

# Teenagers Dismiss Manufacturing, Want 'Professional' Jobs

ROCKFORD, Ill., Nov. 19 /PRNewswire/ — Despite assertions from manufacturers that they will need a new breed of highly skilled workers in the years ahead and job opportunities will abound for today's youth, U.S. teenagers in large numbers want to wear white collars, not blue, when they launch their careers.

A new national poll shows a majority of teens — 52 percent — have little or no interest in a [manufacturing](#) [1] career and another 21 percent are ambivalent. When asked why, a whopping 61 percent said they seek a professional career, far surpassing other issues such as pay (17 percent), career growth (15 percent) and physical work (14 percent).

"Unfortunately, manufacturing often is not positioned as a viable career by groups such as educators and counselors, and at times factory work even is maligned in pop culture and the media," said Gerald Shankel, president of [Nuts, Bolts & Thingamajigs \(NBT\)](#) [2], The Foundation of the [Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, Intl.](#) [3] which sponsored the poll. "Based on this environment, these findings are not surprising.

"It's ironic that even with so many professionals unemployed today, teens still consider the traditional college degree as the launch pad to the preferred career path," Shankel added. "Our industry must generate interest among young people to consider manufacturing and convey that it's both honorable and profitable to work with your hands. The skilled jobs to fill will not only require workers to operate the most advanced, sophisticated equipment, such as robotics and lasers, it will require the kind of high tech, computer skills young people love to apply."

The survey of 500 teens reveals this effort to spark interest and commitment faces obstacles based on their limited exposure to what often are called the "manual arts." The poll shows:

- Six in 10 teens - 61 percent - never have visited or toured a factory or other manufacturing facility.
- Only 28 percent have taken an industrial arts or shop class, yet more than double that number - 58 percent - have completed a home economics course.
- Almost three in 10 teens - 27 percent - spend no time during the week working with their hands on projects such as woodworking or models, 30 percent less than one hour and just 26 percent one to two hours.

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"It's a tragedy that we no longer teach our young people to work with their hands or even encourage them to try it on their own," said actor and producer John Ratzenberger, an NBT founder who leads the organization's communications outreach. "When so few experience a factory tour or can take pride in finishing a shop project, it's no wonder that a manufacturing career receives low marks.

"In addition, for the most part, our schools and administrators focus on only one honorable trajectory for our kids, and that's the traditional university degree," Ratzenberger said. "Our education system theoretically is supposed to prepare our children for the future, yet we fail to offer them exposure to skills and fields that offer both them and us a brighter future."

A separate national poll of 1,000 adults sponsored by NBT reveals parents actually would support having a young factory worker in their family. More than half - 56 percent - would recommend their child pursue a career in manufacturing or another kind of industrial trade.

"Knowing so many parents will back their children in this career path is truly welcome news," said Ratzenberger.

Shankel also notes that more than 70 percent of Americans view manufacturing as the most important industry for a strong national economy and national security.

"Such sentiment really motivates us to work hard to inspire the next generation of manufacturers, welders, builders, electricians and other trades people," Shankel said.

NBT addresses this goal by offering grants to not-for-profit organizations and educational institutions that introduce young people to careers in the trades through manufacturing summer camps for youth. It also issues scholarships to students at colleges and trade schools pursuing studies that lead to careers in manufacturing. More information on NBT is available by visiting [www.NutsAndBoltsFoundation.org](http://www.NutsAndBoltsFoundation.org) [4].

Based in Rockford, Ill., the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, International, is a professional organization with more than 2,300 members working together to improve the metal forming and fabricating industry.

The NBT poll results are based on the responses of 500 teens, ages 13 to 17, who participated in a Web survey in September 2009.

SOURCE Nuts, Bolts & Thingamajigs; Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, Intl.

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### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.fmanet.org/media/multimedia-center.cfm>

[2] <http://www.nbtfoundation.org/>

[3] <http://www.fmanet.org/>

[4] <http://www.nutsandboltsfoundation.org/>