

A Look at Precision Machining by PMPA President Ron Bracalente

New PMPA President Ron Bracalente looks forward to watching the precision machining industry grow stronger and relationships form among members as well as around the association.

“We’ve all gone through a difficult time with the recession, but it’s ended up strengthening our companies,” explains Mr. Bracalente, who is also president and third generation owner of Bracalente Manufacturing Group, located in Trumbauersville, Penn. “Businesses are watching their balance sheets and making sure that they’re focused on profitable endeavors and providing the best value. We’ve all gone through some tough times that have forced us to take a closer look at our companies’ financial health.”



Mr. Bracalente acknowledged the opportunities to the industry on a short-term basis of interest rates and the U.S. dollar. “Manufacturing in the U.S. is a bargain right now. Our cost structures are lower than most developed countries, and we have access to resources that can provide a sustainable marketplace,” Mr. Bracalente says. “As long as we have a healthy middle class, our economy should continue to provide opportunities to allow people to invest and grow their businesses.

“Another key element of our industry is the knowledge base we have. We’re not new to manufacturing, and we have the know-how behind us, but we are losing that knowledge,” Mr. Bracalente says, addressing the prevalent concern in the industry of losing experienced people and not being able to fill their positions. “Our talent pool is retiring and who is going to replace them? We are very concerned about the need



for a younger generation to fill the shoes of those who are retiring. We have a gap, and we expect to have one, but businesses and capabilities fade away when that knowledge gap can’t be filled through training and education.”

Since becoming the president of PMPA, Mr. Bracalente accepted an invitation to travel to a meeting of our European Syndicat group, similar to PMPA, in Switzerland and learn about precision machining in the region. “The main focus at the meeting was the watch industry; we visited several manufacturers who served that industry along with the automotive, medical and electronics industries, a couple of machine tool builders as well as a school,” Mr. Bracalente says. “I was very interested to see how it worked there and compare it with what we’re doing here in the precision machining industry.”

“Another key element of our industry is the knowledge base we have. We’re not new to manufacturing, and we have the know-how behind us, but we are losing that knowledge.”

One main challenge that Mr. Bracalente believes the industry is facing is the overall image of manufacturing. “The images of a machinist in Switzerland and a machinist in the U.S. have some fundamental differences,” Mr. Bracalente says. “In Switzerland, it’s a sought after trade, and most of the companies we visited had both older cam equipment and newer CNC equipment. Schools there publish the wage of the graduating class. In the United States, people don’t have any idea what they’d be earning if they complete a technical training program.

“The image of our industry in America needs to change away from the antiquated picture of forging iron,” Mr. Bracalente continues. “People don’t think about the orthopedic implants that companies in our industry make or the other critical parts for use in the aerospace, defense, medical, oil and gas industries.”

CONTINUES ON PAGE 18

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

The Most Important Challenge

The most important challenge we face as manufacturers is maintaining and optimizing our workforce as we all go through this tsunami of demographic change in our employee base.

We need to actively start an effective campaign to change the perception of the opportunities available in our industry. We need to start effectively reaching out in our communities to guidance counselors, parents and others to make it known that there is an attractive, no-debt career path that can create a solid future for people who can earn as they go while pursuing skill credentials, a 2-year degree, and ultimately finishing a 4-year degree.

We need to learn of the resources available to help people get the skills needed to enter our advanced manufacturing field, where currently more than 600,000 openings exist. And we need to get the fact that those resources are available in front of the people in our communities where it can make a difference.

Next month: "A Shop Owner's List to Change the Perception."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

A Look At Precision Machining

"Parents have to be accepting of their children going into the industry or attending a trade school and be willing to support them," Mr. Bracalente says. "On the other side of the fence, it has to be 'cool' for the younger generation to want to do it."

Bridging that gap and utilizing knowledge transfer is one of Bracalente's goals as president of the association. "I want to work on what I call the 'ground-game' in our own backyards to get younger, talented people into the industry by working together with member companies, approaching schools and our politicians," Mr. Bracalente says. "There are some things going on here locally with trade schools and other local initiatives that I'm anxious to share with the members."

"I'm really looking forward to getting to know as many members as I can," Mr. Bracalente says. "PMPA is the best trade association I've been involved in, and one of the benefits of being the president is getting out there to meet and learn from the membership and develop those long-term relationships."

PMPA president Ron Bracalente can be contacted at: rbrac@bracalente.com.

Why Join PMPA?



To grow and profit today, you have to work smarter. You have to relentlessly eliminate waste. PMPA is the way to expand your knowledge and increase your capabilities in order to grow your business. Through daily interaction with PMPA staff members, you have access to our expertise on important industry issues. You're also able to tap the collective knowledge of your peers; those who have "been there" and "done that."

Through the meetings, resources and online connections, reports and more, we give you the tools to grow. We look at emerging markets and let you know what's hot and what's not. PMPA programs help you understand your markets so you can make sense of the issues. And, we provide relevant information to help you make informed decisions.