



Business/Education Partnerships – NEEDED!

by A.F. "Tony" Raimondo, Chairman, Behlen Mfg. Co. / Director – National Association of Manufacturing



Raimondo

I am pleased to have this opportunity to share my views as an owner of Behlen Mfg. Co. with 1100 Partners in Progress (employees); four plants in the U.S. and a Joint Venture in Beijing China, where we manufacture buildings for the China market. Also I am a Director and represent the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) in Washington D.C., and we represent 10,000 companies and 14 million employees.

You may be surprised to hear that manufacturing is strong with production output at its highest level in history. Also, 90 percent of manufacturing companies that responded to the NAM's 2005 Skills Gap survey stated that they could not find qualified skilled workers. These exciting careers range from University degrees in Engineering to Computer Controlled (CNC) machine operators, welders, etc. The U.S. manufacturing sector is strong, it is the highest contributor

to real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth between 2001 and today.

A strong business/education partnership in Nebraska can help us be leaders in U.S. competitiveness and support our young adults moving into a globally competitive environment where future leaders and tomorrow's winners will be innovative and possess strong technical skills to lead their companies to leading edge productivity.

Why are stronger business / education partnerships needed?

1. The global climate has changed significantly. Developing nations will be the challenge for decades, Japan had their day, presently China and India are in the

limelight, followed most likely by Eastern Europe, Africa, Russia, etc.

2. Workplace demands and trends require higher skills. Manufacturing is the engine of American technology development and innovation.

As developing nations strive to pursue quality of life standards set by Americans, we need to raise our bar – U.S. competitiveness as productive world leaders requires stronger innovation and skills in various technical fields. Low skill jobs have been significantly reduced as these are the first to be absorbed by developing nations.

Nebraska's Advanced Manufacturing Coalition is a partnership between State Leaders in business, education, government and labor, and we launched the

usually pays 23 percent higher wages.

2. Dream It. Do It. will address the exciting careers in Manufacturing. The Nebraska Advanced Manufacturing Coalition understands today's manufacturing careers require higher skills, and we plan to communicate this to young adults and their parents in partnership with education.

So together business and education need to help students and their parents understand the need for higher skills and assist in career identification and opportunities. Personally, I believe there are two categories of thinking in young adults.

1. Some (I believe a small percentage) have a strong career direction and commitment to being a doctor, engineer, musician, etc. This is great and they should follow their dream!

2. Some (a larger majority) say I'm not sure. I would suggest this group takes incremental steps to obtain skills and keep an open mind on future opportunities.

Looking back on my personal experience, I would share that category two students may want to think of education as a path with many incremental steps and decision opportunities. I incrementally moved from high school to Community College to a University BSME to an MBA. For me, it was one incremental step at a time to determine what I enjoyed.

A frequent question is – would you prefer to be talented or lucky. The answer is be prepared!

Our commitment in Dream It. Do It. is to help young adults and parents understand the exciting, well paying careers that exist in manufacturing and provide information to assist and partner with education's – "21st Century Learning Concept."

Thank you for this opportunity! Check out the Dream It. Do It. web site at www.dreamit-doit.com.

*A frequent question is –
would you prefer to be
talented or lucky.
The answer is
"be prepared!"*

Dream It. Do It. Campaign on September 8th. This campaign is rolling out across the nation, with two major objectives.

1. Explain the importance of making things!

- Manufacturing has been and is key to our quality of life.

- Manufacturing is key to economic development for growing areas.

- Manufacturing is key to research and technology development.

- Manufacturing is key to our national defense.

The U.S. manufacturing segment if standing alone would be the eighth largest economy in the world. It is 12 percent of U.S. GDP and 11 percent of Nebraska GDP, and manufacturing typi-