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OWN IT: THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING

Today's manufacturing industry is facing a unique challenge - something that previous generations have not experienced. In the past, workers were prepared at any early age to enter a manufacturing job. Today, the perception of manufacturing has degraded which poses a new challenge: influencing people to want to work in this important field. Regardless of the industry - aerospace, medical, automotive, etc - the general consensus is that this shortage of qualified workers is a serious issue.

So, as authorities within this industry, how do we go about addressing and correcting the problem? It's simple. We need to own the problem and start bridging the gap between education and industry. We all talk about our concerns and what they mean for the future, but not many people are actively doing anything about them. If it seems overwhelming, it's not. As the saying goes, "many hands make light work". If we all do our part, we can ensure the future of manufacturing. It is our responsibility to work with students and parents to **demonstrate that manufacturing is a viable and attractive career option**. There are compelling facts to back up this claim which can be used to illustrate the benefits of choosing a manufacturing career path.

- Manufacturing jobs pay - according to CNN Money, an aspiring machinist can start training at 18 and then do a one- or two-year manufacturing apprenticeship. In five years, he or she could be making more than \$50,000. In 10 years, that could double to \$100,000.
- There are many job openings in manufacturing due to the higher demand by employers
- U.S. manufacturing is growing faster than the economy overall for the first time since the 1990s. U.S. manufacturers are consistently adding new jobs, nearly 900,000 since February 2010 alone.*

To effectively bridge the gap between education and industry, we must work collectively toward changing the perception of today's students. There are many ways we can do this!

- Work with your local schools - talk to the board of education to learn what they are teaching. If you can serve as a mentor or advisor, you can serve as a real-life example of what manufacturing can mean as a career.
- Participate in Manufacturing Day. This once-a-year event is a great way for students and their parents to see firsthand what manufacturing is all about. Learn more at www.mfgday.com
- If you are an employer, partner with your local schools to offer job shadowing, or give presentations and tours of your facility. Learning in a classroom is one thing, but experiencing it live makes it "real".

It is never too early to start introducing the youth of our country to manufacturing. The question you need to ask yourself - and which will help to ensure the continued prosperity and success of the industry: "What can I do to excite today's youth about a career in manufacturing?" Once you answer that question, you'll know how you can help own, and solve, the problem.

*<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/10/fact-sheet-investing-manufacturing-create-high-paying-jobs-and>

Meghan earned her BS in Business from Bentley College and an MBA in Management from Hawaii Pacific University. Meghan gained valuable job experience outside of manufacturing before officially joining CNC Software in 2009 as operations manager. She was named president in April 2015.

In 2014, SME named Meghan one of the "30 Under 30 Future Leaders of Manufacturing." She resides in Vernon, CT with her husband and two children.