



HV MFG

THE COUNCIL OF INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

FALL 2025

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COMPANY PROFILE
CARIBBEAN FOOD DELIGHTS

LEADER PROFILE
Deborah Smook and Eli Uriel
TurboFil Packaging Machines

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LEADER PROFILE



TurboFil Packaging Machines, owned by Deborah and Eli Uriel is based in Mount Vernon, NY. They specialize in solving complex packaging challenges for research labs, drug manufacturers, and contract packagers across the county and around the world.

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ON THE COVER

Caribbean Food Delights is located in Tappan, NY, in Rockland County. The company is the largest manufacturer of Jamaican style frozen patties. They source ingredients from around the world to maintain authentic flavor.

Cover photo by Tom LaBarbera
Picture This Studio



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NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY

DEAR READER

Welcome to the Fall 2025 Edition of HV Mfg, the Council of Industry's magazine by, for and about Hudson Valley manufacturers.

These are uncertain times for Manufacturers across the globe and in the Hudson Valley. The trade war and tariffs grab the headlines but other factors such as automation, cyber threats and artificial intelligence are also disrupting the status quo and forcing manufacturing executives to rethink long-standing business models, processes and even products.

For this edition of HV Mfg we brought together a small group Member Executives for a roundtable discussion of the threats and opportunities their businesses are facing. Council CEO Johnnieanne Hansen led a lively, wide-ranging and informative discussion. I think you will find it worth the read.

Other articles feature a profile of Caribbean Food Delights, a Rockland County based manufacturer of authentic Jamaican Patties and other delicacies. The Company's story, written by Ciara McEneaney, the Council of Industry's Member Services Coordinator, from its founding by Vincent and Jeanette HoSang to its current focus on quality, innovation and family is, to say the least, compelling.

Our Leader Q&A is with Deborah Smook and Eli Uriel, the husband-and-wife founders of Mt. Vernon based Turbofil Packaging. Turbofil develops durable and creative solutions for some of the toughest packaging applications in the pharmaceutical, cosmetic and chemical industries. Debbie and Eli share their success story of entrepreneurship, hard work and innovation.

We also have a wide range of other, interesting reads for manufacturers in this edition. Marc Hoover of Trout Software writes about making your firm "Mission Ready" to be part of the defense supply chain. McKenna Hansen, our summer intern, researched emergency preparedness at manufacturers. She shares her findings and offers some best practices to improve your firm's plan. David King writes on the massive potential for Agentic AI in manufacturing. Bridget Gibbons, director of Westchester Office of Economic Development, shares the details of the exciting new initiative the County has launched in partnership with RPI to offer free training and credentialing to County residents.

We have our regular Fall features including news briefs, "What are You Reading," and our Regional Manufacturers Resource Guide.

Finally, tucked away in the News Briefs under "Council News" is one of the most exciting stories of 2025. Johnnieanne Hansen has been named the Council of Industry's Chief Executive Officer. This well-deserved promotion will begin to unleash her massive talents and seemingly unlimited energy to improve the value of your Council membership. I will remain at the Council focusing on advocacy, content and supporting Johnnieanne.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation once again to the many organizations who placed advertisements in HV Mfg. Your support of the Hudson Valley manufacturing, Council of Industry and this publication is greatly appreciated.

I hope you enjoy this edition and thank you for reading.

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THE MANUFACTURING ECONOMY

Member Survey: Tariffs At Least Somewhat Negatively Impacting 80% of Respondents

In August, The Council of Industry conducted a survey to better understand how recent tariffs are affecting our member companies. The big takeaway? Tariffs are having an overall negative impact. When asked how tariffs have affected their businesses over the past three months, a clear majority reported negative impacts: 55% said “Somewhat Negatively” and 25% said “Very Negatively.” Only a small share indicated no impact (15%), and just 5% reported positive effects. Here are some of the other key findings:

- Asked about the effects of tariffs on operating costs half the respondents reported an increase in costs of 1-10%. One in 4 reported an increase of 11-20%.
- The vast majority (85%) reported no change to their headcount as a result of tariffs but the remaining 15% reported reduced headcount.
- 80% reported higher material costs as a result of tariffs.
- 15% reported greater demand from firms seeking domestic suppliers
- Two thirds (68%) have raised prices to pass along tariff related costs. 62% of those are passing along the majority or all of the tariff costs to customers.
- When asked about their current tariff strategy 35% reported making temporary adjustments. 25% reported they were still developing their strategy. And 30% said they were not changing their strategy despite the tariffs.

These results highlight the ongoing challenges tariffs pose for manufacturers in our region, with most respondents citing cost pressures and operational disruptions. The Council will continue to advocate for policies that support competitiveness while providing resources to help companies navigate these headwinds.

Empire Manufacturing Survey: ‘Modest Decline’ in September

Manufacturing activity declined in New York State after increasing over the summer, according to the September survey. The general business conditions index dropped twenty-one points to -8.7, its first negative reading since June.

- The new orders index declined thirty-five points to -19.6.
- The shipments index fell thirty points to -17.3, the lowest levels for both indexes since April 2024, pointing to significant declines in orders and shipments. Unfilled orders fell.
- The inventories index remained modestly negative at -4.9, indicating that business inventories continued to shrink somewhat.
- The index for number of employees came in at around zero,

suggesting that employment was little changed after increasing for the prior three months, while the average workweek index declined to -5.1, pointing to a modest drop in hours worked.

- The prices paid index fell eight points to 46.1, a sign that input price increases slowed but remained steep, while the prices received index was little changed at 21.6, indicating that selling prices continued to rise at a moderate pace.
- The index for future general business conditions came in at 14.8, suggesting that firms expect conditions to improve somewhat in the months ahead.
- New orders and shipments are expected to increase, and supply availability is expected to be little changed.
- The future employment index fell to near zero, suggesting that employment levels are not expected to increase over the next six months.
- Capital spending plans remained soft.

Federal Government Shut Down October 1 After Funding Bill Fails to Pass

The government shutdown at 12:01 a.m. October 1 after the Senate failed to pass a government funding bill. The chamber voted down a proposal from Democrats, followed by a GOP House-passed stopgap bill that would have kept the lights on through Nov. 21. Both parties have blamed each other for a failure to reach a deal and refused to blink, leaving it unclear how Washington exits a shutdown. Three members of the Senate Democratic caucus broke with Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (N.Y.) on Tuesday and voted for the House Republican-drafted bill.

Republicans insist on a “clean” continuing resolution that would provide funds to reopen the government until at least Nov. 21. Democrats want any funding bill to extend enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies that are set to run out at the end of this year. That and other provisions in the Democratic bill would cost an estimated \$1 trillion.

Fed Cuts Rates - Cites Rising Unemployment, Slow Hiring As Key Concerns

The Federal Reserve approved a widely anticipated rate cut at its September meeting and signaled that two more are on the way before the end of the year as concerns intensified over the U.S. labor market even as inflation is still in the air. The decision puts the overnight funds rate in a range between 4.00%-4.25%. “Uncertainty about the economic outlook remains elevated” the Fed statement said. “The Committee is attentive to the risks to both sides of its dual mandate and judges that downside risks to employment have risen.” Along with the rate decision, officials in their closely watched “dot plot” of individual expectations pointed to two more cuts before the end of the year. The grid, however,

showed a wide level of disparity, with one dot, possibly Miran's, pointing to a total of 1.25 percentage points in additional reductions this year.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell highlighted growing signs of weakness in the U.S. labor market as a primary reason for the latest rate cut. Recent data showed job creation falling below the level needed to keep unemployment steady, with the unemployment rate edging up to 4.3%, the highest in nearly four years. Policymakers noted that downside risks to employment have increased, prompting a shift in the Fed's focus from inflation to supporting jobs.



NAM Q3 Outlook Survey: Manufacturers' Confidence Climbs After Tax Bill, but Headwinds Remain

On the heels of the landmark tax bill's passage, manufacturers' optimism has jumped—even as challenges persist across the sector. The National Association of Manufacturers' Q3 2025 Manufacturers' Outlook Survey found a 10-percentage-point increase in confidence, with 65.0% of respondents reporting a positive outlook for their companies, up from 55.4% in Q2. Yet, consistent with last quarter, respondents pointed to the same top business concerns, each edging higher than in Q2:

- Trade uncertainty: 78.2% (up from 77.0%)
- Rising raw material costs: 68.1% (up from 66.1%)
- Increasing health care costs: 65.1% (up from 60.0%)

"These results confirm what we've seen in the economic data—that the sector is still enormously challenged as manufacturing output took four months to recover from this spring's dip, and optimism still falls below the survey's historical average of 74%," said NAM President and CEO Jay Timmons. "The third quarter optimism level aligns with August's production data released by the Federal Reserve, which showed that manufacturing output was 100.3% of its 2017 average, barely above March's level of 100.2%, taking four months to recover from April's drop," said NAM Chief Economist Victoria Bloom.

CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY AND HEALTH

EPA Proposing to Repeal Climate 'Endangerment Finding'

President Donald Trump's administration proposed revoking a scientific finding that has long been the central basis for U.S. action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change. The proposed Environmental Protection Agency rule rescinds a 2009 declaration that determined that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare. The "endangerment finding" is the legal underpinning of a host of climate regulations under the Clean Air Act for motor vehicles, power plants, and other pollution sources that are heating the planet.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin called for a rewrite of the endangerment finding in March as part of a series of environmental rollbacks announced at the same time in what Zeldin said was "the greatest day of deregulation in American history." A total of 31 key environmental rules on topics from clean air to clean water and climate change would be rolled back or repealed under Zeldin's plan. Conservatives and some congressional Republicans hailed the initial plan, calling it a way to undo economically damaging rules to regulate greenhouse gases. But environmental groups, legal experts, and Democrats said any attempt to repeal or roll back the endangerment finding would be an uphill task with slim chance of success. The finding came two years after a 2007 Supreme Court ruling holding that the EPA has authority to regulate greenhouse gases as air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

Major Companies Reframing, Not Abandoning, DEI: Report

More than half of S&P 500 companies adjusted how they communicated diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in their annual securities filings this year compared to 2024, according to a new report by The Conference Board. Among S&P 500 companies, the use of the acronym "DEI" dropped by 68% compared to 2024, according to the report. Twenty-one percent of companies reduced or removed DEI-related metrics and targets.

While firms scaled back DEI language and commitments, 79% percent of S&P 500 firms disclosed board committee oversight of DEI, up from 72%, according to the report. For Russell 3000 companies, this figure jumped from 48.4% to 86.8%. Rather than simply abandoning DEI, this suggests that companies are being more cautious about external messaging while integrating DEI into governance to make it more legally defensible, according to the report.

Manufacturers Drive Trump's Regulatory Agenda

In the eight months since President Trump took office, the NAM has worked closely with the administration on modernized regulations to address the regulatory burden that manufacturers are facing. With the industry shouldering \$350 billion every year in regulatory costs, the NAM has called for dozens of regulatory reforms to support the industry's growth.

The administration has responded to the NAM's advocacy, delivering manufacturing wins in the form of lifting the liquefied

natural gas export ban, rescinding Securities and Exchange Commission guidance that had empowered activist investors, reconsidering the previous administration's unworkable PM2.5 standard and more. Now, the administration has released its Spring 2025 Unified Regulatory Agenda—which closely aligns with the NAM's regulatory agenda and includes even more opportunities for collaboration between manufacturers and the administration. In it the NAM has identified more than 120 opportunities for regulatory reform in policy areas ranging from labor to energy, to finance and much more. While the NAM has been advocating for many of these changes since the beginning, the agenda also includes new chances for meaningful reform.

Governor Hochul Directs New York Power Authority to Develop a Zero-Emission Advanced Nuclear Energy Technology Power Plant

Governor Kathy Hochul in June directed the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to develop and construct a zero-emission advanced nuclear power plant in Upstate New York to support a reliable and affordable electric grid, while providing the necessary zero-emission electricity to achieve a clean energy economy. This builds on other opportunities announced in Governor Hochul's 2025 State of the State to catalyze nuclear energy development in New York.

As a result of economic growth and fossil fuel power plant retirements, New York needs new, clean electricity resources to meet growing power demand from new industrial development, building electrification, and electric vehicles. The advanced nuclear plant will complement New York's ongoing deployment of renewable energy by adding zero-emission baseload power, providing reliable and affordable clean energy to advance the State's goal to achieve a clean energy economy. NYPA, in coordination with the Department of Public Service (DPS), will seek to develop at least one new nuclear energy facility with a combined capacity of no less than one gigawatt of electricity, either alone or in partnership with private entities, to support the state's electric grid and the people and businesses that rely on it.

LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

SUNY Reconnect Launches Offering Free Community College Degrees for High Demand Fields

SUNY Chancellor John King Jr. and other officials toured Dutchess Community College in June to promote the launch of SUNY Reconnect, an initiative offering free college to New Yorkers ages 25 to 55 pursuing degrees in high-demand fields. Dutchess Community College, along with each of the Hudson Valley Community Colleges are host sites for the new program that creates tuition free access to the college when they pursue an associate degree in one of several high-demand programs including Electrical Technology, Engineering Science, Aviation Maintenance, Computer Science, and more.

The new program "will help empower New Yorkers 25-55 to achieve their full potential, and power our state economy to a variety of high-demand, well-paying career fields," said King. The

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The return of manufacturing to the U.S. is a welcome one with benefits that extend to retailers, consumers and distributors. Demand is on the upswing despite increasing competition and shrinking margins. Although price increases are difficult to engineer, many other enticing growth strategies are well worth exploring – from cost-cutting and workflow improvements to automation, outsourcing, acquisitions and global expansion.

The key, of course, is to seize these opportunities in ways that align with everyday operations and overall business objectives – precisely what PKF O'Connor Davies specialists help our clients achieve every day. Our expertise is recognized in:

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program has the support of County Executive Sue Serino. “At a time when so many adults are working hard to build better futures for themselves and their families, SUNY Reconnect is helping to break down barriers to opportunity, and we’re proud that Dutchess Community College is helping to lead the way.” Each of the Council of Industry’s Hudson Valley Community College partners will be participating in the program.



DOL Halts Enforcement of Biden's Contractor Rule

Field staff for the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division will not apply the agency’s 2024 independent contractor rule in their enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act, a DOL bulletin announced in August. Instead, the department directed staff to apply a 2008 fact sheet as well as a 2019 opinion letter to any matters in which no payments for back pay or civil monetary penalties have been made to either individuals or DOL.

The agency said it is still considering rescinding the Biden administration’s rule, which faces ongoing litigation. “Until further action is taken, the 2024 Rule remains in effect for purposes of private litigation and nothing in this FAB changes the rights of employees or responsibilities of employers under the FLSA,” DOL noted.

JOLTS: US Job Openings Decline in July; Hiring Lackluster

U.S. job openings fell more than expected in July and hiring was moderate, consistent with easing labor market conditions. Job openings, a measure of labor demand, dropped 176,000 to 7.181 million by the last day of July, the Labor Department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics said in its Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS report, on Wednesday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 7.378 million unfilled jobs. There is now less than one job opening per unemployed worker—the first time this



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ratio has dropped below 1.0 since 2021. Workers and employers alike remain in a freeze, evident in the hiring and layoff rates holding steady at low levels.

Overall, while there are few signs of the jobs market unraveling, the current balance remains tenuous. With hiring subdued, low layoffs remain the linchpin to keeping net employment growth in the black. Although economic policy uncertainty has retreated somewhat since the spring, we suspect that the slower pace of consumer spending and cost pressures related to tariffs will keep the pressure on businesses to look for cost savings where they can, including their workforce.

As 2026 Salary Budgets Remain Flat, Employers Are 'Rethinking' Value Propositions

With cost containment a looming influence, new research finds that when it comes to salary increase budgets for 2026, few organizations are planning any big changes. WTW's most recent Salary Budget Planning Report uncovered that the average salary increase budgets for U.S. companies are expected to remain flat next year at 3.5%, the same as the actual budgets of 2025. WTW's Rewards Data Intelligence practice conducted the survey this spring across 157 countries worldwide, with more than 29,128 responses, including nearly 1,600 from the U.S.

Despite stagnant budgets, WTW is seeing employers take meaningful action to strengthen their compensation approach. For instance, nearly half of the responding organizations that told WTW that they plan to review their compensation programs have already conducted a full compensation review or reviewed pay for specific employee groups, and many more plan to do so in the months ahead. What's changing is the way they are deploying their pay strategy, Brittany Innes, director, Rewards Data Intelligence notes. Also, Innes says, while top-line budgets are generally holding steady, the data says the real shift is happening beneath the surface, as organizations are being more deliberate about how they allocate pay, where they focus investment and what outcomes they expect to drive.

There Is Now Clearer Evidence AI Is Wrecking Young Americans' Job Prospects

Artificial intelligence is profoundly limiting some young Americans' employment prospects, new research shows. Young workers are getting hit in fields where generative-AI tools such as ChatGPT can most easily automate tasks done by humans, such as software development, according to a paper released by three Stanford University economists. They crunched anonymized data on millions of employees at tens of thousands of firms, including detailed information on workers' ages and jobs, making this one of the clearest indicators yet of AI's disruptive impact.

Using records from paycheck processor ADP, the economists were able to get a granular view of how generative AI has affected the labor market. The data includes detailed information on workers' ages and occupations, making it far more comprehensive than the survey of households the Labor Department uses for its monthly employment report. The Stanford economists first looked at areas where AI can automate many of the tasks workers perform, and therefore potentially replace them. Those include jobs such as software developers, receptionists, translators, and customer service representatives. Their finding: Overall employment in those

categories has softened since late 2022 relative to other occupations, with the weakness concentrated among younger workers.

Health Insurance Prices to Rise as Much as 20% Next Year, Brokers And Experts Say

Pricey prescriptions and nagging medical costs are swamping some insurers and employers now. Patients may start paying for it next year. Health insurance will grow more expensive in many corners of the market in 2026, and coverage may shrink. That could leave patients paying more for doctor visits and dealing with prescription coverage changes. Costs have been growing in the bigger market for employer-sponsored coverage, the benefits consultant Mercer says. Employees may not feel that as much because companies generally pay most of the premium. But they may notice coverage changes. About half the large employers Mercer surveyed earlier this year said they are likely or very likely to shift more costs to their employees. That may mean higher deductibles or that people have to pay more before they reach the out-of-pocket maximum on their coverage.

For prescriptions, patients may see caps on those expensive obesity treatments or limits on who can take them. Some plans also may start using separate deductibles for their pharmaceutical and medical benefits or having patients pay more for their prescriptions, Daboul said. Coverage changes could vary around the country, noted Emily Bremer, president of a St. Louis-based independent insurance agency, The Bremer Group. Employers aren't eager to cut benefits, she said, so people may not see dramatic prescription coverage changes next year. But that may not last. "If something doesn't give with pharmacy costs, it's going to be coming sooner than we'd like to think," Bremer said.

Ulster BOCES Launches Career Academies at iPark 87

Ulster BOCES has opened a brand new, state-of-the-art school for Career and Technical Education in Kingston. The CAREER ACADEMIES at iPark 87 offers dozens of high-tech training programs that lead to in-demand jobs. Graduates leave the half-day programs ready for college and the workforce. Through a blended approach of classroom instruction, hands-on learning, and work site assignments, students build specific skills related to a career area. Our experienced instructors bring extensive job service



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Ulster BOCES collaborates with local business and industry – Including the Council of Industry and many of our members -

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COUNCIL NEWS

Council of Industry Board Names Johnnieanne Hansen CEO Harold King to Remain as President

The Council of Industry Board of Directors was pleased to announce the appointment of Johnnieanne Hansen as Chief Executive Officer, effective July 1st. This decision reflects the Board's strong confidence in her leadership and marks an important milestone in the continued growth and evolution of the association. Ms. Hansen has been an integral part of the Council since 2017, implementing, expanding, and leading many of the organization's programs and initiatives, and playing a key role in building meaningful connections with manufacturers and the broader community. Her deep understanding of the Council's mission and unwavering commitment to the manufacturing sector have



positioned her as a trusted and respected leader across the region.

"For over 115 years, the Council of Industry has been a trusted voice and resource for manufacturers in the Hudson Valley," said Hansen. "It is a privilege to advance the Council's mission to support manufacturing in the region through our member employers, and help grow a strong, skilled workforce by establishing and expanding programs, resources and relationships."

This transition is not a departure from what makes the Council strong, but a forward-thinking continuation and strengthening of it. Harold King will continue as President, focusing on statewide partnerships, advocacy and economic development. His extensive experience remains essential to the association and its growth.

Council's Annual Luncheon and Expo Will Be Held November 21st at The Grandview in Poughkeepsie.

The Council of Industry will host its Annual Luncheon, celebrating our 115th year of serving Hudson Valley manufacturers – on Friday, November 21st at the beautiful Grandview on the Hudson River in Poughkeepsie. The event will also feature our Member/Associate Member Expo. The Expo opens at 11:00 am and Lunch will follow at 12:15 pm.

Maribel Cruz-Brown, Vice President, Economic Development & Key Account Management at the New York Power Authority (NYPA), will be our Keynote speaker. Ms. Cruz-Brown will speak about programs that the NYPA runs to help businesses and manufacturers as well as the Authority's Mission to "Lead the transition to a carbon-free, economically vibrant New York through customer partnerships, innovative energy solutions, and the responsible supply of affordable, clean, and reliable electricity."

We will also recognize the recipients of the Certificate in Manufacturing Leadership.

The Council of Industry Partners with RIT and Dutchess Community College to Deliver Lean Manufacturing Training this Fall

The Council of Industry is working with Dutchess Community College to deliver RIT's Lean and Lean Six Sigma Training to member firms.

Lean Simulation & Overview is a full day Lean Foundational

course that provides a comprehensive introduction to Lean principles, tools, and methodologies. Designed as a starting point for those interested in Lean certification—including Yellow Belt and Green Belt—this program offers participants a hands-on learning experience to understand the impact of Lean concepts on their operations. Through a combination of instruction and simulation exercises, attendees will explore

the differences between traditional batch manufacturing and Lean manufacturing, gaining practical insights they can apply immediately.

Lean Simulation & Overview will be held October 28th at DCC in Fishkill.

Lean Six Sigma: Yellow Belt is an approach to process improvement that merges the complementary concepts and tools from both Six Sigma and Lean approaches. The resulting approach will have a greater impact than one that centers on only Six Sigma or Lean. Participants will learn a short history of each approach and how they can complement each other.

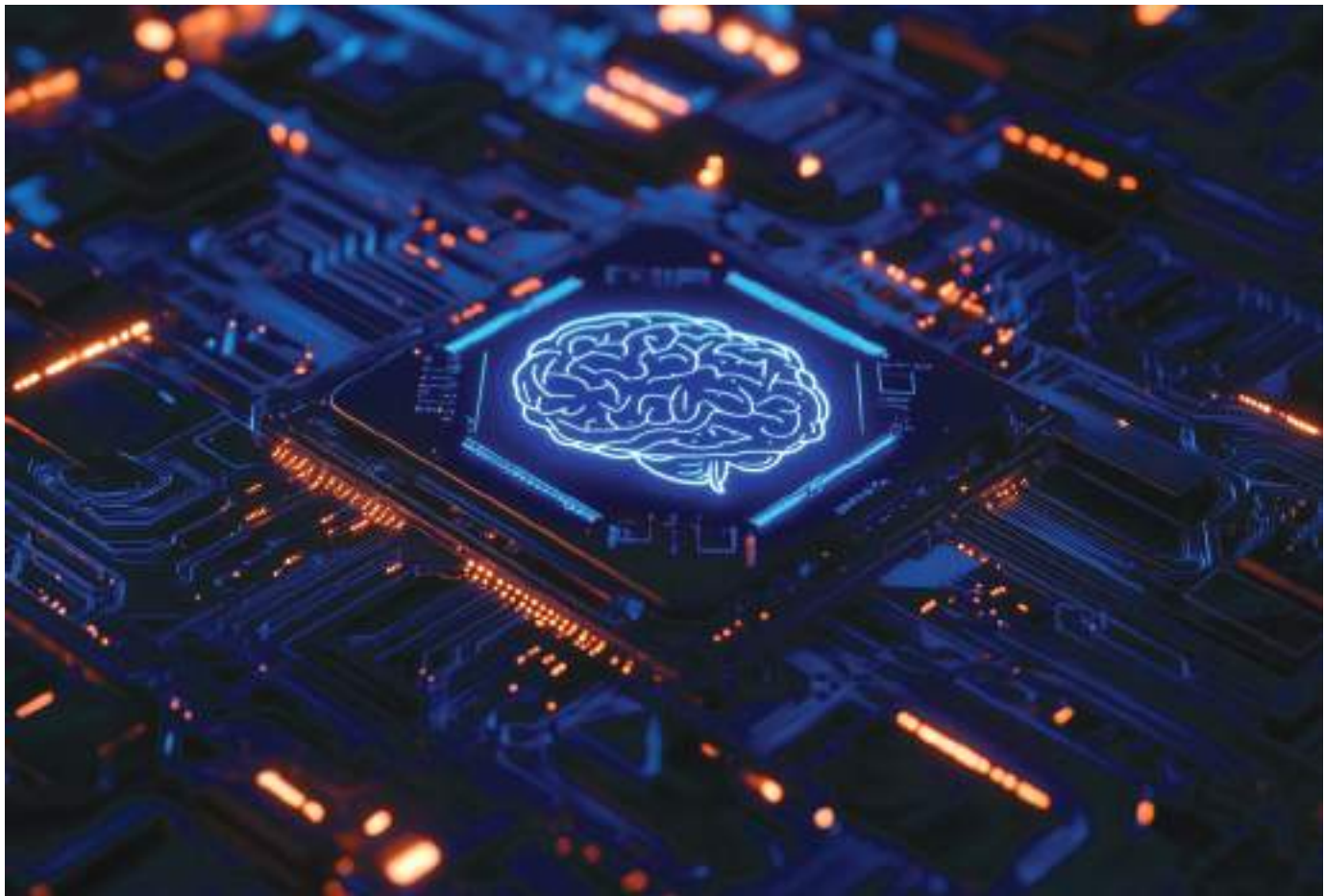
They will be introduced to the Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control improvement process and some of the tools associated with each stage.

The following topics will be focused on during the training: Resistance to Change, 5-S and Visual Controls, Team Building, Problem Solving Process, Statistical Thinking.

Yellow Belt will be held November 12, 13 & 14 at DCC Fishkill.

Upcoming training and events can be found at Members.councilofindustry.org/events.

FROM AUTOMATION TO AUTONOMY: AGENTIC AI IN MANUFACTURING



I don't know if you've heard, but there's this new technology called AI (short for Artificial Intelligence) that's been seemingly the only thing anyone in any field can talk about, whether it's the arts, business, government, you name it.

Oh, you've heard?



Artificial Intelligence has attracted such attention and inspired so many articles that the topic risks becoming spoken about only in clichés: there are the doomsayers who predict the death of human ingenuity, or worse, there are the tech cheerleaders who tend to overpromise in their quest to hype the technology (the fact that many of its biggest boosters are also the ones poised to profit the most from it is surely not a coincidence.) The subgenres of AI discourse now include everything from ground breaking work using the technology in medical diagnostics to stories of teens driven to suicide by their chatbots. You have also probably heard about media replacing human writers with AI generated articles, but I assure you this one is entirely human written (except for one quote below.)

So, let's cut through the noise a bit by focusing on one specific type of Artificial Intelligence and its potential uses in one specific industry. This article is about Agentic AI and its uses in manufacturing.

As defined by ChatGPT, Agentic AI “refers to AI systems that are not just passive responders (like answering questions or completing prompts) but instead can pursue goals, make decisions, and take actions over time.” Agentic AI is a more advanced type of AI than ChatGPT and similar chatbots, which depend on prompts; you ask it something, and it gives you an answer. Agentic AI is more sophisticated, instead of just reacting to prompts, it takes steps on its own initiative to meet a set objective, which can either be given to it or set by itself. Agentic AI is meant to be used for more complicated tasks than writing an email, generating an image, answering a search query (the things most people use ChatGPT to do). ChatGPT offered a simple way to understand it: think of it as Google Maps and Agentic AI as a self-driving car.

Agentic AI then has the potential to drastically reshape the manufacturing industry in ways ChatGPT's ability to generate text or images never could. As technology finally reaches the necessary maturity for workplace adoption, here are just a few ways the technology could be applied to your manufacturing business:

TIME SHEET TRACKING

Traditional time sheets can only record and process data, leaving it to HR to interpret the information and adjust schedules manually, but Agentic AI could automatically manage time sheets for maximum efficiency. It could proactively anticipate attendance patterns and adjust the schedule automatically to reassign workers and account for staffing needs. With enough data it could automatically align attendance with production schedules while accounting for seasonal variations or workforce trends.

PRODUCTION INSIGHTS

The typical static production report can only provide you with insights from the past, depending on the interpretations of management to apply it to future business decisions. With Agentic AI though, it would be possible to not only automate reporting but also analyze data in real time to predict inefficiencies that it could then recommend corrections for or even initiate the corrections on its own. Bottlenecks in production could be detected in real time and fixed with automatic speed or output adjustments further up the assembly line. Furthermore, Agentic AI would continuously adjust its recommendations based on its growing bank of production data to better identify evolving needs and link production with outside factors like shifting customer demand, labor availability, and supply chain readiness.

SUPPLY CHAIN CONTROL

Speaking of supply chains, possibly the single most talked about issue facing American businesses of the last few years. They have popped up in the national conversation over COVID, inflation, and tariffs, and now here they are in our AI talk. Agentic AI will not be able to make all supply chain problems go away, but they can help manage them. The current manual system of managing inventory depends on reorder points established in advance and set based on manual oversight. Agentic AI would be able to predict demand fluctuations based on data patterns and reorder automatically. Shortages and overstocking could be prevented by automatically analyzing sales and performance trends, as well

as by correlating inventory with production schedules and data on customer demand. As the AI learns as it goes what works and what doesn't, and is better able to adapt its analysis to a company's specific trends and needs, it would be able to reduce holding costs and avoid supply chain disruptions.

MATERIALS RESEARCH

In addition to managing supply chains, Agentic AI can also be used to decide what to use those supply chains to order. With its advanced processing abilities, Agentic AI can use data to come up with new concepts for goods and services that ordinary managers might miss. Agentic AI could determine which materials are feasible options to produce a product with, along with hidden costs and benefits they offer that might not be obvious up front.

SALES

Agentic AI doesn't have to just be applied to the production end, it can also be used to help sell the final product. Again, Agentic AI offers the option to replace static data, this time on sales dashboards, with more dynamic software that will analyze vast amounts of data to detect trends and predict opportunities at a speed the human mind can't match. AI could identify a declining sales trend and automatically adjust the price or develop a multi-step targeted marketing campaign to reverse the trend. It could automatically compare your prices with your competitors

and adjust accordingly. And as it learns and adapts to company's specific needs it could refine its adjustments to better tailor them to customer behavior and demand forecasts.

The possibilities Agentic AI offers are virtually limitless, with the potential to reshape any and every corner of the industry. If deployed properly, with the right data, it could transform manufacturing into something nimbler, more readily adaptable to changing market conditions and requiring a lighter workforce to operate. Still, the technology will not arrive overnight, and as with other AI systems, its early versions will be almost certainly rough and require multiple upgrades before they start to show the potential their boosters promised. But while it won't happen tomorrow, the technology is coming, and manufacturers eager to stay competitive should start considering where it could be applied at their companies.

David King is a marketing professional and freelance writer.





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BUILDING THE FUTURE OF SMART MANUFACTURING AND ADVANCED INDUSTRY



A strategic partnership to develop a high-tech workforce, fuel innovation and strengthen the region's manufacturing sector.



Manufacturing has long been part of Westchester County's history, and today the region is home to a sizable cluster of more than 600 manufacturers. From global leaders like PepsiCo, IBM, and Regeneron to the many small and midsize firms that form the backbone of advanced production, Westchester has the depth and diversity to drive growth. These companies depend on engineers, technicians, and problem-solvers to fuel innovation across their global operations. Now, Westchester's manufacturing landscape is at the edge of a transformation, driven by advanced technologies, data-driven decision-making, and a new collaboration with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) designed to prepare the next generation of talent.

"This partnership aligns perfectly with our vision for Westchester County as a hub for innovation and advanced manufacturing," said Bridget Gibbons, Director of Economic Development. "By investing in our workforce, we are not only supporting our existing companies but also attracting the next generation of high-tech employers."

A PARTNERSHIP WITH PURPOSE

Employers across Westchester are struggling to find enough skilled workers. This challenge comes at the very moment advanced technologies like automation, robotics, and data analytics are reshaping production. Without intentional investment in talent, the region risks losing ground to competitors.

Some of America's most successful innovation hubs – San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, Atlanta, all share a common success factor: sustained investment in talent. Westchester is following that same path through a partnership with RPI's Rensselaer at Work programs, which provide working professionals with flexible, industry-informed STEM education. The goal is to create a deeper, more specialized talent pool in areas such as smart manufacturing, biotech, advanced production, and computational sciences.

This strategic partnership was created with input from Westchester employers themselves, ensuring programs reflect both today's workforce demands and tomorrow's market opportunities. "When technical talent is readily available in Westchester, employers are more inclined to invest here," said Dr. Aric Krause, Dean of Rensselaer at Work. "Through this partnership, we're strengthening a technically trained, ready-to-lead workforce."

Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins sees the collaboration as a long-term investment in the region's competitiveness. "This partnership has expanded the lifelong learning opportunities available in Westchester where people can train for the skills they need," he said. "By aligning education with industry needs, equipping our residents with forward-looking skills, and helping employers adapt to emerging industries, we're not only supporting business growth today but building the foundation for a stronger economy and a more competitive Westchester for years to come."

KEY PROGRAMS POWERING WESTCHESTER MANUFACTURING

RPI's Rensselaer at Work offerings go beyond theory: every program uses project-based learning, so participants gain hands-on experience while addressing real-world industry challenges. Current manufacturing-relevant programs include:

- **Smart Manufacturing Acceleration Roadmap Professional Certification ProCourse:** Implementing Industry 4.0, data analytics, and process optimization in partnership with CESMII—The Smart Manufacturing Institute.
- **Lean Six Sigma Graduate Certificate:** Streamlining operations for efficiency and quality.
- **Data Fluency & Analytics:** Building data-driven decision-making capabilities throughout all RPI's Rensselaer at Work programs.
- **MBA for Professionals in STEM:** Developing leaders with both technical expertise and business strategy skills.



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Krause noted: “We’ve re-engineered every course to; match where industries are going—not just where they are today.”

RPI: A PROVEN LEADER IN INNOVATION

Founded in 1824 as the nation’s first technological research university, RPI has built a 200-year legacy of preparing leaders at the intersection of science, engineering, and business. As part of the Westchester partnership, employers gain access to workforce programs built with their direct input and tied to real company challenges, creating a one-to-one link between classroom learning and industry needs.

Through its Center for Smart Convergent Manufacturing Systems, a New York State–designated Center for Advanced Technology, RPI brings together AI, additive manufacturing, and advanced materials to create smarter, more agile production systems. For Westchester companies, this means access to cutting-edge research and innovation that can improve productivity, enable faster customization, and accelerate new product development. It is the kind of capacity most small and midsize firms could never tap on their own—now made possible through this partnership.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY ACROSS THE WORKFORCE

This strategic partnership recognizes that manufacturing growth depends on every level of the workforce, not just engineers. With 60–70% of high-tech manufacturing staff working on the production floor, RPI’s Westchester partnership is launching an

Undergraduate Degree Completion Program in Production and Operations Management in Fall 2026.

The program is for employees already working in manufacturing who want to move into supervisory and operational leadership roles without pausing their careers. For many Westchester workers, it is a direct pathway to advancement—and for employers, it offers a way to retain and cultivate a homegrown workforce.

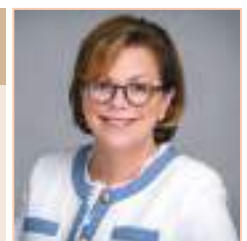
SHAPING WESTCHESTER’S FUTURE

The RPI + Westchester County partnership is more than an academic collaboration; it is a catalyst for sustainable economic growth. By integrating workforce development, applied research, and employer partnerships, this initiative ensures Westchester will have the talent and innovation pipeline needed to compete in a global manufacturing economy.

“You have to continue developing the talent you have while also bringing in new hires for smart succession planning,” said Krause. “Westchester County and RPI’s partnership’s does both.”

To learn more, visit: <https://westchestercatalyst.com/RPI>

*Bridget Gibbons, Director of
Westchester County Economic
Development.*



LEADER PROFILE

TURBOFIL PACKAGING MACHINES | WITH HV MFG STAFF

SOLVING COMPLEX PACKAGING CHALLENGES



TurboFil principles Eli Uriel and Deborah Smook.

For more than 25 years...

TurboFil Packaging Machines has earned a reputation for customization, precision, and creativity in automated liquid filling and assembly. Led by husband-and-wife team Deborah Smook and Eli Uriel, the Mount Vernon-based company engineers liquid filling, capping, and assembly equipment for pharmaceutical, cosmetic, chemical, and defense applications.

Known for solving complex packaging challenges, TurboFil specializes in filling liquids with difficult viscosities and delivers high-performance, Made-in-the-USA machines trusted by research labs, drug manufacturers, and contract packagers across the country and around the world.

Recently, HV MFG sat down with Deborah and Eli (pronounced "Ellie") to learn how they built TurboFil, the opportunities that shaped its direction, and the values that continue to drive its success today.

THE ORIGIN STORY

HV MFG: Let's start at the beginning. TurboFil launched in 1999. What did those first months look like?

Deborah: Eli was working for a packaging company that was going out of business when a client approached him directly. That gave us the confidence to start. We had a toddler, a baby on the way, and a house under construction. I was working full time in pharmaceutical consulting and helped at night after the kids were asleep. Technically Eli was the only employee at the beginning.

Eli: I always thought we could build a business if the opportunity appeared. We started in a small room inside a machine shop with a few tools and one machine. Our first project was a cosmetic powder filling system. It was humble, but it got us moving. We named the company TurboFil to signal speed and precision, two things we aim to deliver on every job. Very quickly the limitations of that shared space became clear, so we moved to our own facility.

HV MFG: That is a lot to juggle with young children at home. Before we get into the business, tell me a little about your partnership. How did the two of you meet?

Deborah: We met at folk dancing. Someone talked him into coming, and we became dance partners. At that time, I was living in Manhattan and Eli was in Queens, having recently moved from Israel. We were dance partners and friends for years before we started dating. We married in 1996, and by the time we launched the company we already had a strong foundation, both personally and professionally.

Eli: I did not dance much before, and not much after the wedding. Debbie kept dancing, and she still does today. It is something she enjoys, even if my time on the dance floor was short lived.



Two TurboFil engineers, Eli Uriel and Jairo Gomez, assembling one of the company's equipment solutions, which help its pharmaceutical customers manufacturer, contain and deliver liquid drug products.

HV Mfg: Eli, you mentioned moving here from Israel and your time in the Army. What was your background before starting TurboFil and how did you end up in New York?

Eli: I studied mechanical engineering with a background in electronics. I learned a trade in high school and always liked working with my hands. I served in the Israeli army for four years in military communications, where I gained technical skills that stayed with me. Afterward, I moved to the United States because my brother was here. Though we did not connect for several years and we still live on opposite coasts, I settled in New York and worked for packaging and machine building companies in the Bronx and in New Jersey.

HV MFG: That is fascinating. Deborah, I understand you are also an engineer. Tell us more about your background.

Deborah: I have a degree in electrical engineering from Tufts and an MBA from Wharton.

HV MFG: That is an impressive resume. What made you decide to go into engineering, and what was your experience pursuing a career in a technical field?

Deborah: I have always been good at math and science. When it came time to consider colleges, I asked my dad what I should study, and he casually said, "You should be an engineer." I asked what that meant, and he gave a brief answer. I figured I would find out along the way, and I loved it. The coursework always came easily to me, and it was a great choice. The MBA from Wharton broadened my interests and shifted my thinking about the business side of engineering.

After business school, I consulted for pharmaceutical and medical device companies. That work shaped how I think about our clients, the quality of our products, and our adherence to compliance standards. It also gave me perspective on the opportunities that existed for small companies that could deliver custom solutions. Eventually, I was able to bring all that together here.

DIVISION OF ROLES AND PARTNERSHIP

HV MFG: Deborah, you mentioned helping behind the scenes while still consulting. When did you decide to join full time, and how did the two of you divide responsibilities?

Deborah: I helped behind the scenes for a while as the team was growing. I would bring the kids to the shop, and since I was also an engineer, I would take home projects here and there to help. One day, a friend told me I had three full time jobs - my day job, the kids, and TurboFil - and that was one too many. I wasn't going to give up the kids, so we decided I would jump in full time and see how it goes. So far, it's going pretty well.



Assembly specialist, Edisaur De La Rosa Sosa works on final testing of a fully automated system for filling, assembly and inspection of single dose nasal spray devices.

Eli: Our roles haven't changed since the beginning. I handle the technical work, and Debbie handles everything else. That split has never changed, and we are still married.

STRATEGIC PIVOTS AND GROWTH

HV MFG: Once you were on your feet, what helped TurboFil stand out in the market?

Deborah: We started in cosmetics but quickly recognized larger opportunities. We build custom machinery that solves specific manufacturing problems, especially for difficult-to-fill liquids. Whether it's thick, stringy, foamy, or contains particulates, we develop automation systems that meet the exact needs of our customers. That positioned us perfectly for highly regulated markets like pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. Unlike cosmetics, these products are harder to offshore, and my background in pharma made the move feel natural.

Pharmaceutical customers have more specialized and more complicated needs. The standards are higher, and so is the value you can create if you meet them.

Eli: The pivot raised the bar for our engineering, documentation, and quality systems. We learned the market by going to shows, talking with users, and setting ambitious goals for what our machines had to do. We built a reputation for machines that meet exact needs without shortcuts.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

HV MFG: It seems like you have been able to adapt quickly. How did that agility help when the business faced bigger economic challenges?

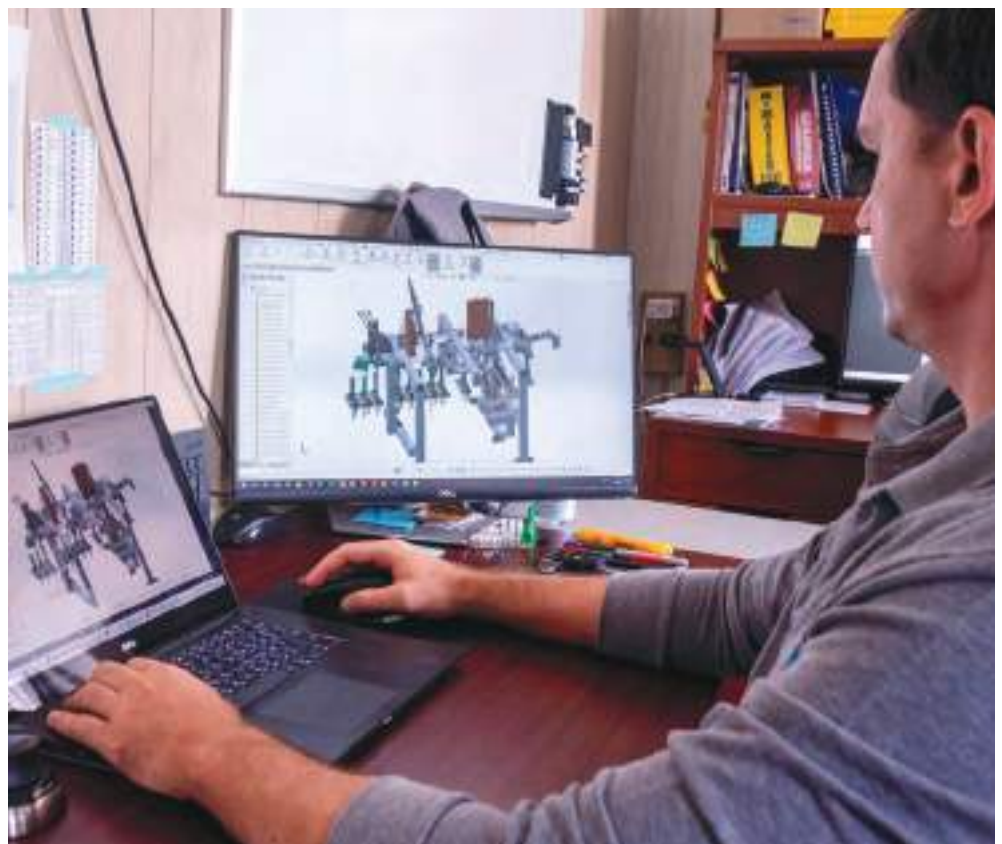
Deborah: It has not always been easy. Business was difficult during the 2008 financial crisis. Our longtime bank refused to issue a letter of credit for an international project, and it felt like no one would take our calls. We were worried but we also saw the opportunities ahead.

Right now, the tariffs are a double-edged sword. We benefit from stronger interest in buying American product, which has helped open doors, but material costs rose. Our size and our skilled workforce are how we remain agile. We pivot quickly and develop new solutions while some larger companies take longer to sort things out.

Eli: Global issues like tariffs, supply chains, and downturns always test us, but being small helps us adapt.

HV MFG: In addition to tariffs and general disruption, what challenges are most pressing?

Deborah: Workforce remains the hardest. We care deeply for our staff, and it really is like a family, complete with the family dog, Teddy. But technical talent is scarce, and we have lost good people to larger companies. In some ways it is a source of pride because we have helped launch careers, but hiring, training, and retaining



TurboFil engineer, Yurii Synkovskyi, utilizes sophisticated software to create a 3D model for a custom-built pharma production line machine.

*We named the company TurboFil to signal speed and precision,
two things we aim to deliver on every job.*

high-quality talent requires a lot of attention, time, and energy. We are always thinking ahead, working to build partnerships with the county and within the community, and consistently reevaluating what we can do to evolve as the workforce changes.

INNOVATION AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

HV MFG: Talk a little about technology and how the products and industry demands have changed over the years.

Deborah: We are not bound by our last machine or industry. As the market evolves, so do we. A few years ago, we leaned into unit dose nasal products and developed a fully automated system that fills and stoppers the vials and assembles the actuator system. It requires exacting inspections to ensure that every device delivers the expected dose. This represents one of the fastest-growing delivery methods and is becoming increasingly important in areas like respiratory care, mental health, and even vaccines, in addition to drug overdose reversal.

Eli: And now we are a leading manufacturer in that space. It is one of the technologies we are most proud of.

HV MFG: What is ahead for TurboFil as you continue to grow?

Deborah: One exciting development is our partnership with Ravona, a global leader in containment and aseptic barrier systems. Through this partnership, we offer both standalone containment solutions and fully integrated systems. Customers can now purchase isolators and glove integrity testers directly through TurboFil or customize packages that combine these technologies with our aseptic filling and assembly machines. It is a natural extension of our goal to deliver end-to-end customization.

Eli: It is powerful for our customers too because regulatory compliance is built-in and lead times are shorter. The machines and isolation components work together from the start, which helps streamline installation and validation.

Deborah: We are seeing the efficiencies of these machines around the world, and we're excited to exhibit together at INTERPHEX 2026, the leading global pharmaceutical and biotechnology event, so more people can see how full-system aseptic solutions work in practice.



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TurboFil principles Eli Uriel (seated, left) and Deborah Smook (seated, right) meet with team members at the company's Mount Vernon headquarters, accompanied by the official TurboFil Team Mascot, Teddy.

CULTURE

HV MFG: Let's shift gears a little. Talk a little about the culture here at TurboFil and how would you describe your approach to leadership?

Deborah: I am a big-picture thinker and very experimental. If we want to try a tool or a new approach, we try it. I would like to think that is my approach to the team as well. When we hire, we look for curiosity and for employees who are excited about solving new, complex problems. We are a small company and work closely with each other every day. It is important to be there for our team and create an environment where we like to come to work. Hiring the right people creates momentum.

Eli: I am more hands-on, Debbie oversees all aspects of the business, and I like mentoring engineers and working together on projects that expand our limits. When an engineer has full

machine responsibility, it gives them a broader view and direct customer contact. We value our family-style culture. Deborah bakes birthday cakes, one of our guys cooks breakfast on Fridays and we celebrate outside of the shop. It's a supportive environment encouraging each of us to excel and that leadership shows in our final product.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

HV MFG: You've shared quite a journey, from a borrowed shop space to high-level pharmaceutical partnerships. Looking back, what stands out most?

Deborah: Building a business while building a family wasn't the plan, but I wouldn't trade it. We are proud of what we have built and the team we have assembled. We deliver innovation at a world-class level, and it still feels like home.

HV MFG: Thank you both for sharing your story.

When we hire, we look for curiosity and for employees who are excited about solving new, complex problems. We are a small company and work closely with each other every day. It is important to be there for our team and create an environment where we like to come to work.

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WHAT ARE YOU READING?

HV Mfg asked the manufacturing community to recommend a book, article, or podcast that impacted them personally or professionally.



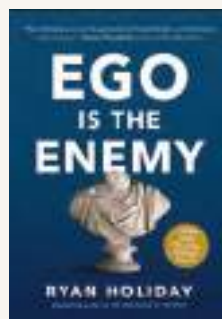
Oliver Stauffer, CEO, PTI

The Title: *Ego is the Enemy*

The Author: Ryan Holiday

A Brief Summary: The book argues that our unhealthy belief in our own importance is often the greatest obstacle to success. Drawing on many stoic philosophers in his

writing, Holiday delivers a message that creates leadership and growth through valuable introspection. In a world where leadership is more based on humility and how we show up for others, Holiday shows how ego manifests and how we can best manage it to be better leaders. He emphasizes humility, discipline, and purpose as antidotes to ego, highlighting how restraint, learning from others, and focusing on the work itself lead to long-term achievement and fulfillment.



In What Ways Did You Find It Valuable or Impactful:

We are all challenged with different emotions and attitudes as we navigate our way to success. Taking a deep hard look at how we engage, how we pursue goals, and how that shows up for others is extremely impactful. As leaders, how we show up for and relate to others will dictate who we are as leaders. This book drives you to look inward and helps uncloud some of the thoughts that motivate us. It helps realign who we are to who we want to be. Ultimately, it creates a new way to relate to yourself as a purpose-driven leader. For someone in a high-stakes or high-visibility role, it's a reminder to stay grounded, prioritize the mission over recognition, and avoid being blinded by pride.



**Emma Olivet,
Workforce Development,
The Council of Industry**

The Title: *Smart Brevity*

The Author(s): Jim VandeHei,
Mike Allen, Roy Schwartz

A Brief Summary:

Smart Brevity is co-authored by three leaders who came together after

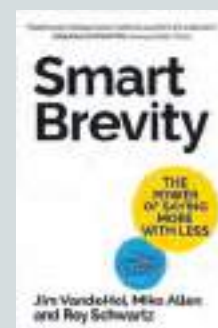
building both *Politico* and later *Axios*. Two come from the world of journalism and one from the business side. The book makes the case that the way we write and deliver information shapes how people *actually take it in* – whether in the news, at work, or in daily communication. It defines 'Smart Brevity,' explains how to use it, and the different ways it can be applied – from daily correspondence and newsletters to social media posts and meeting agendas.

In What Ways Did You Find It Valuable or Impactful:

Despite having a degree in communications, my natural tendency is to overword or repeat myself to ensure my message comes across. Reading *Smart Brevity* helped me realize that's where we often lose people. We are all inundated with messages, from overloaded inboxes to real-time news notifications, and it's easy for important points to get lost in the noise. The book reframes it with a simple question: "*What really matters here? What do I want people to actually remember?*"

On average, we only retain about 10% of what we hear. And, the volume of information we're asked to process is growing quickly: in 2005, the average worker received about 50 emails a day; by 2019, it was 126; and I can only imagine what the number looks like in 2025.

The book itself is written in the 'Smart Brevity' format. Each section shows word counts and reading times, uses plenty of bullet points, and provides clear examples and visuals. It's quick, practical, and easy to digest – proving the point by how it's written.





**Harold King, President,
The Council of Industry**

The Title: *Change of Fortune:
How One Determined Immigrant
Built His American Dream*

The Author:
Vincent HoSang

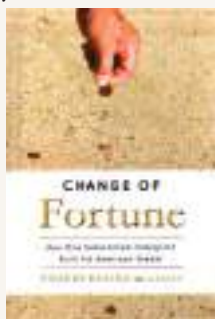
A Brief Summary: This

autobiography chronicles the life of Vincent HoSang, an immigrant from Jamaica, who, through sacrifice, dedication and hard work, built a hugely successful business in the Hudson Valley.

In What Ways Did You Find It Valuable or Impactful:

Our association has more than 100 manufacturing members, each with a unique founding story. Whether it happened a few years ago, like Cerven Solutions, or more than a century ago like EFCO Products or James L. Taylor, these stories feature individuals with vision, grit and determination and are all inspirational in their own right.

Vincent HoSang's founding of Caribbean Food Delight (see nearby Company Profile), however, stands apart. His rise from what can only be described as abject poverty to business owner and philanthropist is astounding.



The son of immigrants who had left their village in South China for a better life in Jamaica, he witnessed his parents' struggle to eke out a living in that Caribbean nation to support their large family from a grocery shop in a remote and impoverished rural area. By fifteen, he faced the death of two siblings, separation from his family, and life as a high-school dropout. At twenty-seven, he arrived in New York City determined to make his fortune, and started his new life as a minimum wage factory worker.

He scraped and saved to buy a small deli in the Bronx. Seeing the swelling population of West Indian immigrants in the area he began to sell his wife's Jamaican patties. A larger store, and a bakery, followed as did a factory in Rockland County employing more than 150 workers. A business now run by his hard working and appreciative children. (who encouraged him to write this book)

The book chronicles the sacrifices that Vincent made. It notes his failures as well as his successes. For those who doubt the American Dream, or question the positive impact immigrants can have on a community or an economy, Vincent's story will change your mind.



**Jean Coney, Senior Business
Development Manager,
Langan Engineering**

The Title: *Leading for Wellness:
How to Create a Team Culture
Where Everyone Thrives*

The Author: Patricia Grabarek
and Katina Sawyer

A Brief Summary: Through a straightforward, science-based approach, *Leading for Wellness: How to Create a Team Culture Where Everyone Thrives* explains the steps to become a Generator—the type of leader who people want to work for and organizations want to hire—by leading in a way that fosters trust and positive connections with employees. This book is based on two in-depth studies conducted by the authors, where they found that the keys to employee satisfaction, wellbeing, retention, and productivity were found in the behavior of leaders and the environment those leaders cultivated. Written by experienced industrial/organizational psychologists Dr. Patricia Grabarek and Dr. Katina Sawyer, it is packed with real-life stories to add context.

In What Ways Did You Find It Valuable or Impactful:

Does a company fulfill its responsibility for workforce “wellness” with a firmwide subscription to a mindfulness app? An e-blast highlighting lesser-used health insurance perks? A meditation room down the hall? These gestures may check the “wellness” box, but are they truly what we crave for fulfillment, engagement, and growth at work?

Dr. Grabarek and Dr. Sawyer found that employees don't just want perks, they look to their **leaders** as a human barometer for how they should feel about work. They want to see positive daily interactions, healthy ways of navigating challenges, and role models who are authentic and consistent.

No small task for leaders, of course. But when it's done well, the “Generator” leader (as opposed to the “Extinguisher”) cultivates “cultural caretakers” who carry forward the positive environment set at the top.

While I certainly don't hold a “Chief” title, I realize that colleagues across my company and industry look to me as a positive, trusted ally. This book gave me new strategies, but it also reassured me that staying grounded in gratitude, listening, and openness is the right approach.





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Todd Lake,
Business Development Officer,
Tompkins Community Bank

The Title: *How to Win Friends
and Influence People*

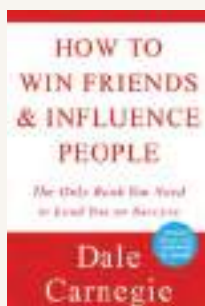
The Author:
Dale Carnegie

A Brief Summary: In 1912, Dale Carnegie started conducting business education courses in New York – one of which was a 14-week course on human relations and public speaking. The material from this course later became the foundation for *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, first published in 1936. The book covers topics such as “Fundamental Techniques in Handling People”, “Six Ways to Make People Like You” and “Twelve Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking.” Today, it is categorized as one of the first books of the self-help genre and is one of the best-selling books of all time, having sold over 30 million copies.

In What Ways Did You Find It Valuable or Impactful:

I’ve read this book quite a few times. In fact, I’ll pull it out and reread it every four or five years, and every time I do, I take away something new from it. In my most recent reread, I found myself thinking deeply about this quote: “People are not interested in you, they are interested in themselves – morning, noon and after dinner.” This may sound a little blunt on a first read, but at the heart of it, Carnegie is talking about the importance of knowing your audience and putting yourself in their shoes. We all have different backgrounds, personalities and ways of looking at things. It’s important to always think in terms of the other person – in life, but also in client-facing work. It goes hand in hand with one of my favorite principles from the section “Six Ways to Make People Like You”: develop a genuine interest in other people. Relationship building is one of the most important things we do as a community bank. It not only helps us support our individual clients, but our community as a whole.

Another fun fact about this book: Warren Buffett took Dale Carnegie’s course “How to Win Friends and Influence People” when he was 20 years old, and to this day, still has the diploma in his office. If Warren’s professional success is any testament to Carnegie’s advice, I think I’ll keep pulling this one out to reread!



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COMPANY PROFILE

CARIBBEAN FOOD DELIGHTS | BY CIARA MCENEANY

SPICE OF SUCCESS

THE HOSANG FAMILY AND CARIBBEAN FOOD DELIGHTS



ROOTED IN FAMILY LEADERSHIP

The story of Caribbean Food Delights is inseparable from the journey of cofounder, Vincent HoSang. Born in St. James, Jamaica, to Chinese immigrant parents, Vincent grew up in a large family where hard work and resilience were a way of life. He migrated to the Bronx in 1968, and a decade later, he and his wife and business partner, Jeanette, purchased a struggling fried chicken restaurant, and transformed it into a vibrant West Indian bakery and restaurant – Kingsbridge Delights.

This small business introduced authentic Caribbean cuisine and baked goods to New York’s Caribbean community, laying the ground work for the foundation of Royal Caribbean Bakery. This solid foundation would eventually expand into Caribbean Food Delights, which today stands as the largest manufacturer of Jamaican-style patties.



Camilus, a diligent production employee monitors the dough for quality and consistency. Caribbean Food Delights has been Safe Quality Food (SQF) certified for 15 consecutive years, holding the highest level of certification available.

Today, the company's legacy remains deeply rooted in family leadership. Vincent HoSang continues as chairman, while his daughters Sabrina HoSang Jordan and Simone HoSang serve as CEO and COO, respectively. Their brother, Damian, leads Royal Caribbean Bakery as CEO. Each sibling brings unique strengths that, together, keep the company moving forward. Simone's background in research and development fuels innovation in food science and product development. Meanwhile, Damian manages both the bakery and franchise, JerkQ'zine Caribbean Grille, while also overseeing technical operations to ensure efficiency and reliability.

As CEO, Sabrina charts the company's strategic direction, emphasizing both growth and expansion while strengthening partnerships and serving as the face of the business within the community. She notes that her leadership encompasses everything from marketing and public relations to partnership-building and team guidance - highlighting her business acumen and ability to guide growth while keeping the company connected to its roots.

QUALITY ISN'T OPTIONAL

Quality has been a defining standard at Caribbean Food Delights since Vincent and Jeanette HoSang first began selling patties in the Bronx. Today, that standard is safeguarded not only by tradition but also by rigorous compliance and oversight. Caribbean Food Delights' Jamaican-style frozen patties are produced at its 103,000-square-foot facility in Tappan, New

York, while Royal Caribbean Bakery operates separately in Mount Vernon. The intentional division reflects both scale and compliance: the USDA mainly oversees meat, poultry, and egg products, while the FDA regulates most food products that do not fall under the USDA's jurisdiction including processed foods, dairy, eggs, and seafood. By housing them in different facilities with dedicated staff, the company ensures that one side of the business never jeopardizes the other, this structure also allows each to specialize and excel.

This level of strategic foresight and commitment sets a standard of discipline that carries through every ingredient and process. Caribbean Food Delights has been Safe Quality Food (SQF) certified for 15 consecutive years, holding the highest level of certification available. "SQF is not required and it's costly," Sabrina HoSang Jordan explained, "but it's something we go through to show our customers that we go above and beyond with food safety and quality." Audits are rigorous, unannounced, and continuous, and the process requires preparation year-round, not the night before. It is no wonder that visitors often remark on the exceptional cleanliness of their facility.

Every product begins with carefully sourced ingredients and a commitment to authenticity. The beef, imported from Australia, comes from grass-fed, hormone-free, and steroid-free cattle - a higher-quality choice that sets Caribbean Food Delights apart from many competitors. To achieve the perfect spice, the company relies on Scotch bonnet peppers grown in Florida by a Jamaican

farmer. When they briefly tried substituting habaneros, loyal customers immediately noticed the difference. As Sabrina explains, “We wanted the taste that you get in Jamaica and bring it here to the U.S., and we’ve learned what not to sacrifice.”

Inside the plant, precision ensures that authenticity is matched by consistency. Beef is seasoned and simmered in kettles with the family’s secret recipe before being wrapped in dough through a highly automated process that is as impressive in scale as it is in accuracy. Depending on the product line, patties may be sold baked or unbaked to suit customer preferences. “When we say the product is unbaked, we are referring to the dough – not the filling, which is thoroughly cooked,” explained Sabrina HoSang Jordan. “A lot of people like it that way because baking it at home makes it come out fresh, and it’s a very different experience than pre-baked products.”

After filling, patties move through nitrogen flash-freezing, a technology that freezes them in seconds rather than minutes or hours. This prevents ice crystals and preserves the original texture, taste, and nutritional content. From there, the patties are packaged and stored in a freezer large enough to hold 30 trailer loads of products, ready to ship while still at their peak freshness.

This careful balance of selectively sourced ingredients, hands-on oversight, and scalable automation allows Caribbean Food Delights to produce more than 20 varieties while maintaining the scratch-made standards customers expect. “No matter where you buy it, whether it’s a spicy beef patty at Costco, a vegetable patty at ShopRite, a chicken patty at your local West Indian bakery or online for cocktail-sized patties for your next party, you’re going to experience the same authentic taste and quality ingredients,” said Sabrina HoSang Jordan.

In addition to its renowned patties, the company offers a diverse selection of seasonings and sauces in smaller batches, while Royal Caribbean Bakery produces an array of baked goods. Together, these offerings solidify the company’s reputation as a true provider of authentic Caribbean flavors.

INNOVATION TAKES PERSISTENCE

From its earliest days, Caribbean Food Delights has embraced innovation as the key to growth. While the spicy beef patty remains its signature product, the company has continuously expanded its offerings to reflect evolving tastes and markets. Today, patties come in a wide range of flavors and sizes - from curry chicken to vegetarian, plantain, or even jackfruit, showing both versatility and a willingness to take risks in product development.

Caribbean Food Delights was the first company to introduce microwavable Jamaican-style patties to grocery store shelves, opening the door for other brands to follow. Innovation remains central to its growth. The family continues to explore new directions—from potentially reviving the successful Sabrina’s Delights puff pastry line, to experimenting with fusion cuisine inspired by the HoSang family’s Chinese-Jamaican heritage, to researching lower-sugar bakery items that could meet growing demand for healthier options. There’s a lot of talk about fusion cuisine, and with both of my parents being Chinese and Jamaican, it feels natural to bring those flavors together,’ said Sabrina HoSang Jordan. ‘At the same time, customers are asking for healthier choices, so there’s a lot of room to keep innovating.’

Equally important are the decisions made behind the scenes. The company has invested heavily in automation, adding precision



Caribbean Food Delights COO Simone HoSang (left) and her sister CEO Sabrina HoSang Jordan (right) look on as patties move along the production line.



Patties entering the spiral cooler after exiting the oven, move along conveyors on their way to the freezer before being packaged. The company produces both fully cooked (reheatable) and ready-to-bake Jamaican patties, ensuring convenience without compromising authenticity of flavor.

machinery that can portion, wrap, and bake patties at scale, along with nitrogen flash-freezing systems that lock in freshness at its peak. These advances boost efficiency while preserving the scratch-made quality that defines every product.

Becoming a household name requires both innovation and persistence. Scaling from a single fried chicken restaurant in the Bronx to supplying national retailers has demanded that the HoSang family meet every challenge head-on. Breaking into new markets comes with steep requirements. As Sabrina HoSang Jordan explained, stores expect products to sell at volume,

each with their own required minimum amounts, and delivered with exacting reliability. “If you do not sell more than the minimum amount or if you keep missing the required delivery dates, you risk being kicked out,” she noted.

Our creativity must extend beyond the production line, “making great food and getting it on shelves isn’t enough,” said Sabrina HoSang Jordan. Caribbean Food Delights brings its brand to life through experiences that resonate with customers. From in-store sampling at Costco and BJ’s to television and radio campaigns, and from community celebrations like bun-and-cheese eating contests to the playful Mr. and Mrs. Patty mascots created by Vincent and Sabrina, the company has found memorable ways to stay connected. “We want people to smile when they see our products, to feel the joy and authenticity that is at the heart of our brand,” she added.

THE TRUE TEST: STAYING ON THE SHELF

Even with decades of growth and a strong reputation, Caribbean Food Delights is not immune to the pressures of today’s economy. Rising costs show up at every level of the business. Inflation and tariffs have driven up the price of beef and other essential ingredients, placing a heavy strain on sourcing since much of the company’s meat is imported. In an effort to manage expenses, the team sources local beef, when possible, yet demand has pushed prices higher across the board. Energy costs, already a major factor in running large freezers and production equipment, have continued to climb. On top of that, higher interest rates make it more expensive to finance new machinery or expand operations. Each of these factors chips away at margins in an industry where volume is critical.

“We don’t want to have an inferior product or add any fillers because what we pride ourselves on is quality,” said Sabrina HoSang Jordan. “But we also recognize that our product is not a luxury item, affordability matters, and we have to sell a lot of patties to make money, and even then, the margins can be small. That is a problem we’re facing now, and we hope that changes soon, but it seems like it’s even more challenging than ever.”

On top of today’s economic pressures, competition adds another layer. Caribbean Food Delights may have been the first to introduce microwavable Jamaican-style patties to grocery store shelves yet now rivals vie for the same customers. Shelf space itself is a constant battle. As Sabrina HoSang Jordan explained, “Introducing a new product is never easy, and when you do, it has to be a strong seller. Getting on the shelf is one thing, staying there is the true test.”



Patties are packaged and stored in a freezer large enough to hold 30 trailer loads of products, ready to ship while still at their peak freshness.

Despite these pressures, Caribbean Food Delights continues to adapt and persist, carrying forward the grit and determination that have defined the HoSang family's story from the very beginning.

OUR SUCCESS STARTS WITH PEOPLE

Caribbean Food Delights' success started and continues to focus on people. From the very beginning, when Vincent and Jeanette HoSang brought authentic Caribbean flavors to the community in the Bronx, the business was built on serving people. Today, that commitment continues, to the customers who look for familiar flavors in every



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The HoSang family belief is that business success and community well-being must grow together to ensure the next generation inherits not just a thriving company, but a stronger community.



Packer, Vilma putting the 2-pack Beef Mild patties in a box to be shipped to Walmart.

patty, and to the employees whose skills and dedication keep the company thriving.

When you walk through the company's Tappan facility this is clear. From machine operators and maintenance technicians to food technologists, sales, marketing, and human resources, the business relies on a wide range of skills, often carried out by employees who have been with the company for 10, 20, even 40 years. That longevity reflects a workplace culture where people feel valued and connected. As Sabrina HoSang Jordan explained, "We have employees who have been here long enough, we've seen their families grow up, and now some of their children work here. That kind of loyalty only happens when people feel like they are part of a family."

They are also our best product testers, offering candid feedback when new items make their way into the break room. "When we put something new out for employees to try, we know right away whether it's going to sell," said CEO Sabrina HoSang Jordan. "Our team is on the front line, and they give us honest feedback that makes the product stronger before it ever reaches the shelf."

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CEO Sabrina HoSang Jordan standing in the freezer that holds 30 trailer loads of product. Temperature is kept at minus 10 degrees.

But, like many manufacturers across the Hudson Valley and beyond, Caribbean Food Delights also faces the ongoing challenge of finding and keeping qualified workers. Some roles, like maintenance mechanics and food technologists, require specialized technical expertise and training even after hiring, while others depend on leadership ability and institutional knowledge. At every level, the strength of the workforce remains essential to sustaining the company's growth. "I know we can do more, but right now, as everybody's facing, it is difficult to find workers," Sabrina explained. To support the engagement of the current team, the company is investing in improvements such as new office space, locker rooms and a larger cafeteria, ensuring growth happens with employees in mind, not at their expense.

Sabrina also knows that meeting future demand will take more than facilities and equipment, it requires scaling across all fronts, from supply chain resilience to workforce development. That is why she has become a passionate advocate for building partnerships in the community. Caribbean Food Delights collaborates with the Council of Industry and the Rockland

Business Association, and Sabrina is eager to expand opportunities through Rockland Works and with the new leadership at Rockland Community College.

Beyond workforce partnerships, the family's philanthropic work through the Vincent HoSang Family Foundation extends their impact even further. The foundation has funded scholarships for students in Rockland County and the Caribbean, supported hospitals with critical medical equipment, and backed local food pantries, reinforcing the HoSang family's belief that business success and community well-being must grow together to ensure the next generation inherits not just a thriving company, but a stronger community. It's a vision of growth rooted in family, flavor, and the promise of opportunity.

Ciara McEneaney is the Member Services Coordinator for the Council of Industry.



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EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE | BY COUNCIL OF INDUSTRY STAFF

COUNCIL MEMBER LEADERS DISCUSS CHALLENGES, CHANGE, AND THE PATH FORWARD



American Manufacturing has been thrust into the spotlight over the last few years. President Donald Trump campaigned on a promise to bring the industry back home and make the country globally competitive once again, staying persistent in those goals as he took office.

Hudson Valley manufacturers are now facing an economy that has changed substantially due to new policies, tariffs and not knowing what is going to come next. In an August survey - where 20 Hudson Valley manufacturers shared how recent tariffs are impacting their business - 80% responded that they were facing negative effects.

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The Council arranged a roundtable discussion among five local manufacturing leaders to share their thoughts about, and experiences with, the current climate. The facilitated discussion was held at the Mechatronics Lab at Dutchess Community College's Center for Excellence in Industry and Innovation in Fishkill, which is itself a product of the renewed interest in manufacturing.

There, some shared that they believe we are living in unprecedented times, while others are envisioning the opportunities from it.

'THERE IS A LOT PREVENTING BUSINESS-AS-USUAL'

Elna Magnetics – a custom machine shop, providing specialized ferrite cores to the electronics industry has gone through many iterations since its 1955 founding in a retired one-room schoolhouse in Woodstock.

Over the decades, the company has grown into a trusted supplier to the defense, military, and aerospace sectors, holding both ISO certification and ITAR-DDTC registration. Despite steady demand from military and aerospace customers, the Saugerties-based manufacturer faces significant uncertainty following the reciprocal tariffs imposed on Europe in April, said Jim Ferraro, vice president of Elna.

On April 2, President Trump signed the *International Emergency Economic Powers Act* – an executive order that put a 10% tariff on almost all imports, along with country-specific reciprocal tariffs, as a solution towards closing the trade gap and rebuilding U.S. manufacturing.

This action was immediately met with legal pushback, trade talks and constant changes from the administration, causing chaos for manufacturing leaders.

"We manufacture here, but I have to get the raw material from overseas," Ferraro said. "We're required to import it ourselves."

Meaning, when the prices increase for the raw material, it increases for the customer. Nearly 70% of respondents to the Council of Industry's Tariff Survey said that they had to raise prices to pass along tariff-related costs, passing along the majority, or all, of the costs to customers.

This has been the reality for Elna, as well as Kingston-based Fala Technologies and PTI Packing Technologies & Inspection, in Hawthorne, who have all seen a drop in demand for capital expenditures from their customers as a result.

Frank Falatyn, owner and president of FALA Technologies, Inc., believes that customers are now gearing up for more future unknowns by asking for cost reductions on product. Founded in 1946, FALA provides contract manufacturing and engineering services for advanced electro-mechanical products, serving industries from semiconductors and aerospace to green energy and defense.

"Our customers are really putting pressure on us, and we don't have that margin to give," Falatyn said. "That's been a downside to the tariffs, and it's been a downturn to our sales also."

In Hawthorne, Packing Technologies & Inspection (PTI) experienced a downturn almost immediately, said Oliver Stauffer,



the company's CEO. Working in the life sciences industry, things came to a halt around March and since then, there's been "a complete drop off in demand," Stauffer said.

Uncertainty around government funding in the industry along with low demand, forced the company to make some major changes to stay afloat.

"There's only so many things in this world that we control, and when it comes to business-as-usual right now, we control very little," Stauffer continued. "We are fighting tooth and nail – we've had to control costs, and we cut as deep as we can without doing damage to the organization."

While these companies manufacture in the Hudson Valley, a lot of their materials come from outside of the U.S., Elna Magnetics, PTI and Mechanical Rubber all have felt the impacts of the reciprocal tariffs.

These pressures have them considering, and in some cases going through with, shifting portions of their manufacturing overseas. In PTI's case, they have started assembling machines intended for European customers at their facility in Switzerland, a move designed to reduce the impact of tariffs. With so much uncertainty, they are left questioning how best to move forward in a way that will meet customer needs and safeguard their business.

"Business is certainly down" said Elna's Jim Ferraro. "It's not where we wanted it to be, nor is it where we anticipated it to be at this point when we were planning nine or ten months ago."

"There's a lot preventing business-as-usual."

'I SEE COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES'

Mechanical Rubber – a custom contractor of rubber, plastics and metals, has been focused on acquisitions and diversification for the last decade and does not see any reason to stop now.

Cedric Glasper, the company's president and CEO, has been on "go" for the past few years, he said, expanding his business across the country. The Warwick-based manufacturer now has its "eggs in different baskets," riding the waves of change, and looking for more.

"You go where the opportunity is, and I see countless opportunities" Glasper said. "You can't go by what you hear on the news, you have to go by what you experience with your customer, because your customer is the true tea leaves."



Examples of these opportunities are emerging nationally and locally. GE Appliances, recently announced a \$3 billion investment over the next five years in its U.S. operations, development, product innovation and advanced manufacturing, as well as workforce. Mechanical Rubber is a supplier to GE Appliances, which anticipates 1,000 new jobs to be created from the deal.

Diana Tomassetti, Hudson Valley Plastics' President and CEO, has seen similar signs at the regional level, from inquiries by new customers to increased interest from companies seeking manufacturing space and tooling capacity on the East Coast.

Nationally, Apple announced plans to invest \$600 billion over the next four years, hiring 20,000 workers across the country, while locally, New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced that Garonit Pharmaceutical, Inc. – a global manufacturer of antiseptic products and health care solutions – plans to erect a 200,000 square foot manufacturing facility in New Windsor, Orange County, and create 100 high-skilled jobs.

"But who is going to work? That's the bigger issue," says Frank Falatyn.

THE WORKFORCE CHALLENGE ISN'T GOING AWAY

While efforts to build Hudson Valley's manufacturing workforce – such as the Council of Industry's Manufacturing Intermediary Apprenticeship Program and SUNY Reconnect are having a positive impact, these efforts are not enough to meet what is needed, especially as more jobs are created. Community colleges are stepping up, with SUNY Reconnect identifying advanced manufacturing as a priority sector, and facilities like the Mechatronics Lab at DCC's in Fishkill developed in partnership with employers to meet regional demand. "The community colleges are playing ball with us like they never had before,"

Falatyn said. "they are really stepping up."

Even with this progress, the concerns go deeper. "Even before the latest trade disruptions and reshoring efforts, we were already worried about the skills gap, looming retirements, and the transfer of knowledge to the next generation," said Elna's Jim Ferraro, who also serves as Chair of the Ulster County Workforce Investment Board.

According to the 2025 USA Reshoring Survey, done by the Reshoring Initiative and Regions Recruiting, original equipment manufacturers said that having a skilled workforce is more important than any other policy and that reindustrialization is "impossible" without a national workforce commitment. Nearly one-quarter of the U.S. manufacturing workforce is age 55 or older, underscoring the urgency of attracting new workers from all demographics and backgrounds into the field.

One solution is legal immigration, which PTI's Oliver Stauffer, also a member of the Advanced Manufacturers Task Force in Westchester, has already been doing for some time. Being a first generation American himself, Stauffer is open to having a heavy international workforce, recognizing the skills and impact these employees bring. "My workforce is quite international. We have a lot of people on H-1B visas, engineers, and high-skilled controls and mechanical talent," he explained. That commitment to cultivating talent and innovation has made PTI a recognized employer in the region, earning a 2023 Best Place to Work award.

"We have five employees that we're currently sponsoring," Stauffer added. "We are international, and legal immigration is such an important aspect of the conversation. My father came to this country and started a business in 1984 – we just celebrated 40 years."

Legal immigration has been on the Trump administration's mind, but not in terms of workforce. The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs approved a proposal in August that experts believe will change the current random lottery with a system that favors those with higher wages, according to Seyfarth's Immigration Group.

Frank Falatyn also thinks that legal immigration must be the way to supplement the manufacturing workforce moving forward. But he stressed that system changes are necessary, as the current system does not align with current workforce needs. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, in June there were more than 400,000 open manufacturing jobs nationwide, and projections estimate 3.8 million new positions will be created by 2033.

"Nobody is talking about legal immigration, but we're going to have to have it," Falatyn said. "We need to address the demographic challenges and engage more workers across the board, including through changes to legal immigration. Then our community college partners can work with us and train people for current and future roles. That is the solution. But I am worried we're never going to have enough people, I'll tell you the truth."

'MANUFACTURING HAS BEEN IN WAY TOUGHER TIMES'

Johnnieanne Hansen, CEO of the Council of Industry, the region's manufacturers association, noted the long history of manufacturers adapting through disruption. "Some of the Council's member companies are now led by fifth-generation owners," Hansen said. "Manufacturers have always had to adapt, but resilience in the moment doesn't feel like strength – it feels like strain. That's why sharing stories like this, and communication

with policymakers and with other manufacturers, is critical.”

FALA Technologies faced its biggest hurdle when IBM closed its Kingston campus in the 1990s, which at the time were one of its main clients, but that hard lesson eventually opened doors in the semiconductor industry. Falatyn recalled that period as a fight to keep the doors open, including drawing a circle on a map and using the Thomas Register of Manufacturers to visit every company within a 150-mile radius in search of work. “We’ve been in business for 79 years now, and we have been through three downturns where we almost lost the business,” he said. “It’s cyclical. This is tough times right now, but two years ago we were on top of the world – so, we’re trying to take advantages of opportunities and prepare for the next downturn.”

Similar stories of adaptation can be found across the region. Hudson Valley Plastics has paired optimism with realism. Since purchasing and rebranding the company in 2018, Tomassetti has reorganized leadership, invested in new equipment, and added warehouse space to prepare for future demand. She described the early years as “a great challenge” but said she is proud of turning the business around and building a stable, loyal workforce.

Looking ahead, she noted that employers across the industry are facing big decisions in a shifting landscape, whether to double down on investments and innovation, or navigate increasing private equity interest or consolidation. “We’re not struggling to keep the lights on like we were in the beginning, but there are still so many challenges,” Tomassetti said.

At Elna, it kickstarted a change that might have been needed. The company has had to adapt regularly over the last few years - everything from pivoting during COVID and managing unfilled positions, to exceptionally high demand that did not seem sustainable, and now tariffs. These last few months, Elna is thinking about the future.

“It’s provided us an opportunity to get creative and rethink our sales strategy, instead of rushing and reacting just to keep up,” said Jim Ferraro, vice president of Elna Magnetics. “We are pounding the pavement with customers and looking at different opportunities on the market. This downturn has given us an opportunity to refocus on the business.”

When asked about their current strategies, 35% of respondents to the Council’s Tariff Survey said that they are making temporary adjustments, with 25% developing their strategies. But as some adapt or expand, others still struggle to stay afloat.

PTI’s Oliver Stauffer has been in a “dog fight” to keep his company competitive amongst the global players. While he continues to battle through disruption, he believes that damage has already been done.

“I think that these last three to four months has done permanent damage to the life sciences industry domestically, and debilitated some small businesses,” Stauffer said. “It feels like we are no longer in a global environment of business, but rather one in which the borders are going up and the lines are being drawn.”

Resilience, however, is built into PTI’s story. Stauffer’s Swiss immigrant father founded the company in 1984 and grew it from a small operation into a trusted innovator serving the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors. “That’s the American story,” Stauffer reflected. “My father answered an ad in a

newspaper and came here with very little, then built this company from the ground up.” Now in its second generation of leadership, PTI will rely on its proven strengths – patented technologies, a highly skilled and innovative workforce, and a global perspective –



to adapt and compete through the uncertainty.

Still, the manufacturing leaders are hopeful that the sector will regain its footing and evolve despite the daily uncertainty. Manufacturers in the Hudson Valley have been adapting for more than a century, and in recent decades have weathered disruptions from the early 2000s economic crisis to the global pandemic, making change become the norm.

And when manufacturing can make it through these tough times, it will once again be America’s Backbone, said Mechanical Rubber’s Glasper. He emphasized that survival also means recognizing and seizing opportunities.

“One thing that manufacturers know is evolution,” Glasper said. *“FALA has evolved; Mechanical Rubber has evolved. That’s what we do. We evolve, We survive.”*



A SEAT AT THE TABLE: Small Business and the Future of Defense Manufacturing



The Evolving Defense Landscape

The United States defense sector is accelerating, being driven by an urgent need to modernize and secure its supply chain.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the Navy is planning to produce one Columbia-class and two Virginia-class submarines annually. The proposed FY'25 defense budget included a 13.4% increase over the previous year.

Each of these programs depends on thousands of components, subassemblies, and specialty material that are far beyond the capacity of the major primes.

Federal law mandates that a minimum of 23% of all contracting dollars go to small businesses, representing more than \$100 billion annually. These Small Business Set-Asides create a protected channel for smaller firms to compete, and win, in the defense industrial base.

Demand is moving downstream, and small to mid-size manufacturers are squarely in scope. That said, access isn't automatic – it requires initiative and preparation.

ADMIN WORK: AN ECOSYSTEM OF CODES & ONLINE PORTALS

The System for Award Management, SAM.gov, is the central entry point for federal contracting. Any company looking to work with the Department of Defense will need to register early to access detailed opportunity information.

Navigating federal procurement platforms often involves jumping between multiple interconnected systems. A search on SAM.gov may quickly redirect to additional portals for documentation, proposal requirements, or final submission.

Several other platforms are also essential for manufacturers serious about defense work.

Familiarity with SAM.gov, CAGE Code Registrations, Procurement Integrated Enterprise Environment, DIBBS, Navy's Seaport – NxG, Army's Jagger, and Primes Registration, among others, can streamline access and improve positioning.

When you register with SAM.gov, you will be assigned a (CAGE) code by the DLA, a 5-digit identifier assigned to businesses that the government uses to track and pay suppliers. This should be done as

soon as possible as other registrations, including Primes, will ask for this number.

Procurement Integrated Enterprise Environments (PIEE) are often required for submitting proposals.

Every company has their own application process, but you must be registered with them to be considered for supplier contracts. Most will have you create a supplier account that you can continually update and add capabilities as your business grows.

Navigating these portals can be tedious, enough for a small business owner wearing too many hats already to throw in the towel on defense work all together. If you're new to defense work, understanding the maze of defense jargon and acronyms alone can require a translator.

Fortunately, there are established support systems designed to help manufacturers navigate this environment.

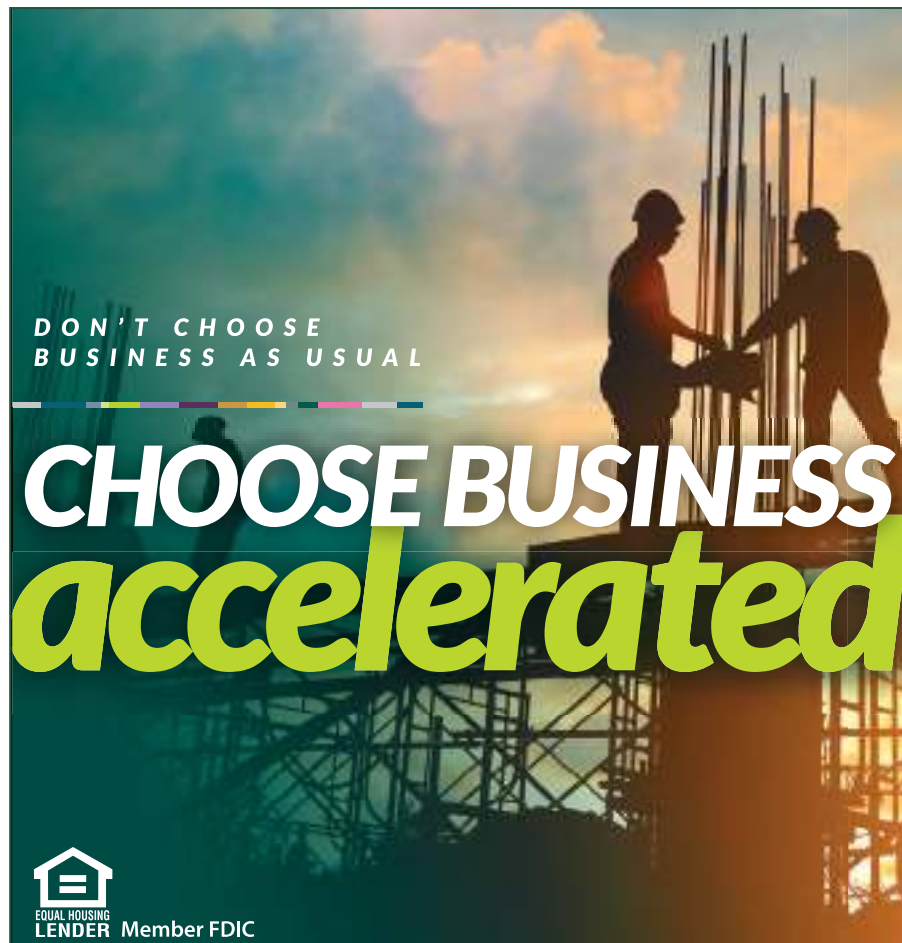
ASK FOR HELP!

You will save yourself countless hours of frustration online, trying to find the information you need, just by using resources available.

Apex Accelerators is federally funded and managed by the DoD Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP). They offer no-cost guidance and support services to help your business succeed in the government marketplace, with locations all over the country.

The Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEP) can assist with finding grant opportunities to cover compliance costs, assistance with assigning your business NAICS codes, which are also important codes when searching databases for opportunities relevant to your business.

MEPs also have extensive networks of support and will help you find the assistance you need.



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For small and mid-sized manufacturers, this is a rare window to step into a high-value, long-term market.



The Griffiss Institute, a non-profit located in Rome, New York, works with their neighbor, the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) to develop, enable, and elevate potential defense technologies.

Mission Ready is a one-stop program built specifically for small and mid-sized manufacturers pursuing defense work. Based in Ulster County, Mission Ready is led by a team of cybersecurity

specialists and military veterans who understand both the technical and operational requirements of entering the defense industrial base.

The program brings together administrative onboarding, Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC), and targeted bid intelligence to help manufacturers get compliant, get noticed, and win contracts.

TIERS OF THE DEFENSE SUPPLY CHAIN

Most times small and mid-sized manufacturers are not competing with major defense prime, they're supplying them. The defense industrial base is structured in tiers, and each tier depends on a network of trusted partners to deliver on cost, quality, and compliance.

Large defense contractors like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and BAE Systems are considered Tier 1. Most of these Primes have online forms to fill out your company information to be added to their pool of potential suppliers.

Tier 2 companies supply components or systems to Tier 1 contractors. Many of these companies are in a flux period of compliance, waiting for official word from their Prime that they must meet CMMC compliance to maintain their contracts. The



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mandate is coming and trickling down. Fortunately, there is still time to get ahead of it

Smaller suppliers making parts, materials, or assemblies are Tier 3. This is where a small manufacturer can thrive, pending compliance, if they are diligently searching for opportunities.

HOW TO STAND OUT

Success in the defense supply chain depends on more than price and lead time. Buyers, whether primes or government agencies, are evaluating suppliers based on compliance, credentials, and unique capabilities.

Small manufacturers that invest early in these areas significantly improve their eligibility and competitiveness.

CMMC is no longer optional. Level 1 certification will be required to bid on most defense contracts, while Level 2 will be mandatory for any contract involving Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI). These requirements are actively rolling out and will be enforced across the supply chain.

Early compliance not only reduces risk but signal's reliability to primes and government buyers alike.

Quality certifications like ISO 9001 and AS9100 aren't universally required, but they are increasingly requested by primes and government buyers. Holding these certifications signals a disciplined quality management system and can open doors to higher-value contracts.

Unique capabilities like precision machining, exotic materials, rapid prototyping, or specialized coatings are major differentiators. When properly communicated, these strengths help manufacturers avoid commodity pricing and align with niche needs across programs and platforms.

Keeping your capabilities statement up to date will help resources find you the best opportunities and assistance available.

In FY24, the federal government awarded 23.3% of its budget

to small businesses. This 80/20 rule for small business set-asides is projected to continue. There are additional ones within these set-asides for Women Owned Small Businesses (WOSBs), Veteran and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSB/SDVOSB), Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDB) and others.

If your business falls into these categories, targeting these opportunities greatly increases your chance of winning.

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

The Department of Defense has made its priorities clear: Strengthening the industrial base depends on engaging manufacturers of all sizes.

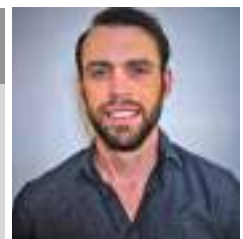
There's growing momentum to bring new suppliers into the fold. For small and mid-sized manufacturers, this is a rare window to step into a high-value, long-term market.

Those who act now by securing registrations, achieving compliance, and showcasing their capabilities will be well-positioned to build lasting relationships across the defense supply chain. Yes, the requirements are real, but so are the stable demand, multi-year contracts, and a direct role in national readiness.

With the right guidance and support, small manufacturers can move ahead confidently.

<https://missionready.io/>

Marc Hoover is the Client Success Manager, MissionReady



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: FIVE PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO MOVE FROM COMPLIANCE TO CULTURE



From power outages and cyber threats to chemical spills and extreme weather, emergency situations are no longer a matter of if but when.

Even brief downtime can lead to hundreds of thousands of dollars in scrapped products and halted production lines. According to a recent report from *Occupational Health & Safety*, 75 percent of manufacturing facilities evaluate their emergency plans only once a year. This reality highlights a critical flaw: static, under-reviewed plans often do not keep pace with evolving operations and emerging threats.

Effective emergency preparedness is about more than protecting assets. It is about safeguarding employees, sustaining operations, and meeting rising regulatory and community expectations. What once met industry standards may no longer be enough as new risks emerge, and past experiences reshape best practices.

“The definition of high preparedness is constantly changing,” said Tim Hayes, senior director of Emergency Management at Central Hudson. “What was considered best practice five years ago might not be enough today. New threats emerge, expectations shift, and your plans have to evolve with them. That is why we treat every incident, whether it is a drill or a real event, as a learning opportunity. It is also why leadership buy-in is so important. When executives are engaged and have clearly defined roles, it sets the tone for the whole organization.”

THE MINIMUM STANDARD

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Standard 1910.38 sets a baseline for preparedness. It requires employers to have an emergency action plan that includes in part:

- Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergencies.
- Procedures for emergency evacuation, including type of evacuation and exit route assignments.
- Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate.
- Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation.
- Procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue or medical duties.
- An employer must have and maintain an employee alarm system.
- Training of employees to assist in a safe and orderly evacuation of other employees.
- An employer must review the emergency action plan with each employee covered by the plan.

Standard 1910.38, however, is the minimum and the best manufacturers have shifted from compliance to true preparedness, from static plans to living systems that evolve with the risks.

Here are five practical strategies to ensure that your business is ready for whatever emergency may come its way.

1. TREAT PREPAREDNESS AS A LIVING SYSTEM

Emergency preparedness must be an active, evolving process – not a binder gathering dust.

Regardless of the size of your operation, embedding readiness into daily routines is essential to building true resilience.

At Howmet Aerospace, a global manufacturer of engineered metal products, in Kingston, new employees complete two hours of site-specific Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) training and carry emergency procedure cards alongside their ID badges.

We believe in combining institutional knowledge with modern tools to keep our workplace safe,” said Komal Kumar, Environment, Health, Safety, & Security Manager at Howmet Aerospace in Kingston. “You can’t rely on muscle memory alone. Systems change, people change, and new threats emerge. Our goal



is to build a culture where safety is part of every conversation, not just something we rehearse during drills. That means integrating preparedness into onboarding, reinforcing it through training, and encouraging people to think critically in the moment.

Sun Chemical’s Peekskill facility, which produces high-performance pigments for cosmetics, coatings, and industrial applications, incorporates emergency preparedness into every level of operation. The company’s plans are reviewed annually using digital systems with built-in reminders, and safety is treated as a shared responsibility rather than a compliance checkbox. These practices do not require a large safety team or complex tools. Clear procedures, regular training, and consistent reviews go a long way toward building resilience.

“We don’t just talk about safety during emergencies, we make it part of the rhythm of our work,” said Gary Hutchison, Site Director at Sun Chemical. “If people are comfortable speaking up and sharing what they see, then they’re better prepared when things go wrong.”

2. ASSIGN ROLES AND PRACTICE THE PLAN

Emergency plans must be realistic, actionable, and site-specific. Attempting to plan for every possible scenario can create confusion and reduce the likelihood of a successful response. “Less is more,” recommends Sun Chemicals’ Gary Hutchison. Focusing on the most likely threats and building team confidence through repeated practice is far more effective than exhaustive but unused planning.

Central Hudson, which serves more than 400,000 electric and gas customers in the Hudson Valley, demonstrates how role clarity transforms response. Every employee, including executives, has an assigned storm role. From field response to supply delivery, staff keep packed go-bags and are ready to deploy on short notice. These clearly defined responsibilities ensure smooth mobilization when emergencies strike. “We train year-round and update our protocols regularly because we cannot afford to have uncertainty during a crisis,” said Tim Hayes, Senior Director of Emergency Management at Central Hudson. “Everyone knows where they need to be, what their role is, and how to communicate if something changes.”

This approach can be adapted easily in manufacturing environments. Start by appointing a cross-functional emergency

team with representation from key departments. Identify essential staff, assign roles that align with their day to day responsibilities, and provide regular, scenario based training. Sun Chemical reinforces preparedness with monthly safety meetings, quarterly town halls, and an annual Safety Month. The Emergency Response Team receives 40-hour refreshers, while all staff maintain CPR and first aid certifications. “Emergency readiness is not something we check off a list,” said Gary Hutchison. “We revisit the fundamentals often, so everyone feels confident in their ability to act, whether it is a routine drill or the real thing.

Ask yourself: Does your company have an emergency response team? Have you identified the essential staff, equipment, and procedures needed to keep your operations running during a crisis?

3. BUILD IN COMMUNICATION REDUNDANCY

Communication systems must be fast, clear, and fail-safe when an emergency strikes.

Howmet Aerospace uses a multilayered communication strategy that includes intercom systems, text alerts, and radios, ensuring that no matter where someone is in the facility, they can receive critical information.

“We don’t rely on a single method to get the message out,” said Komal Kumar. “Redundancy is built into our systems so that if one channel fails, another is ready. That consistency builds trust across the workforce.”

Even simpler tools, such as printed emergency cards or physical contact trees, can strengthen a communication plan. The key is having backup methods and rehearsing their use regularly.

Drills should specifically assess communications. Can you reach all employees if cell service is down? Do workers know

where to find safety signage in the dark? Can the night shift access instructions if a supervisor is unavailable? Testing redundancies under pressure reveals where improvements are needed.”

4. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Coordination with local agencies and emergency responders should begin long before an incident. Sun Chemical, for example, shares detailed chemical inventory information with the local hospital to improve coordination during emergencies. Tim Hayes of Central Hudson recommends that every manufacturer establish direct contact with their utility provider to streamline response efforts when infrastructure disruptions occur.

“Preparedness doesn’t stop at the fence line,” said Komal Kumar, Environment, Health, Safety, & Security Manager at Howmet Aerospace in Kingston. “We’ve built relationships with local responders and community partners because in a real emergency, coordination saves precious time.”

These relationships go beyond utility providers. Local fire departments, emergency management agencies, and even elected officials can play a valuable role in preparedness planning.

In addition to local resources, manufacturers can engage with state-level resources such as the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES). These agencies provide tools, tabletop exercises, and training opportunities to enhance internal plans and connect organizations to the broader emergency response system.

DHSES also offers planning checklists to help businesses assess vulnerabilities, plan for continuity of operations, and build response capacity.

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5. KEEP IT SIMPLE AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

For smaller manufacturers without large-scale infrastructure or dedicated emergency staff, emergency preparedness can feel daunting. But simple steps like keeping a running list of lessons learned after each drill or conducting a 10-minute debrief can lead to meaningful improvements over time. Updating roles and checklists based on these reviews help embed readiness into the organization's routine.

Emergency plans should focus on the most likely risk scenarios and be easy to understand under pressure but simplicity doesn't mean stagnant. After major storms or drills, Central Hudson conducts formal after-action reviews to meet New York's 72-hour reporting rule and improve response protocols. Similarly, Howmet Aerospace shares incident reports across its global network to accelerate learning and avoid repeat mistakes.

"Preparedness isn't a one-time project. It's a mindset, Kumar added, "Every incident, every drill, every conversation is a chance to get better. When people feel empowered to learn and speak up, that's when you know the culture is working.



FROM COMPLIANCE TO CULTURE

Emergency preparedness in manufacturing cannot be reduced to a checklist, or a one size fits all OSHA Standard. It requires leadership support, engaged employees, and systems that adapt to change.

While compliance is a necessary foundation, resilience comes from practice, partnerships, and learning.

The Council of Industry encourages manufacturers to treat preparedness as an ongoing priority. Through its Safety and Health Sub

Council and network of Associate Members, the Council offers a platform for sharing lessons, resources, and best practices tailored to the manufacturing environment.

When preparedness is embedded into culture, manufacturers are better positioned to protect their people, their operations, and their communities.

McKenna Hansen is a graduate of the University at Albany's Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security program and a Summer Intern with the Council of Industry.



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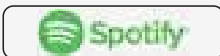


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