

The Most Important Challenge

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I just returned from two and a half days at IMTS, the metal-working industry's biggest gathering in North America. I was impressed by a number of new technologies and significant improvements in others. I was somewhat aggravated at the claims being made for new technologies like additive manufacturing, and I was pleased to witness the optimism and positive attitude and "buzz" throughout the show. Now is a great time to be in advanced manufacturing!

Regardless of the product being sold or considered, whenever I spoke with anyone at the show, one issue was on their minds—the lack of trained people with skills to work in our advanced manufacturing shops. Machine tool builders, tool makers, software companies, providers of ancillary equipment and shops like yours—everyone was looking for skilled, talented people and identified it as the most important obstacle to their company's success.

It is skilled people that help our companies produce the high-precision, engineered components that make U.S.-manufactured goods the gold standard that has been the only bright spot in the post-recession of 2008-2009 recovery. Our industry has increased sales by double digit growth the last 2 years. But this trend cannot continue if we do not find a way to recruit and train more skilled people for our shops. The precision machining industry will not be able to grow our capabilities without adding skilled workforce. Many companies are already at their limit for what they can do without adding more talent—whether in engineering and quoting, project leadership and implementation, setup or operations. And who is making sure that our efforts for quality improvement remain a priority when we are in all-hands-on-deck mode?

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You know that you need to add skilled people, and you don't know why you can't find them. You don't know why they aren't coming to apply for the positions that you have in your shop. We will discuss that in our next article, but before we do that, we need to review some workforce facts so that after you read the next article, you will recognize that YOU need to take some steps on this workforce issue. Skilled workers for our shops are not going to just materialize anytime soon.

Fact number 1: In 2020, more than one third of your employees will be over 55. In fact, the entire baby boomer generation will be age 56 or older. (Table 2 page 47 short.productionmachining.com/ydjwhavv)

Fact number 2: In 2020, one in five employees will be over 65—20 percent. Baby boomers will be turning 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day for the next 19 years.

Fact number 3: In 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that almost one out of every ten workers will be older than age 75. Staying fit, not having sufficient savings and liking their jobs are some factors that might be keeping "well-aged" baby boomers on the job.

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Your Workforce in 2020

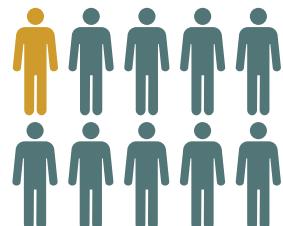
More than one in three employees will be over 55



One in five employees will be over 65



About one in ten will be over 75!



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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."

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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.