

# Inside a Successful Manufacturing Day: Finding Talent

By Rachel Kerstetter, Contributor

Albert and David Thuro, of Thuro Metal Products, are more at ease today than they were last fall, when it comes to filling the skills gap in their shop. Their concerns about developing tomorrow's workforce are familiar to many in the industry. Thuro Metal Products found itself putting together a MFG Day (Manufacturing Day) event for October 3, 2013, in just a few weeks, and it all started with a lament.

Former PMPA executive director, Mike Duffin, and PMPA vice president, Tom Bernstein, visited Thuro Metal Products in September 2013, and met with David Thuro and his father, Albert Thuro, of Thuro Metal Products. Albert Thuro, who founded Thuro Metal Products in 1971, lamented to the visitors about the present skills shortage.

"They suggested we host a Manufacturing Day event and do something about it," recalls David Thuro, president of Thuro Metal Products. "I'm glad they listened to us and offered that advice."

MFG Day, started in 2012, addresses common misconceptions about manufacturing by giving manufacturers the opportunity to open their doors and show, through a coordinated effort, what manufacturing really is and what it isn't. By working together during and after MFG Day, manufacturers will begin to address the skilled labor shortage they face, connect with future generations, take charge of the public image of manufacturing and ensure the ongoing prosperity of the whole industry.



Photo by Julie Allegritti, LIFT

Thuro Metal Products organized a simple MFG Day event in a short period of time that included a brief introduction of Thuro Metal Products and industry trends, followed by a 45-minute plant tour lead by experienced Thuro staff, a presentation on the importance of manufacturing and job opportunities in the field and a question and answer period.

Aside from listing Thuro's event at [mfgday.com](http://mfgday.com), Thuro invited administration, faculty and students from two local technical schools, Suffolk County Community College and Farmingdale State University of New York, and Thuro's manufacturing extension partners. David Thuro explained that the primary goal of the event was to engage with anyone who wanted to attend.

"We didn't have a lot of time and it was our first event," Mr. Thuro recalls. "But we had a fairly good turnout with about 20 people. We had the administration from the colleges come, which was good. And we've developed a better relationship with them inviting them back for follow-up visits and I see our relationship growing in the future. We had two students attend and it worked out really well because we ended up hiring them both."

## IN THIS ISSUE

- **Inside a Successful Manufacturing Day: Finding Talent**
- **Metal Seal Precision Invests in Growth**
- **Craftsman's Cribsheet: Quality**
- **Listserve Topics**
- **PMPA Calendar**

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Both students approached David Thuro at the end of the event to inquire about positions that were mentioned during the program. One of the students was Edward Rivas, who has since graduated with an associate's degree in manufacturing technology from Suffolk County Community College. Mr. Rivas, 21, began working part time at Thuro Metal Products in February 2014 while he finished his schooling. He is now employed full time at Thuro on a training path with the company for programming and set-up for CNC Swiss machines and is considering continuing his manufacturing education in the future.

"At Manufacturing Day, I learned a lot more about the important role manufacturing plays and how the industry is growing," Mr. Rivas says. "I was influenced to attend by the fact that the school's administration was interested in it, and I ended up being the only Suffolk student there. When I told classmates about my experience afterward, they said they wished they had attended too."

The other student in attendance was Peter Hamblen, who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at Farmingdale State University of New York. Mr. Hamblen, 22, has already earned his certificate of completion from Word of Life Bible College and turned to the Thuros who are family friends to learn more about starting a career in manufacturing. He works at Thuro

Metal Products part time during the school year and full time during breaks. Currently, Mr. Hamblen is working as the project manager for the company-wide implementation of the calibration module in UniPoint Software which manages all of Thuro's quality system key documentation. Through this project, he is getting hands-on experience with both documentation and calibration techniques and seeing the practical application of production gaging.

"The biggest benefit of the Manufacturing Day event for me was learning about the world of manufacturing," Mr. Hamblen says. "I had no real knowledge of manufacturing and Thuro played a huge role in introducing me to the industry. I was able to learn about how important manufacturing is."

The main focus of the MFG Day event was the plant tour. Mr. David Thuro explains that showing the students and faculty what a manufacturing facility really looks like helps break down the misconceptions about the industry. He was very interested in the first impressions the attendees had of the plant.

"I was surprised on the plant tour by how big the facility was," Mr. Rivas says. "There were different kinds of machines that were larger and had different controls from what I knew through the classes at school."

Suffolk County Community College teaches largely on vertical mills, whereas Thuro Metal Products specializes in production turning and uses vertical and horizontal machining.

"When I first saw the shop, I was amazed by the size of it," Mr. Hamblen says. "It was well lit and not very loud. The working environment was good."

For MFG Day 2014, which will take place nationwide on October 3, 2014, Mr. Thuro says the company will host another event following the same format, but will highlight some additional aspects of manufacturing, including a typical day in the life of various manufacturing positions at Thuro, vocabulary that will help students entering the workforce and the importance of process engineering.

"We want to show through Manufacturing Day that there are opportunities in this field for everyone by bringing them in. For example, at Thuro, our staff is half women, which is something that people don't think about," Mr. Thuro says. "With more planning time, our 2014 event will follow the same format but can be promoted better."



Photo courtesy of Thuro Metal Products

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We've tasked Mr. Rivas and Mr. Hamblen with helping us get the word out about it among their peers. Now that the schools' administrations have a better idea of what we do at Thuro and what Manufacturing Day is, we hope that they will encourage more students and faculty to come."

MFG Day goes a long way to helping improve the image of manufacturing among the community and the next generation.

"Manufacturing pays good wages, provides good benefits and it's a stable field. That information needs to get out there," Albert Thuro says.

### Get Involved with MFG Day

PMPA, a silver sponsor of MFG Day, offers supplemental materials to members participating in MFG Day. In 2013, the association provided an electronic kit containing career information, resources and videos.

"PMPA member precision machine shops will be hosting open houses for their communities, schools and local officials on October 3," Miles Free, director of industry research and technology at PMPA, says. "The events will showcase the great technology and career opportunities in advanced-manufacturing companies."

If you're interested in hosting a MFG Day event at your company, here are some tips for a successful event:

- Identify your target audience, or audiences. Based on the needs of your organization, some potential audiences to invite include: Local technical school and high school



Photo by Julie Allegretti, LIFT

administration, faculty and students; local and regional politicians; local and trade media; family and friends of your employees or the local community as a whole.

- Put together a simple agenda. Include time to introduce your company and tailor your event to the audience that you're inviting.
- Plan informative and interactive activities. Plant tours, day-in-the life and question and answer sessions at the end are activities that are easy to arrange and effective.
- Promote your event. List your event with [mfgday.com](http://mfgday.com), use your network to promote, personally invite your target audience and promote your event through your existing channels including on your website and social media.

Even if you can't host an event on October 3, consider inviting local technical school classes or public officials to your facility to learn about manufacturing in their communities.

For more details on MFG Day, visit the PMPA Education Foundation blog, *Your Career Facts*, at [yourcareerfacts.com/?s=MFG+Day](http://yourcareerfacts.com/?s=MFG+Day).

