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A Conversation With...Michele Nash-Hoff

Author, Can American Manufacturing Be Saved: Why We Should And How We Can

Although there are plenty of warning signs that U.S. manufacturing is in a state of peril, discussion of what it all means, how it got there and what you can do about it is harder to come by. Leveraging 25 years of experience as a manufacturing sales representative, Michele Nash-Hoff has written a new book, *Can American Manufacturing Be Saved: Why We Should And How We Can* (MM Bernard Publications, 2009). The book is rich with history and detailed research, providing a comprehensive look at the contribution manufacturing makes to the U.S. economy. Nash-Hoff considers the effects of U.S. trade policies, offshoring of production, the threat to our national security in losing our manufacturing base, and what can be done to save American manufacturing by government, industry and individuals. For more information or to purchase the book, visit savingusmanufacturing.com.

What is the key argument you make in the book?

MNH: The key argument is that we must maintain a strong manufacturing industry in America if we want to maintain our national sovereignty, retain our middle class and generate enough tax revenues at the local, state and federal levels to fund our government. We can save American manufacturing, but there is a limited amount of time to do so before we lose the critical mass.

Think of manufacturing as the platform of a three-legged stool. The first leg is the manufacturers and their industry associations and what they can do to "save themselves." The second leg is people and what they can do as consumers and voters. The third leg is government at all levels and what it can do by means of tax policies, regulation, incentives and national trade policies. It will take the cooperative effort on the part of all three "legs" to save American manufacturing.

What is your biggest concern?

MNH: That we'll lose the critical mass of manufacturing and no longer be able to produce the products and systems we need to defend our country. We've already lost 63% of the U.S. textile industry since 2001, 47% of communication equipment jobs, 43% of motor vehicles and parts industry jobs. Even more harmful is that the U.S. machine tool industry is down 78% in just the one year from April 2008 to April 2009, and the U.S. printed circuit board industry has shrunk by 74% since 2000. These latter two



industries are critical to the manufacture of military and defense products and systems.

Where do you see the most hope?

MNH: I see the most hope in American ingenuity. As an example, the San Diego Inventors' Forum is packed every month with men and women who have ideas for new products, and several of them have already launched successful products and are designing their second, third or fourth new product. I see a strong desire on the part of these entrepreneurs to make their products in the U.S., and those of us on the steering committee are helping them achieve their desire.

If you could change one U.S. policy, what would it be?

MNH: I would change America's free trade policies that are really unfair trade policies, which enable foreign companies to compete unfairly against U.S. manufacturers. Japan, China and India are actually practicing predatory mercantilism and currency manipulation with the intent of destroying American industries.

What specific strategies can manufacturers employ to help save themselves?

MNH: There are numerous strategies that manufacturers can utilize to save themselves that I outline in chapter 9. The three most important are: purpose, process, and promotion. Purpose is clarity and vision about the unique competitive advantage of your company's products and services. Process is the use of the concepts and methodologies of total quality manufacturing, lean office and lean manufacturing, and Six Sigma. Promotion is use of the most cost-effective and productive marketing and sales strategies and channels to market.

What can we do as consumers?

MNH: The simple answer is "buy American" as much as possible. It's getting more and more difficult to find "Made in USA" products. In the book, I describe what individuals can do as entrepreneurs, business owners of existing companies, employees of manufacturing, consumers, and voters. I believe it will take the pressure of voters to change national trade policies.



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