will result in new jobs for your communities. Readers can provide both content and traffic.

M.net: What is your perspective on America's current manufacturing climate?

CK: As a concerned citizen, our attention needs to return to profitability and the support of our domestic manufacturing. The national debt is getting a great deal of attention, but isn't income equally important? Manufacturing matters and is the low hanging fruit in our hunt for jobs to fuel this recovery. When we begin to care, our politicians will look to satisfy our needs to secure our votes.

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