

MANUFACTURERS Digest

BNMA

Advancing WNY Manufacturing

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Q1 2026

From Vision to Velocity: Advancing Manufacturing in 2026

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2026 isn’t about planning. It’s about executing.

Across Western New York, manufacturers are turning strategy into action – investing in automation and AI, strengthening supply chains, expanding capacity, and building the skilled workforce that will power the next decade. The conversation has shifted from “What if?” to “What’s next?”

Velocity isn’t just speed. It’s direction.

It’s using data to make smarter decisions. It’s adopting technology that drives productivity. It’s developing talent through apprenticeships and partnerships. And it’s staying agile in a shifting economic landscape.

At BNMA, we see it every day – manufacturers choosing progress over pause and collaboration over isolation. Western New York manufacturing isn’t waiting for the future.

We’re building it.



Dear BNMA Members,

I am truly honored and energized to serve as the next Chairman of the Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance. Stepping into this role is both a privilege and a responsibility I take seriously. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Candice Pineau for her two years of dedicated leadership as Chair. Candice brought clarity, focus, and resilience to the organization during a dynamic period for manufacturers across our region and beyond. I hope to build upon the strong foundation she established as I begin my own term of service.

Our recent Annual Business Meeting was a tremendous success, and I want to thank all of you who made the time to attend. The turnout was outstanding and speaks to the strength and vitality of our membership. Personally, I always leave these gatherings feeling optimistic about the future of manufacturing in Western New York. There is something powerful about bringing together leaders who are creative, pragmatic, and willing to think beyond conventional boundaries. The exchange of ideas, perspectives, and solutions is what makes BNMA more than an association – it makes us a competitive advantage for our members.

I sincerely hope your investment of time in attending the meeting was worthwhile. Your engagement is not incidental to our success – it is essential. As we discussed that evening, the Board is enthusiastic about what lies ahead in 2026 and is committed to increasing meaningful member engagement. If you were unable to attend the meeting or did not complete the member poll, I strongly encourage you to do so through the follow-up email Peter sent summarizing the event. Your feedback will directly inform our programming priorities and strategic initiatives. Peter will be sharing the results in the coming weeks, and we look forward to translating your input into action.

For those who could not attend, I also provided an update on an initiative that has been in development for the past five months: the Manufacturing Exchange Portal (MXP). This platform represents a significant evolution in how BNMA supports your growth. The MXP leverages artificial intelligence alongside your existing profile information on the BNMA website to help generate additional purchase order opportunities for your organization. In practical terms, this tool is designed to enhance visibility, streamline supplier discovery, and connect buyers and manufacturers more efficiently across our super region.

The Board has made a deliberate and substantial financial commitment to ensure the success of this platform. Beyond the initial buildout, we will be investing additional resources to market the MXP super regionally, driving awareness among procurement teams, primes, and OEMs who are seeking capable manufacturing partners. Our objective is clear: create tangible business development opportunities that translate into revenue growth for our members.

Once the platform is fully operational, we will host a series of “lunch and learn” sessions to ensure every member understands how to maximize its value. Adoption and utilization will be key. The MXP will only reach its full potential if each of you actively maintains your profiles and leverages the system strategically. We are building infrastructure not just for connection, but for competitive positioning.



In parallel with the MXP rollout, the Board dedicated much of Fall 2025 to developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the organization. That work continues. Our aim is to strengthen member engagement, refine and expand high-value programming, and ensure BNMA remains a must-belong organization for manufacturers in Western New York. This includes evaluating our events, workforce initiatives, policy engagement, and peer-to-peer forums to ensure they are aligned with your operational realities and growth objectives. I will continue to provide updates in upcoming newsletters as this plan takes final shape and moves into implementation.

During my address, I also reflected on the legacy of Western New York as a manufacturing powerhouse. Our region has long been defined by ingenuity, production excellence, and industrial leadership. From heavy industry to advanced manufacturing, our companies have contributed not only to local prosperity but to national supply chains and defense readiness. The legacy of BNMA is intertwined with that broader story – serving as a convener, advocate, and catalyst for growth.

However, legacy alone is not enough. We must actively shape what comes next. I invite each of you to engage fully in the next chapter of manufacturing in Western New York. Participate in our programs. Share your expertise. Challenge our thinking. Introduce new members. The future of BNMA – and of our regional manufacturing corridor – will be determined by the depth of our collaboration.

One of the ambitions I shared is the vision of positioning Western New York as the “go-to” manufacturing corridor in the United States. This is not aspirational rhetoric; it is a strategic objective. With the right alignment of workforce development, supply chain integration, technology adoption, and business advocacy, we can strengthen our region’s reputation as a reliable, innovative, and cost-competitive manufacturing hub. The MXP, our strategic plan, and increased member engagement are all components of that broader vision.

I am excited about the evolution ahead and confident in our collective capacity to achieve it. Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we continue to build momentum and advance manufacturing excellence in our region.

Talk soon,
Dom

Chair of the Board



DOMINIC MYERS

Dominic Myers is a true Western New Yorker through and through, completing the local “school trifecta” at ECC, Buffalo State, and the University at Buffalo, where he earned degrees in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, and an Executive MBA. His manufacturing journey started where it matters most – on the shop floor – working hands-on in assembly and testing before growing into engineering, leadership, and executive roles spanning operations, business development, and global manufacturing programs. After helping build Buffalo Manufacturing Works’ automation team, Dominic launched Properly Works in 2019, transforming it from a technology consulting venture into a thriving custom automation and engineering solutions company. Since joining BNMA in 2024, he has brought energy, vision, and a deep passion for strengthening Western New York manufacturing and preparing the region for the future.

THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR SPONSORS



Thank you to our BNMA Strategic Partner for their commitment to WNY Manufacturing



Building your future workforce starts with Middle Schoolers

A student in the 8th grade now could be entering the workforce in 5 years. Will they apply for your jobs? Most likely not!

We have an image problem. According to Yahoo Finance, Gen Z students “are deterred by outdated perceptions of low pay, lack of flexibility, and safety concerns, often preferring other skilled trades or tech roles over traditional factory floors.” They hear it from their family, and friends. Factories are dark, dirty and dangerous.

According to a 2022 survey by the Manufacturing Institute, 70% of parents would not recommend manufacturing careers for their children.

This is especially worrisome as baby boomers retire, while employer demand for workers is forecasted to increase (Brookings Institute Case Study 2024). What will you say to your customers when they ask something like, “If I give you this order do you have enough people to deliver on time?”

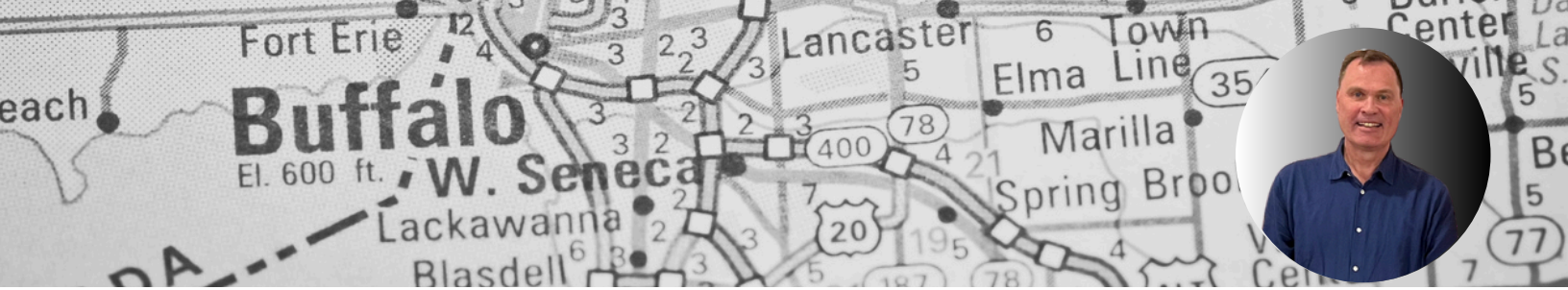
To date, the solution many employers have tried is to compete for talent against each other. This is a “no win” path. Maybe in the short term you can grab a talented person from another firm, who then tries to take one of your staff. This is a spiral where everyone loses in the long run.

Let’s go back to the perception problem I mentioned above. There are plenty of potential employees who will be joining the workforce soon, if we could only attract them to our industries.

You have to get them early! An article in School links reported “Companies with active school and community outreach programs report a 25-30% increase in youth awareness and engagement within their local regions.”

Student Outreach doesn’t cost a lot. Its an investment of your time and perhaps the time of some of your staff. By the way, I have found that many baby boomers want to “pay it forward”. They care about the future of their trade and want their company to remain successful after they retire. “Employees feel a sense of purpose and satisfaction in helping students, fostering their curiosity, and seeing the “light bulb” moment when complex topics click, notes [NIST.gov](https://www.nist.gov) and [netl.doe.gov](https://www.netl.doe.gov).”

There are organizations in Western New York like “Dream it Do It” [Dream It Do It | Jamestown, NY 14701 - Home](https://www.dreamitdoit.com) and Be Your Own Hero [Home | Explore Careers with Be Your Own Hero](https://www.beyourownhero.com) who are working with students today. But they need your help! Find out more through BNMA and/or the Western New York Manufacturing Coalition. A little investment can pay off for you big time!



Members,

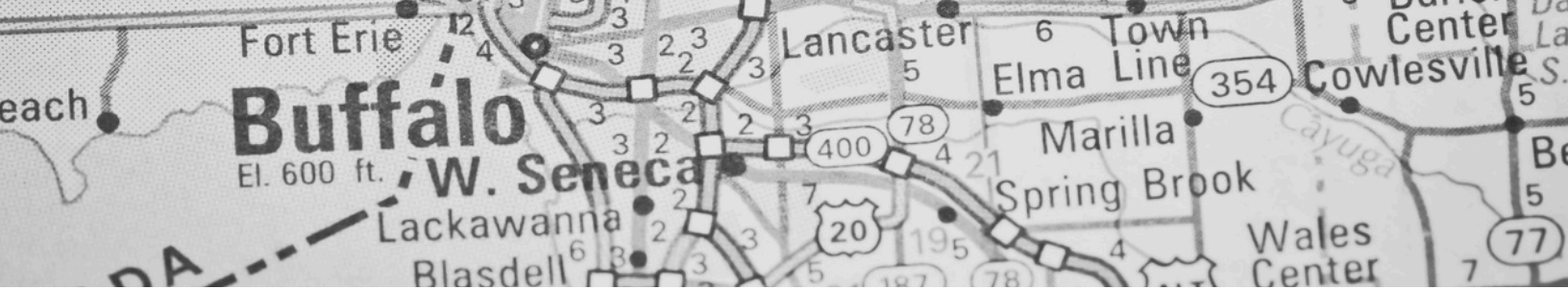
Thank you to everyone who attended our recent Annual Business Meeting. In my view, it was the most substantive and informative meeting we have hosted to date. The level of engagement in the room, combined with practical, actionable content from our presenters, made it a highly valuable evening for our membership.

A special thank you to our partners from Dream It Do It of Western New York (DIDI), who shared updates on how we are strengthening the manufacturing talent pipeline across the region. Their efforts to expose high school students to skilled trades and advanced manufacturing careers are directly aligned with our long-term workforce strategy. Increased engagement at the secondary level should translate into more students selecting training pathways at Northland Workforce Training Center and ultimately entering your facilities with relevant technical skills.

We also heard from Cindy Aronson, who provided a pragmatic framework for upskilling under-skilled workers and increasing shop-floor productivity. Her message was clear: workforce development is not limited to recruitment. With intentional training strategies, manufacturers can unlock higher performance, improved retention, and stronger internal career ladders. The knowledge-sharing that evening reinforced that talent management is not a one-dimensional challenge – it requires coordinated effort from K-12 exposure through incumbent worker training.

On the topic of advancing member value, we reached an important milestone with the public introduction of the Manufacturing Exchange Portal (MXP). After months of development, it was exciting to share a teaser demonstration of what this platform will deliver. The MXP is designed to leverage artificial intelligence to match purchasing agents and supply chain managers with qualified BNMA member companies. Its purpose is straightforward: generate new purchase order opportunities for our members across New York State, Pennsylvania, and Ohio – particularly from buyers who may not have previously considered Western New York as a sourcing destination. We frequently state that the BNMA exists to help grow your business. The MXP represents a tangible investment in that commitment. This is not simply a networking enhancement; it is a business development engine intended to elevate the visibility of our member firms. Once the platform goes live, I will be hosting a series of lunch-and-learn sessions to ensure you understand how to optimize your company profile and fully leverage the system. Adoption and participation will be critical to maximizing its impact.

Membership growth remains another cornerstone of our strategy. In 2025, the BNMA achieved a net gain of 24 regular members, along with several new associate members. This growth strengthens our advocacy voice in Albany and beyond, enhances peer-to-peer collaboration, and ensures the long-term sustainability of the organization. A larger membership base amplifies our ability to push back against policies that disproportionately burden New York manufacturers while simultaneously advancing workforce and supply chain initiatives.



I encourage each of you to actively identify suppliers, peer manufacturers, and plant leaders within your networks who would benefit from BNMA membership. Through your participation, non-members often benefit indirectly from our efforts. With the launch of the MXP – which will spotlight BNMA members exclusively to procurement professionals – the value proposition becomes even more compelling. Let’s make 2026 our strongest year yet in net membership growth.

This season also brings a series of workforce-focused events designed to support your hiring needs. We will be participating in and supporting the Depew Career Fair, the Northland Career Fair, the Alden Bulldog Career Fair, and our inaugural STEM Wars competitions in Erie and Niagara Counties. These events create direct touchpoints between your companies and emerging talent. In addition, we will continue hosting targeted virtual lunch-and-learn sessions addressing operational and policy issues that are top of mind for manufacturers.

Please also mark your calendars for our upcoming tour of Reworld in April – an opportunity to gain insight into innovative waste-to-energy operations and sustainability practices. And as we move toward summer, begin assembling your foursomes for our annual BNMA Fundraiser Golf Event in June. Event details are available in the Manufacturers Minute and on the events page of our website. Finally, I will continue to keep you informed through our monthly video update series, “What Has the BNMA Done for You Lately?” Transparency and measurable value remain priorities, and I look forward to sharing continued progress with you throughout the year.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the BNMA and to strengthening manufacturing in Western New York.

Peter

A large red circular graphic containing a portrait of Peter Ahrens. The text "Executive Director" is written in white along the top inner edge of the circle, and "PETER AHRENS" is written in white along the bottom inner edge. To the right of the portrait, there is a block of text in white.

Peter Ahrens is the Executive Director of the Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance and one of the region’s biggest champions for manufacturing. Known for his passion, deep industry knowledge, and ability to connect people across the manufacturing community, Peter works tirelessly to bring companies, educators, and leaders together to strengthen the future of manufacturing in Western New York. If you’ve spent more than five minutes with Peter, you know he loves a good conversation—sometimes a long one. His enthusiasm for the industry is contagious, and his quick wit and quirky personality make him a familiar and well-liked presence at manufacturing events across the region. Through his leadership at BNMA, Peter continues to help manufacturers collaborate, innovate, and grow—while keeping the conversations lively along the way.



Skilled Trades and Advanced Manufacturing: A Growing Opportunity in WNY

A Dream It Do It WNY Perspective

For decades, the message to students was clear: go to college, earn a bachelor's degree, and you'll have better job security. But new labor market data shows a shift. In 2025, workers with occupational associate degrees—such as machinists, electricians, and manufacturing technicians—posted lower unemployment rates than those with bachelor's degrees, signaling renewed demand for skilled technical talent.

This national trend mirrors what employers in Western New York have been experiencing for years, where advanced manufacturing remains one of the region's strongest economic sectors.

- More than 61,000 people work in manufacturing across Western New York.
- The average manufacturing wage is about \$85,474 annually in the region.
- Entry- to mid-level manufacturing jobs in Buffalo average about \$24 per hour, or roughly \$50,000 annually.
- Many production and technician roles pay between \$50,000 and \$63,000 per year, with higher wages as skills increase.

Historically, manufacturing wages in upstate New York have been about one-third higher than the region's overall private-sector average, highlighting the strength of these careers. They are among the region's best-paying opportunities that don't require a four-year degree.

Yet across Western New York, manufacturers consistently report the same challenge: they need more skilled workers. WNY manufacturers have high-tech equipment and strong wages, but they need young people to see and be attracted to these careers earlier.

Registered apprenticeship offers an ideal opportunity to attract NextGen talent as they offer on the job, 'learn while you earn' training combined with technical instruction through a local SUNY community college or DOL approved provider. This hybrid approach offers student an educational pathway at low or no cost to them, helping avoid college debt with the potential of earning a good income. Manufacturing offers the hands-on, applied learning in robotics, automation, and advanced technology that they enjoy, while paying strong, family-sustaining wages.



Why are students rethinking a college-only career path? Several factors are driving this shift:

1) Rising college debt

Many students graduate with more than \$40,000 in student loans, pushing families to consider lower-cost training options.

2) Strong wages without a four-year degree

Manufacturing and skilled trades careers often offer:

- Paid apprenticeships
- Industry credentials
- Starting wages above regional averages
- Clear advancement pathways

3) Growing demand for technical talent

As manufacturing becomes more automated and high-tech, companies need workers with skills in:

- CNC machining
- Mechatronics
- Industrial maintenance
- Robotics and automation
- Electrical and controls systems

How Dream It Do It WNY Is Responding

Dream It Do It Western New York connects students directly to these opportunities through:

- Career awareness programs
- Manufacturing technology tours

•STEM events like STEM Wars in Chautauqua County and TECH Wars in Erie and Niagara counties

- Connections to local employers

These efforts help students understand that:

- College is one path—but not the only one.
- Technical careers can lead to strong wages and advancement.
- You can start earning sooner with less debt.

A New Career Message for the Next Generation

The labor market is sending a clear signal:

- Skilled trades and advanced manufacturing careers are rising.
- Employers are hiring now—and paying competitive wages.
- Hands-on, technical careers offer stability, advancement, and purpose.

In Western New York, those opportunities are not theoretical—they're right here in local companies, offering real careers to NextGen talent.

Dream It Do It WNY is helping students discover them.

HOW WILL YOU FINANCE YOUR NEXT CAPITAL EXPANSION?

Manufacturers located in Erie County may qualify for tax incentives and/or low-interest loans administered through the Erie County Industrial Development Agency

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Precast Concrete

A Solid Choice For Manufacturing Facilities

By Travis Gruszka, AIA, NCARB Q1 2026

Precast concrete construction offers significant advantages for manufacturing facilities where precision, speed of construction, energy efficiency and long-term performance are critical. As building owners continue to demand more from their facilities, precast concrete has become an increasingly attractive structural envelope solution in manufacturing architecture.

Quality Control & Precision

One of the primary benefits of precast construction is that building components such as wall panels, columns, beams, and roof planks are fabricated in a controlled manufacturing environment under strict quality assurance procedures. This approach mitigates issues that may arise from inclement weather or human error associated with cast-in-place concrete. It ensures material consistency in strength, finish quality and dimensional accuracy. These attributes are especially valuable in manufacturing facilities that may be outfitted with cranes and specialized process equipment, which often require precise structural coordination.

Construction Speed

Identifying precast concrete as the primary shell system early in the project schedule is key to accelerating construction.

Selecting precast during the initial design phase allows the architect to coordinate the building shell design in parallel with municipal approvals and site development. Once strip footings are cured and the stone building pad is compacted, precast components arrive on site in sequence and are craned into place. This streamlined installation process shortens the overall schedule, reduces construction costs and allows earlier setup of process equipment and commissioning - ultimately leading to an earlier manufacturing start up date.

Energy Efficiency

Insulated precast concrete wall panels function as structural concrete "sandwich" systems incorporating continuous insulation which delivers excellent thermal performance. These panels are designed to meet increasingly stringent energy codes while reducing HVAC demands in facilities that often operate across multiple production shifts. Improved thermal performance translates directly into lower utility expenses and reduced operational costs over the lifespan of the facility.



Structural Performance

Precast concrete wall panels can be designed to serve as the building's primary structural system, allowing for the elimination of separate foundation walls and perimeter columns. In many applications, structural precast wall panels bear directly on strip footings and extend to parapet height, simplifying both the structural system and the building envelope. Precast concrete walls integrate seamlessly with concrete columns and beams and are highly versatile, often used in combination with structural steel columns, beams, and bar joists. This flexibility allows the architect to tailor the structural system to the specific operational and spatial needs of the manufacturing facility.

Durability & Low Maintenance

Manufacturing processes often expose structures to heavy loads, vibration, impact and chemicals. Precast concrete construction is well suited to these conditions, offering exceptional resistance to wear and environmental stress. Its inherent strength and resilience reduce long term maintenance and contribute to an extended building lifespan which is an important consideration for owners planning decades of operation.

Precast concrete construction aligns well with the priorities of efficiency, architecture: precision, speed, strength and durability. By combining performance with long-term value and architectural flexibility, precast systems provide a practical and resilient solution for manufacturing facilities.





Why I'm Passionate About Dream It Do It Western New York

By Todd Trantum, President of Dream It Do It Western New York & Executive Director of the Manufacturers Association of the Southern Tier

We have something special here in Western New York, and I don't say that lightly. There's a reason so many of us choose to stay. This is where our roots are. Where careers were started. Where families were raised and still gather around kitchen tables and backyard grills. Western New York is safe, affordable, and filled with good people who are hardworking, resilient, and proud of where they come from. It's a great place to raise a family.

And when you zoom out and look at the bigger picture or political uncertainty, environmental pressures, and economic volatility across the country, what we have here is, frankly, pretty damn good. We have access to fresh water. We have land. We have a beautiful and diverse landscape, a relatively balanced climate, electrical power generation and infrastructure. And importantly, we have opportunity, not just to sustain what we have, but to build something even better.

That belief, that Western New York can be even stronger, is at the core of why I'm so passionate about the work we do at Dream It Do It Western New York.

If you look at any thriving region, one truth holds constant: manufacturing is the backbone of a strong economy. Manufacturing is one of the few sectors that brings new dollars into a region. As manufacturers, we export products, generate wealth, and reinvest those dollars locally through wages, benefits, taxes and job creation.

Here in Western New York, manufacturers ship roughly \$26.8 billion in manufactured goods every year. Compare that to visitor spending from tourism, which totals about \$4.1 billion annually. Tourism matters – but manufacturing drives long-term economic stability and growth.

The quality of opportunity matters too. The average manufacturing wage in Western New York is about \$70,500 per year, roughly 25% higher than the regional average and those jobs typically come with health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off. For the sake of comparison, the average wage in tourism is around \$25,700 per year. These are real differences that affect families, home ownership, and long-term financial security. This is where workforce development, and the work we do every single day at Dream It Do It WNY, becomes a matter of competitive advantage.



Why I'm Passionate About Dream It Do It Western New York

By Todd Trantum, President of Dream It Do It Western New York & Executive Director of the Manufacturers Association of the Southern Tier

When I talk about competitive advantage, I mean this: regions win when they offer something unique and valuable that others can't easily replicate. For Western New York, that advantage is our ability to develop, attract, and retain a skilled manufacturing workforce. When manufacturers can find the talent they need here, they can compete more effectively, grow their businesses, and choose to stay and invest in our region. That's exactly what Dream It Do It WNY is about.

We are about keeping and growing manufacturing in Western New York. We are about energizing and connecting students to manufacturers and real manufacturing career opportunities.

We are about bridging students to good-paying, meaningful careers so they can achieve their aspirations without having to leave the place they call home.

And we are about linking manufacturers to a strong, reliable talent pipeline, enabling them to meet customer demands, grow their companies, strengthen our economy, and expand opportunity across the region.

This work isn't abstract. It's personal. It's about people, families, and futures. It's about ensuring that Western New York doesn't just survive – but thrives – for generations to come.

That's why I believe so deeply in what we do. And that's why I'm proud to do it here, in Western New York.

ttranum@mast-wny.com

Why AI Is Good – But Not the End-All, Be-All of Recruiting

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has quickly become one of the most talked-about technologies in business today. From healthcare and finance to manufacturing and legal services, AI is driving meaningful improvements in efficiency, speed, and data analysis. Recruiting is no exception. In fact, more than 80% of companies now use some form of AI in their hiring process to streamline workflows, reduce administrative burden, and move faster in a competitive talent market.

At StraussGroup, we view AI as a powerful tool – and an important one. We actively use AI to automate and enhance certain aspects of our recruiting process, including conversation summaries, reporting, spreadsheet creation, and other administrative tasks. These tools allow our recruiters to spend less time on manual work and more time doing what matters most: engaging with people.

There is no question that AI brings real value to recruiting. It can quickly scan large volumes of public data from LinkedIn and social media, identify potential candidates at scale, and help generate well-structured resumes or follow-up communications. In a market where speed matters, these efficiencies are not optional – they are necessary to remain competitive.

However, efficiency alone does not equal effectiveness. Despite its advantages, AI has clear limitations when it comes to the human side of recruiting. Recruiting is not simply about matching keywords to job descriptions. It is about understanding people – their motivations, communication style, leadership potential, and how they will function within a specific culture. AI excels at identifying technical qualifications and past experience, but it cannot accurately assess emotional intelligence, adaptability, judgment, or passion for a role.

AI relies on algorithms and keyword searches to interpret data. While this works well for identifying obvious matches, it often overlooks candidates with adjacent or transferable skills – individuals who may not fit a traditional profile but could be high-impact hires. Some of the best candidates are not “perfect” on paper, and AI struggles to recognize potential that does not fit a predefined mold.

Just as importantly, AI cannot replicate human interaction. Recruiting is an emotional process for candidates. People have questions, concerns, and career-defining decisions to make. They want context, honesty, and reassurance. Negotiating compensation, managing expectations, and representing a company’s brand all require empathy, credibility, and real-time judgment. These are areas where human recruiters remain irreplaceable.

Why AI Is Good – But Not the End-All, Be-All of Recruiting

We often say that the recruiter who tells the best story about the opportunity – and the hiring company – ultimately captures a candidate’s attention. That story requires emotion, nuance, and the ability to read the room. AI can present information, but it cannot tell a compelling story in a way that builds trust and enthusiasm.

For these reasons, we believe the most effective recruiting model is a hybrid approach. AI should handle what it does best: sourcing at scale, data analysis, reporting, and answering routine questions. Human recruiters should focus on qualifying interviews, evaluating cultural fit, building relationships, advising clients, and making final hiring recommendations.

As AI continues to evolve and become more sophisticated, we fully expect to incorporate additional functionality into our process. But for now – and for the foreseeable future – AI is best viewed as a strong partner, not a standalone solution. The future of recruiting belongs to firms that combine the speed and power of AI with the judgment, empathy, and storytelling ability of experienced human recruiters.

At StraussGroup, that balance is exactly where we choose to operate.



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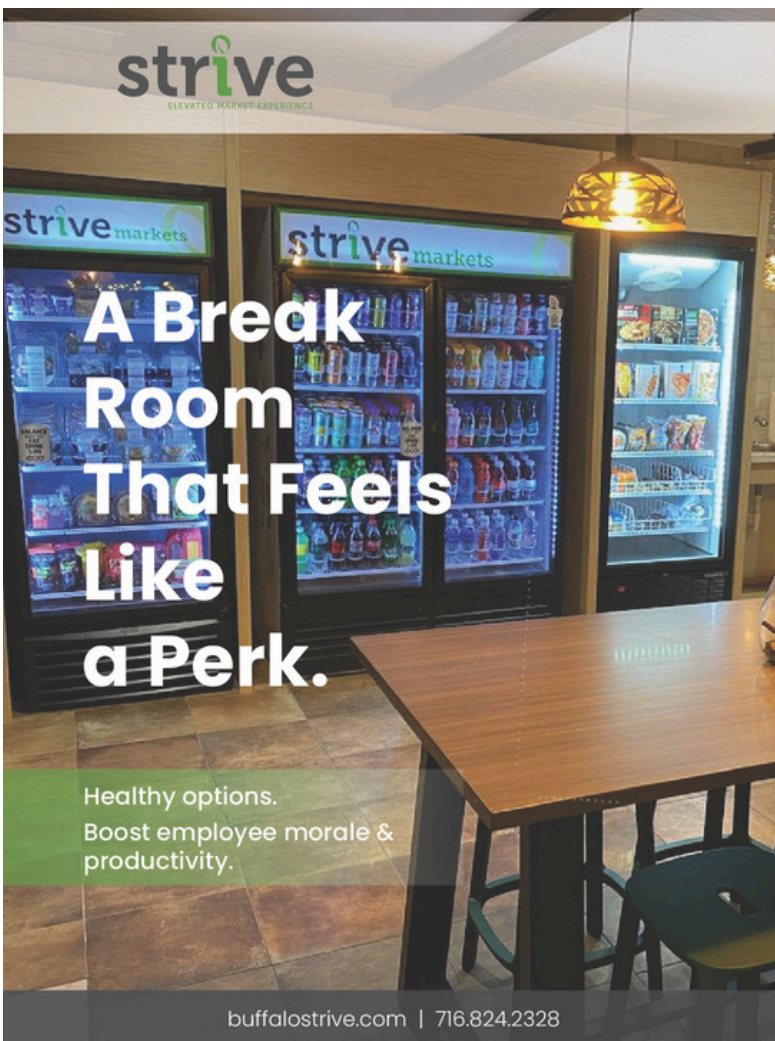
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Empire State of Anchors: Bolstering New York's Maritime Legacy

Across New York, more than 750 suppliers build parts for America's submarines and surface ships. The state plays a quiet but decisive role in sustaining the Fleet.

In 2025, the Maritime Industrial Base Program expanded partnerships across training providers, educational institutions, manufacturing associations, and industry to strengthen that foundation.

Workforce and Training Expansion New York increased training capacity to create long-term talent pipelines statewide.

Key investments:

- Suffolk County Community College trains up to 100 skilled workers annually in welding, CNC machining, electronics assembly, and manufacturing technology.
- New York Talent Pipeline Program provided talent acquisition and retention training that enabled 55 employers to hire 400 employees in maritime careers
- Moog Inc. Operations training center in East Aurora will increase new employee and upskilled worker training for 250 employees over the next five years
- MACNY - The Manufacturers Association registered apprenticeship programs produce 36 state-certified registered apprentices annually
- Successful partnership with the Intrepid Museum for Fleet Week and Kids' Week introducing hundreds of thousands of visitors and students to the maritime mission To date, MIB Program investments improved facilities to add capacity for 200 additional trainees each year across the state.

Programs are now in place to support the training for more than 1000 youth and adults throughout the state, building long-term workforce pipelines. Supplier Development New York's extensive supplier network received targeted support to increase capacity and modernize capabilities. The MIB Program Supply Chain team conducted assessments across many suppliers to identify readiness gaps and modernization priorities. Multiple companies deployed automation, robotic welding, and digital inspection that improved quality and reduced schedule risk. STEM Engagement

The MIB Program engaged students, parents, and educators through classroom experiences, facility tours, and career pathway resources to expose young people to maritime careers early and often throughout their academic journeys. A Mission Bigger Than the Empire State Building New York demonstrates how large manufacturing states can scale workforce and modernize suppliers at the same time. From Long Island to the Great Lakes, the state is strengthening the industrial foundation that sustains maritime readiness. Regional Spotlight Series: Over the coming weeks, we'll highlight maritime partnerships creating local impact across the country.

The Strategic Shop Floor: Moving from Passive to Proactive Asset Management

In the manufacturing sector, maximizing capital recovery is often the difference between struggling and thriving. Too many businesses leave money on the table by relying on passive asset management. To truly optimize profitability, shop floors must embrace active asset management. Jamil Rahman, Founder and CEO of Aucto, breaks down exactly why this strategic shift is essential for your bottom line.

The Depreciation Disconnect

To understand the financial impact of passive asset management, consider a deep dive into one of the market's most widely sold machines: a 2015 Haas VF-2 Mill. Moderately optioned, operating roughly 2,000 hours annually, this machine had an original MSRP of \$65,000.

Many businesses view their equipment strictly through an accounting lens. According to a standard MACRS depreciation schedule, an asset like this might depreciate to \$0 on the books by 2022. However, the machine's actual market value tells a different story.

When you do decide to sell, time is the biggest factor impacting recovery values.

- Forced Liquidation: Selling in under 30 days (with no warranties or guarantees) forces a lower recovery value.
- Orderly Liquidation: Allowing just under 90 days to sell on the open market yields a significantly higher return.

The Hidden Drain of Holding Costs

Holding onto aging machinery isn't free; in fact, the costs compound over time. Shop floor space is expensive. In a per-square-foot analysis of manufacturing space in the Buffalo Niagara Region, costs—including base rent, NNN, and utilities—increased by 79% over the studied period.

Furthermore, maintenance costs eventually skyrocket. Simulated costs for the Haas mill show an inevitable climb.

- In its first year, under warranty, preventative maintenance costs a mere \$545.
- By 2018, as warranties expire, routine upkeep jumps to \$3,500.
- By 2022, the machine hits the spindle failure zone, requiring a major overhaul that can cost \$12,500.

The Strategic Shop Floor: Moving from Passive to Proactive Asset Management

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Gross Margins Dictate Your Cycle

The final piece of the puzzle is determining when to cycle out your assets, which ultimately depends on your machine's ability to deliver gross margins.

Shops boasting elite gross margins can absorb these rising holding costs, allowing them to hold onto their assets longer. However, shops with average or lower gross margins cannot sustain the compounding maintenance and floor space costs; these businesses must cycle their assets much faster to stay profitable.

About Aucto

Transitioning to active asset management requires a reliable partner. The Aucto platform is designed to give you absolute control over your capital recovery:

- Free Valuations for BNMA Members: Aucto can help you understand and track your asset values
- Global Marketplace: Aucto is a global marketplace with buyers in over 82 countries, delivering 53% higher returns compared to liquidators
- Simple: Aucto makes selling used industrial machinery simple and effortless

Turn Process Problems into Measurable Profit

Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Training - Built for Buffalo Manufacturers

Manufacturers across WNY are under pressure to produce more - often with the same people, same equipment, and tighter margins.

The issue is rarely people, effort, or equipment - it's the process.

Meliora's Green Belt training course builds in-house problem solvers who can:

- Identify true root causes
- Eliminate waste and variation
- Improve throughput
- Reduce defects and re-work
- Deliver measurable financial impact



Join Buffalo-based Meliora Partners, a continuous improvement firm with international reach, for our Lean Six Sigma Green Belt training program. Taking place in Buffalo, NY, May 12 - 16, this course is taught in-person by our team of LSS Master Black Belts.

If you want stronger execution and measurable results inside your facility, this is the course for you.

For more information, visit www.mymeliora.com/training or contact Rachael Brown, rbrown@mymeliora.com



MULTISORB TECHNOLOGIES

Multisorb delivers advanced sorbent solutions to over 1,280 clients worldwide with a vertically integrated process, ensuring products across industries remain protected with innovative technologies and global distribution capabilities. This complex, multinational company is powered by over 250 employees generating an estimated \$300 million annual revenue.

THE CHALLENGE

Multisorb required a fast and in-depth evaluation of its materials management and logistics functions including planning, procurement, transportation and warehousing. During the goal-setting process with Straight-Forward, they discovered that evaluation of existing team members, deployed technology and operating processes was also necessary.

OUR SOLUTION

Straight Forward Consulting's engagement included:

- In-depth assessment and practical solutions to improve materials management and logistical functions
- Organizational restructuring including changes to leadership, reporting, and the addition of new talent
- A 15-week purpose-driven supply chain training and education class for leadership across the organization
- Implementation of ongoing performance metrics and reporting to ensure accountability

OUR RESULTS

Assessment, improved processes and training delivered measurable, enterprise-wide value:

- 50% radical inventory reduction
- 30% reduction in annual LTL spend
- 50% reduction in annual ocean freight spend
- Improved reporting structure and effective workforce

“In our opinion, John Hogg stands out from other supply-chain consultants because he is a hands-on leader and practical practitioner. We were confident that the suggestions and guidance that he provided were tried and true, and because of his knowledge, experience and engaging style, we were able to achieve a quick as well as significant positive ROI and cashflow generation.”

ERIC ARMENAT
PRESIDENT AND CEO

MIKE LIPPA
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

JOHN HOGG, PRESIDENT

716-866-8958
JohnH@Straight-ForwardConsulting.com
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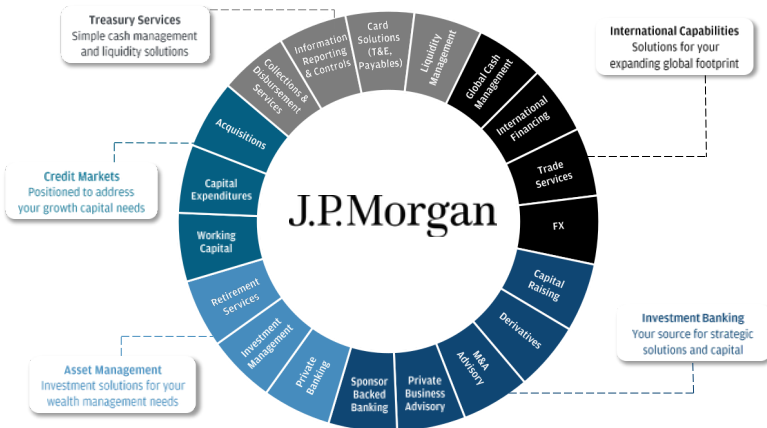
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MANUFACTURING ALLIANCE
Advancing WNY Manufacturing

The Profit Leverage Effect: Why Margins Matter More Than You Think

Most business owners understand this instinctively, even if they don't use the term: not all profit dollars are created the same way. The profit leverage effect explains why, in low-margin businesses, saving money almost always has a bigger and faster impact on the bottom line than increasing sales.

This isn't meant to throw shade on sales teams. Every company has limited resources, and the real question is where those resources deliver the greatest return. The table below compares the impact of sales versus cost savings at different margin levels- and the math is eye-opening.

Net Margin	Sales Needed to Generate \$100K Profit	Cost Savings Needed to Generate \$100K Profit	Which Is More Realistic?
3%	\$3,333,333	\$100,000	Cost savings
5%	\$2,000,000	\$100,000	Cost savings
8%	\$1,250,000	\$100,000	Cost savings
10%	\$1,000,000	\$100,000	Depends on the business
15%	\$666,667	\$100,000	Lean toward growth
20%	\$500,000	\$100,000	Growth often wins

Let's start with a tight-margin company. If your business operates at a 5% net margin, you don't have much room for error. In that case, every dollar you save drops directly to the bottom line. To achieve the same \$100,000 profit impact through sales alone, you would need to generate an additional \$2,000,000 in revenue ($\$2,000,000 \times 5\% = \$100,000$). If margins slip to 3%, that number jumps to more than \$3.3 million in incremental sales to match the impact of a \$100,000 cost reduction. In today's environment, that kind of growth is hard to achieve- and even harder to sustain.

This is why cost control matters so much for low-margin businesses. Reducing waste, rework, excess inventory, overtime, expediting, or poor scheduling doesn't just "clean things up." It improves cash flow immediately and reduces risk. In a tough economy, that can be the difference between stability and constant stress.

Now compare that to a business operating at a 15% margin. Cost discipline still matters, but the math gets much easier. That business only needs about \$666,000 in additional sales to generate the same \$100,000 profit impact. As margins improve, companies naturally shift more of their focus toward growth. Adding customers, expanding capacity, or launching new offerings can produce meaningful profit without putting the business under the same strain.

The Profit Leverage Effect: Why Margins Matter More Than You Think

The mistake many small businesses make is applying the same strategy regardless of margin. Low-margin companies talk about growth when they should be focused on efficiency and waste reduction. Higher-margin companies over-emphasize cost cutting when their real opportunity lies in scaling what already works.

The takeaway is simple: your margin should guide your priorities. In today's economy, low-margin businesses need to treat cost savings as their primary profit lever. Businesses with healthier margins should still protect efficiency- but focus more energy on smart, controlled growth.

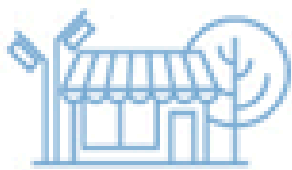
For many manufacturers, this shift doesn't require radical change- just a clearer understanding of where profit is really being made and lost. That's the kind of work Straight-Forward Consulting has been helping manufacturers tackle since 2008: reducing unnecessary costs, improving day-to-day operations, and strengthening margins so growth becomes an option- not a gamble.

Lawley

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Top 3 Things Growing Manufacturers Deploy to Win

Today's American manufacturers are at a critical juncture. Having worked with business owners in New York over the last five years, I have personally seen the challenges brought by foreign competition, price pressures, and a rapidly shifting technological landscape. There are three major things businesses are doing to overcome the challenges of today to get ahead of the competition.

Strategic Reviews

You know your core business well, but as you've grown things have probably become more complicated. Think of your finance department, IT, marketing, or your supply chain. You probably didn't have any of these issues when you got started. But now, they're all necessary concerns, and they oftentimes end up taking up more of your day than they should, taking you away from your core business.

A lot of manufacturers don't look for help managing these functions, but the ones that do end up having more time to focus on growth. It starts with strategic reviews, having someone guide you through a mapping exercise where you lay out every function in a department and determining the function's strategic importance relative to its complexity.

This helps you determine what can be automated with AI, what can be outsourced, and what needs to be done by the people in house. Generally, low strategic importance and low complexity functions are ripe for automation, while high importance and high complexity functions are things your people should be doing.

Try this exercise with an expert, you'll be stunned at how much waste at your company you can quickly fix.

Managed Services

For things that are a little more complex and not that much more strategically important, you can employ a managed service provider (MSP). One of the most common departments to deploy managed services is for your IT department. Most CEO's I talk to don't feel like their IT department is responsive enough or gives them the answers they need. Managed services means you make that someone else's problem, they manage all your IT needs, and they're just responsible to you for the outcome.

We see many growing manufacturers use an MSP for their finance function as they not only reduce costs for a traditional cost center, but also, depending on the MSP, can get a fractional CFO that can provide operational insights.

AI

The big buzzword that won't go away. Most businesses are struggling to find a use case for AI, but businesses that have gone through a strategic review, immediately can identify where AI and automation will provide value to their business. Remember the low complexity and low strategic work? That is all ripe for AI to take over.

How do I get started?

The BNMA team has entrusted me and my colleagues at alliant with ensuring every member has the opportunity to undergo a strategic review. Any issue you have, we can isolate it and identify a solution. I'm available to discuss how this applies to your company at braden.ford@alliantgroup.com or 281.433.5850. I look forward to hearing from you!

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Advancing WNY Manufacturing

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For more information contact Peter Ahrens, Executive Director.

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The Importance of Pre-Employment Screening in Maintaining Manufacturing Safety Standards

In the fast-paced and physically demanding world of manufacturing, safety is more than a priority; it's a necessity. Heavy machinery, hazardous materials, and fast-moving production lines mean that even a minor mistake can result in serious injury, equipment damage, or costly downtime. That's why pre-employment screening plays a critical role in protecting employees, operations, and your company's reputation.

By thoroughly vetting job candidates before they step onto the factory floor, manufacturing employers can maintain safety standards and minimize risk from the outset.

How Pre-Employment Screening Supports Workplace Safety

A robust screening process helps manufacturing employers identify candidates who are not only qualified but also capable of operating safely in a high-risk environment. Here's how:

Criminal Background Checks

A thorough criminal record search can identify past behaviors that might pose safety risks, such as violence, theft, or substance-related offenses. For manufacturing roles that involve operating equipment or handling valuable materials, this step is crucial.

Employment Verification

Verifying a candidate's work history helps confirm experience with similar tools, machinery, or environments. It ensures candidates are being honest about their qualifications and capabilities, reducing the chance of accidents due to inexperience.

Drug Screening

Substance abuse is a major safety concern in industrial settings. Pre-employment drug testing helps prevent workplace incidents by ensuring that new hires are not under the influence of impairing substances when performing high-risk tasks.

Motor Vehicle Record Checks

For roles involving forklifts, trucks, or any kind of driving, checking a candidate's motor vehicle record (MVR) adds another layer of safety and accountability.

Reducing Liability and Improving Compliance

Manufacturing companies must comply with strict OSHA regulations and workplace safety laws. Failure to perform proper due diligence during the hiring process can open the door to legal liability and fines if an incident occurs. Pre-employment screening serves as a strong first line of defense in regulatory compliance and risk management.

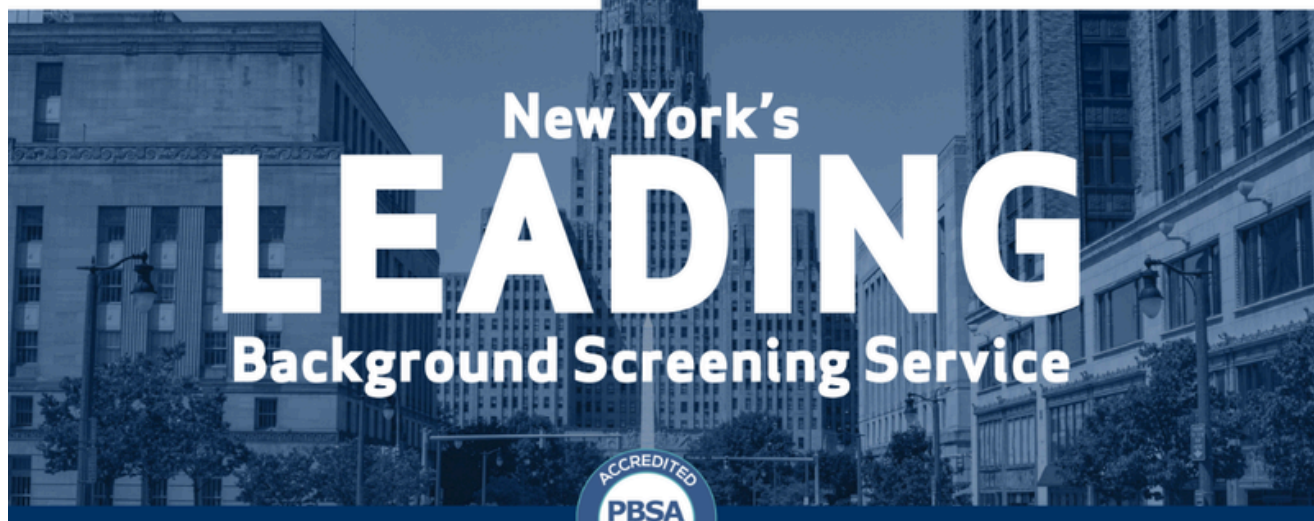
The Importance of Pre-Employment Screening in Maintaining Manufacturing Safety Standards

Partnering with Metrodata Services for Safer Hiring

At Metrodata Services, we understand the high-stakes nature of manufacturing. Our customizable pre-employment screening solutions are designed to help you make safe, informed hiring decisions quickly and confidently. From criminal background checks and employment verifications to drug testing and MVRs, we provide everything you need to build a reliable, safety-focused workforce.

Build a Safer Production Floor from the Start

Every hire in a manufacturing environment impacts team safety, productivity, and compliance. Don't leave it to chance. Contact Metrodata Services today to implement a pre-employment screening process that helps protect your people and your production line.



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