A Tale of Rural Manufacturing: Kane PA

by Bob Zaruta, President/CEO, NWIRC

Throughout each year, I have the privilege and pleasure of traveling across the 10,000 square miles of NWIRC’s 13-county service area. Small towns, local communities, small to mid-sized manufacturers, and other small businesses are the fabric of this region.

Incredible and meaningful things are happening in small towns and local communities among the people who love and care for their area, their neighbors, and quality of life.

Exciting happenings in Kane PA.
The Borough of Kane is a perfect example of a community coming together with a collaborative, creative, and spirited approach to develop a thriving area for businesses and families. With a supportive Mayor, Chamber of Commerce (aka Kane Area Development Center-KADC), and local businesses, everyone is working side-by-side to partner and help one another grow and prosper.

The community of Kane is located in the northern Allegheny mountain region of Pennsylvania, at the edge of the Allegheny National Forest, is known as the ‘star in the forest’, and has population of approximately 3500. Kane is named for the Civil War leader of Pennsylvania’s Bucktail Regiment, Thomas Kane, who founded the town in the early 1860s. Kane has a rich history in manufacturing with the Holgate Company, a wood handle manufacturer, who relocated to Kane in 1884 because of the abundance of timber and natural gas. In 1929, Holgate started manufacturing wooden educational toys under the leadership of Jarvis Rockwell, the brother of the American illustrator Norman Rockwell.*

During my recent visit to Kane, I met with Joe and Andrea Lanich, owners of The Laughlin Owl Press, an authentic letterpress print shop. The Lanich’s returned to this region in 2012 and started their business from their garage. Since then, they purchased and restored an old building in town and have a creative partnering approach with expanded opportunities for the community. One of their employees, Presswomen Brooke Balliet, spoke very enthusiastically about her love of Kane and finding the position at The Laughing Owl which kept her in the area. With an art degree, she had no experience with the old press equipment so she was also able to learn a new trade.

I had the opportunity to meet Royce Novosel-Johnson, owner of Logyard Brewing with partner Mike Dunn. Royce returned to his hometown in 2012 from living in metro areas, such as Boston and DC. This is another new business venture contributing to Kane’s economy and providing new jobs. Logyard’s website is especially poignant, noting “We strive to use Hyper-local™ partnerships and ingredients whenever we’re able. Our goal is to bring together like-minded companies to gather resource from their Hyper-local™ communities.”

During a conversation, Royce noted that he recently worked with nearby manufacturer, Dangelo’s Custom Built, to move some large stainless-steel tanks with their heavy equipment. Stories about these companies and people are featured on the KADC’s blog called 100 Days of Kane, hosted by Kate Kennedy, Executive Director of KADC.

NWIRC knows the commitment of manufacturers in the Kane area from the relationships we’ve developed and our project work with some of the local companies, including Dangelo’s Custom Built, The Laughing Owl Press, Logyard Brewing, and Wilds Sonshine Distillery. Manufacturers we speak with are involved with community programs, attend school job fairs, are interested in apprentice programs, and visit the State Capitol to promote themselves and the Kane community.

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In Royce’s *100 Days of Kane* story about moving back home, he says what he likes about being in Kane is “involvement in the community and being part of something much larger than yourself.” From my perspective, this exemplifies the collaboration of the manufacturers, small businesses, and community members in the rural community of Kane.

I know this sort of commitment is evident in, not just Kane, but many small rural communities in Pennsylvania and I look forward to sharing more stories from my travels.

*Source: www.kaneboro.org

Does your Culture help you Attract, Develop and Retain the Best Talent?

by Lisa Pustelak, Employee Development Specialist, NWIRC

If you are like most companies, finding good people and keeping them is a struggle in today’s environment. Have you asked yourself lately if the culture of your business is helping or hurting you? Do you know if your employees would recommend your company to their family and friends for employment?

The culture of your business is often something that’s taken for granted. The “that’s the way we’ve always done it” mentality is keeping many small businesses from attracting the best talent and they don’t even realize it. There are several factors that help those looking for a job decide on where they will go. Let’s face it, they have choices right now and they are in the driver’s seat. While pay is generally a deciding factor, research shows wages are no longer always the number one decision driving force. In a recent Gallup poll, “87% of millennials said development is important in a job. When employees, particularly millennials, are satisfied with the programs for career development that are available to them, they are more likely to remain with an employer.”

For the younger generations, being able to see a clear career path and having an opportunity for advancement is a big deciding factor.

Does your culture provide an opportunity for growth and advancement?

Here’s a few additional questions to ask yourself to determine if your culture is helping or hurting you:

1. Does your team enjoy working for you?
2. Do your people have the opportunity to grow and advance in their career?
3. How often are your team members recognized when they do a good job?

Shifting a culture to a place where everyone wants to come to work isn’t necessarily easy and it won’t happen overnight. However, it can be done one step at a time. The key is to make positive changes and stick to them even if they push some (maybe even yourself) out of the comfort zone.

Here are 3 ideas to get you started:

1. **Listen to your people** – Ask for ideas for improvement. Ask what they like and dislike about their work. Ask them about their goals, personally and professionally. LISTEN and ACT on what you learn.

2. **Share information** – Be transparent about what’s happening in the company. Share your successes and challenges. Engage the team to help overcome challenges and recognize them when they are part of the success.

3. **Be consistent** – If you say your going to do something, do it. If you roll out a new program, stick to it even if it’s hard and uncomfortable at first. Make sure everyone has the same rules and are held accountable.

Creating a culture that helps you attract the talented people out there will also give you the opportunity to develop those people and keep them on board for a long time.

**Side Note:** An MFG Day Industry Forum is scheduled for October 15 from 9:00am-2:00pm at the Park Inn by Radisson in West Middlesex, PA. The focus of the forum is attracting, developing, and retaining employees. Find more info at www.nwirc.org/events.

Peters’ Heat Treating: Strategic Planning for Family Business Growth

Since 1979, now in their second generation, Peters’ Heat Treating has been one of the leaders in the precision parts heat treating industry. The company serves customers ranging from small shops to large corporations in all industries from automotive to nuclear. They have 3 locations with approximately 60 employees.

Since 2001, the company had been following a strategic
planning process with a three-year timeframe. After retirement of a consultant who facilitated the process in the past, a plan had not been developed since 2015- around the same time the owners’ daughter and son-in-law returned to the area to begin a succession process.

While Peters’ was exceeding sales growth goals, maintaining an increase in sales with an anticipated downturn was a concern. As the company continued to grow both in sales and workforce, it became increasingly important to do strategic planning to safeguard growth and mitigate risk.

NWIRC Strategic Business Advisor/Employee Development Specialist, Lisa Pustelak, led a team at the company in a SWOT Analysis to enhance the strategic plan with a vision towards 2021, improve employee engagement, review and aid in updating the mission and values of the business, and identify items that may require risk assessments for ISO certification. The project included individual interviews with employees, an anonymous employee electronic survey, meetings with management to conduct SWOT analysis, and review financials.

A strategic planning document was delivered containing a 3-year plan including goals, strategic objectives, and action plans to be implemented. Supporting documentation of interview and survey results and SWOT results were included with the final report. Peter’s now has a 3-year plan to, not only increase sales, but also to improve customer diversity and productivity. The owners continue to implement a succession plan while at the same time are focused on overall growth of the company. The Strategic Plan for Vision 2021 includes action programs to meet or exceed the company’s goal of sales growth year over year, as well as growth in productivity each year. “While our management team at Peters’ Heat Treating has always been actively committed to updating strategic plans, we find it extremely important for an outside consultant to investigate and analyze our business to ensure that we are realistic with our vision and goals,” said Diana (Peters) Wilkosz, Vice President of Administration. “The project with NWIRC was seamless and the deliverable met all expectations. We look forward to working with them in future years to assist in our continued business success.”


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Lead Together: Influence, Inspire, and Impact

Ineffective leadership can result in conflict, lost productivity, employee turnover, and unhappy customers - all at a significant cost to the company. Situated between upper management and the front line, today’s supervisors and mid-level managers play a significant role in the success of a business. Individual performance, expertise, and tenure earned them the promotion, but if they’re like the majority of their peers, they were probably promoted on a Friday and started leading their coworkers (and friends) on the following Monday. Now it’s time to invest in these emerging leaders. Lead Together is a brand new program to provide new managers and supervisors with new insights and sharpen their skills for influencing and inspiring others to achieve greater results. Improved communications and problem solving, along with less conflict, can contribute to increased productivity, higher employer morale, improved customer satisfaction, and higher retention. Contact Molly Reichard for more information on enrolling in the cohort starting Nov 7th at (814) 217-6067.

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Manufacturing Day

Launched annually on the first Friday in October with events continuing throughout the month, MFG Day helps show the reality of modern manufacturing careers by encouraging thousands of companies and educational institutions around the nation to open their doors to students, parents, teachers and community leaders.

Across the country, manufacturers small and large will be hosting students of all ages in their facilities, showcasing a vibrant and growing industry that is vital to our economy. Last year, 275,000 people participated in nearly 3,000 MFG Day events across North America (these are just the events listed on the MFG Day website)—and more than 80 percent of students said they became more convinced that manufacturing provides interesting and rewarding careers after attending these events.

NWIRC helped to spread the word in advance of the October 4th MFG Day, but also in October plans an exhibit at the Manufacturers and Business Association’s MFG Day event in Erie, as well as conducting a Kata in the Classroom exercise for students. We will also launch the What’s So Cool About Manufacturing student video contest with teacher training for participating schools and have arranged for facility tours at Clarion Industries, Time Machine, and Specialty Fabrication and Powder Coating for students along with State Representatives Donna Oberlander and Lee James. For NWIRC, MFG Day will continue well past October, each and every day of the year.
YOUR STRATEGIC BUSINESS ADVISORS

If you have questions, or would like to speak with someone from NWIRC about services, please contact your Strategic Business Advisor (SBA):

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UPCOMING EVENTS

IATF 16949:2016 Internal Auditor  
Oct 8-10  
Location: St Marys  
Training of the IATF 16949 automotive standard will provide understanding of quality management principles in context with ISO 9001:2015, along with techniques of process-based auditing with hands-on activities.

Lean Accounting & Lean Accounting Deeper Dive  
Oct 16 & Oct 17  
Location: Erie  
If your company has embarked on applying lean thinking and practices, have you thought about the role of management reporting information and the accounting team in supporting this transformation? Lean concepts from the shop floor apply in every area of the company, including accounting.

ISO 9001:2015 Internal Auditor  
Oct 22-24  
Location: Erie  
The 3-day course provides a detailed review of the ISO 9001:2015 quality standard. Participants will learn how to conduct an audit, write the audit report, take corrective actions and more.

Supply Chain Workshops  
Oct 22 & 23  
Location: St Marys  
A half-day workshop, Supply Chain Optimization for Leaders, and a full day session, Supply Chain Risk Management, all to provide insights for supply chain interdependencies and five elements of preparing for and mitigating risks.

Every day is Manufacturing Day at NWIRC!

For more information or to register for training, visit www.nwirc.org