Sitting With America

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I've recently (finally) grown out of my free, hand-me-down furniture from my college days and went furniture shopping. Planning to find a new couch by the end of the day, I plotted out my path, made it to three furniture stores before settling on a couch that would stand up to the pets, and was pleasantly surprised at the selection of American-made furniture available. I had previously done a quick search online to get some idea of what my ideal couch would cost, and after checking the "Made In America" box, I was left with one (pricey) sectional available. Granted, I spent about ten minutes on one website for this search, but I didn't have high hopes for finding an American-made couch that I could afford come Saturday. At one store, every couch the salesperson showed me was made in America. Every one—and I hadn't even asked for American-made. Since I work with American manufacturers nearly every day, and I've heard the "dollar a day for U.S. manufacturing" statistics, I was thrilled that I found the perfect, American-made couch—and with only one afternoon committed to the task.

If you're not familiar with the "dollar a day for U.S. manufacturing" statistics, I'm talking about the fact that economists say that if every one of us spend an extra $1 on U.S.-made goods every year, it could create [1] nearly 1.3 million new jobs. And Alan Uke, author of Buying America Back *[2]*, says that if everyone shifted their spending by just $5 a day to American goods, unemployment would return to normal levels. And $10 a day spent on U.S. made products would cause wages to rise. And another fun fact, just one manufacturing job supports five other U.S. jobs. So I'm pretty happy with my couch purchase.

I can't always afford, or have to time, to find and purchase an American-made product, I admit. I'm pretty sure my toothbrush was made in China. My phone, a Motorola, was assembled in China. And my TV probably came from China too. But knowledge is power, right? A couple of years ago, I didn't know that spending a few extra dollars a year meant my dad, who works for a manufacturer with headquarters in my home town, has a little more job security. And I had no idea that affordable, durable rubber bands [3] were still made in America. And—as I've discovered—buying American doesn't have to be expensive. (I looked at *a lot* of couches made overseas that were triple the cost of the American made couch I'll soon be lounging on).

Made in America labels, I think, can be an important part of that knowledge equation. As Alan has previously described, Countries of Origin [4] labels can give consumers the power to make informed decisions. While not yet required, he has asked congress to create this label and require it on all manufactured goods, to help give consumers a more complete and clearer picture of where their dollars are really going, and who their money supports. Alan even hosts a petition toward this cause on his website, in addition to a "Buying America Back" pledge.

But he's not the only one trying to do his part to support American manufacturers, and the U.S. economy. Some manufacturers I've had the opportunity to visit are hosting similar pledges, and it seems like nearly every day, the "Buy American" movement grows even stronger. Some people buy American because they, as Americans themselves, think it's simply the right thing to do. Some buy American because, to them, seeing the "Made in America" label means that they're getting a superior product. Others, because they've heard the grave statistics outlining the importance of a strong manufacturing base in the United States. Whatever the reason, I don't think it can ever hurt to support an economy that makes such a difference to this country. With unemployment recently creeping up [5], I don't think Americans can afford to continue to ignore such an important sector of the U.S. economy, especially when the cost to American consumers is so little—I know not everyone can afford to spend a little more on American products, but there are a number of us who can. By spending just $1 a day on American made items, it *is* possible to make a difference.

As Alan Uke says, your buying decisions can change the course of our economy.

Every dollar that you spend is that powerful.

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