It’s Not Just Your Vote That Counts

Having a political conscience is great, but what about also developing your manufacturing conscience?

By Anna Wells, IMPO Editor

"This manufacturing job crisis has become a hot-button issue, but what exactly is this 'crisis' all about?" **-Anna Wells**

I am what might be referred to as a "news junky [1]." This is something that is becoming easier and easier for Americans to become, considering I can feed my addiction every time I turn on my computer, or my television—even if it's 3 am, and all I am really looking for is a quick dose of information on something for cooking a whole chicken that I can 'set and forget.'

Over the past several months, as 24-hour news has slowly morphed into 24-hour coverage of the race for the U.S. presidential bid, the topic of "manufacturing jobs" has been cropping up more and more—out of the mouths of news commentators, op-ed columnists and, of course, the candidates as they travel across America, wooing voters.

Suddenly, this manufacturing job crisis has become a hot-button issue. But what, exactly, is this "crisis" all about? We've heard plenty of figures on the number of manufacturing jobs lost in the past several years, or on which foreign countries have trumped us in certain export commodities. This topic has become one which

any candidate with a shot at the White House will be forced to address. But while we wait for the campaign to heat up, what are those of us with a truly vested interest in manufacturing doing about this crisis, now?

Instead of standing behind the presidential candidate you have the most confidence in to stabilize manufacturing jobs, try also standing behind some of the existing organizations who do what they can—all the time; not just in an election year—to help promote the economic value of American manufacturing. There are numerous ways to get involved, and we don't need a voting booth to do so.

In this month's cover story, IMPO profiles Batesville Casket's facility in Manchester, TN, who optimized the award opportunities offered by AME (Association of Manufacturing Excellence [2]) in order to make its own operations better.

AME's emphasis on excellence is not just an emphasis on lean or continuous improvement, but an emphasis on upping the ante of American manufacturing in a global game. Only by aggressively pursuing improvement initiatives will we improve our chances of maintaining a competitive edge, and retaining existing manufacturing jobs.

There are plenty of other organizations who already fight on behalf of manufacturing:
NAM (National Association of Manufacturers [3]) has a mission to improve competitiveness by helping reinforce the legislative and regulatory activities of its member firms.

NIST MEP (National Institute of Standards and Technology's Manufacturing Extension Partnership [4]) provides national and state programs designed to increase U.S. industrial competitiveness by "bridging the productivity gap for manufacturers, identifying opportunities for growth, and encouraging technology development."

SMRP (Society for Maintenance and Reliability Professionals [5]) is designed to advance best practices in maintenance and reliability. The organization supports the education process by administering certification exams.

Having a political conscience is great, but what about also developing your manufacturing conscience? Getting involved in the success of manufacturing will not just aid this economic segment, but it will help in your own operations as well. After all, we have a lot invested in this race.

Comments? Email *IMPO* Editor, Anna Wells: anna.wells@advantagemedia.com. **[6]**

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