

A Shop Owner's List to Change the Perception

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Our precision machining industry, and our shops, will not be able to grow our capabilities without adding skilled workforce. It is up to us now. Here are five steps to change the perception of manufacturing work in the twenty-first century.

Step One - Improve our shop housekeeping and aesthetics. There are many good reasons to improve our shop housekeeping and aesthetics. Improved safety of our employees springs immediately to mind. Improved efficiency if our people don't have to sort, avoid or step over materials that are not needed for the task at hand. Reduced liability for environmental damages by not having process materials or wastes exposed to the outside environment. Improve our image with customers when they visit. Professional pride. Love of our craft. To set an example to our crew.

But the number one reason is to make our shops a desirable place to spend a significant part of our waking hours. When we are held to pharmaceutical quality standards for provision of quality and on-time delivery, it only follows that our shops should reflect the same high standards for safety, cleanliness, organization and general work environment.



Step Two - Raise our standards. Seriously, what is the hiring standard that you follow? We purchase machine tools that are certified to conform to numerous standards and are sold by ISO-compliant organizations. We hold our tool and material suppliers to ISO standards for quality and quality systems, and to ASTM, SAE and other standards and specifications for conformance. What is our standard for consideration to be an employee? A clean drug screening and a heartbeat? A high school diploma but no demonstrable skills? If we want to change the perception of our industry from one of labor and drudgery to one of high performance and advanced technology, perhaps we should raise our hiring standards to people who have credentials certifying their skills. PMPA has partnered with the Manufacturing Institute to promote the use of NAM-endorsed, NIMS metalworking credentials.

We all learned in the recent recession that it is demand that drives our markets. That without demand, there is no market. If we do not demand recognized credentials from our applicants and local community colleges, why would people take the needed steps to obtain them? If we want to raise the level of our workforce, we can take this step of asking for credentials. Let's raise the bar.

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Step Three - Share your love of our craft and the opportunities we have in our industry. We have great work. Interesting work. Rewarding work. Our shops employ advanced technology. We solve interesting problems. Our products make a difference in the lives of others – in automotive, medical, aerospace, construction, every area of our economy. Making precision machined parts is about making a difference. A quality difference. Quality of life for all of us.

So, who knows this besides us? Why keep it a secret? Advocate for the “existential joys of precision machining.” Our communities would love to know that what you make keeps them safe. Our men and women in uniform safe. Or helps our cars go or stop. How your precision medical parts help to rebuild our bodies after an accident or health issue. What we do makes a difference. Let people know that by working in our industry, they can make a difference too.

Step Four - Become a change agent in your community for manufacturing education. Get on boards (advisory boards, curriculum review boards, school boards) and

sponsor science fairs, vocational competitions in robotics and metalworking skills and F-1 in schools.

Meaning no disrespect, what do insurance agents, accountants and doctors know that will help local schools counsel students on manufacturing? Manufacturing is an option to college and taking six years to hopefully graduate with a four-year degree. An option with better prospects for employment, since more than half of recent college graduates have been unable to find suitable employment? Let alone the college debt incurred? Why not advocate for a manufacturing option? Why not bring in fellow board members, school officials, teachers and guidance counselors, in fact the whole community, to show what manufacturing is about in precision machining. We have a great story to tell. So far, it has been our industry leading the way out of the recession. Why aren't we using it to help others find the success that they can earn in precision machining?

Step Five - Become the change you wish to see in the world. If each of us can take any action at all on any or all of these steps – improve our housekeeping, raise our standards, share our love of our craft and the opportunities available, and engage with our community and its institutions to understand, encourage and offer manufacturing education – we will catalyze the process of re-embracing manufacturing (advanced manufacturing) as an attractive, well-paying, viable career option. A career option which minimizes debt, can lead to post high school educational attainment, interesting work that is meaningful and makes a difference, as well as an attractive wage. Make a career while you make advanced products. It's been a great life for me, and my son is enjoying his entry into our field. Why do we keep this a secret? Which of these five steps have you done today? This week? This month?

Now is a great time to start, before the inevitable wave of baby boomer retirements washes out all of our skilled talent. The need is immediate and growing more serious as each day passes. Which of these have you done today? That is how you change the perception.

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PMPA?
Grow!

To grow and profit today, you have to work smarter. You have to relentlessly eliminate waste. PMPA is the way to expand your knowledge and increase your capabilities in order to grow your business. Through daily interaction with PMPA staff members, you have access to our expertise on important industry issues. You're also able to tap the collective knowledge of your peers; those who have “been there” and “done that.”

Through the meetings, resources and online connections, reports and more, we give you the tools to grow. We look at emerging markets and let you know what's hot and what's not. PMPA programs help you understand your markets so you can make sense of the issues. And, we provide relevant information to help you make informed decisions.