

for **THE RECORD**

YOUR Trade Magazine... published by the National Tooling and Machining Association

OPERATIONAL ESSENTIALS

SALES AND MARKETING FOR MANUFACTURING SUCCESS

ALSO INSIDE:

NTMA WELCOMES NEW LEADERS
PAGES 8-9

INTRODUCING OUR NEW INSURANCE PARTNER
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SEND US YOUR STORY

Each issue of The Record features our members. We want to hear from you. Send us stories of successes, innovations or experiences.

The submission deadline is the first of the month prior to publication.

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UPCOMING NTMA EVENTS



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FROM ROGER

a message from the president

It's amazing how fast one year ends and another starts. Happy New Year! A new year always brings the freshness of a new start, new outlook, new energy and maybe new strategies. What better subject to focus on than sales and marketing? It is the lifeblood of our companies and the first step in operational actions: sales and marketing, receive orders, manufacture, ship, invoice, repeat.

Obviously this is a simplification and each step includes multiple actions. But these are the basic steps and order to make things work and operate effectively. As an industry we are pretty good at steps two through six; but without step number one, a company can face on-going challenges.

When sales are rolling in and contracts are being signed, it can be tempting to downplay the importance of sales and marketing, but for an effective strategy it can never be overlooked. Take it from someone who knows: it can come to a stop faster than you can plan. I don't say this as an alarmist, but rather as an encouragement to stay committed to sales and marketing regardless of your present workload. Your continued

success depends on your consistency and action in all six operational steps. Some companies try to implement a sales and marketing plan, but really have no strategy or direction. They work hard, see minimal results, become frustrated and question the value. They believe they touch all six operational steps, but touching is not action or implementation. They continue to find themselves in that proverbial hamster wheel year after year. It takes focus, action and consistency to move forward. Don't give up.

Still others have never had to promote, advertise, utilize social media or even have a website. This may have worked to date, however, times are quickly changing. If your company has not been impacted yet, it will be. You may already be impacted and not even realize it. Doing nothing is no longer a strategy. It's never too late to start. Plan now and take action. It will pay off.

So what do the terms sales and marketing represent? Sales and marketing is promoting your capabilities: equipment and size, unique services, quality certifications, software ERP/programming, people

and experience. Always remember, what separates similarly-configured shops is our people. It is our people and their capabilities that distinguish us from all others. Communicating that to the OEM community sets you apart from others and draws the buying community to your operations.

Your job is to get that information out to the OEM community to see and search. This can be done via social media, websites, YouTube videos, influencer interviews, trade shows and your peer-to-peer community. The bottom line: Actively do something, don't wait and hope. Hope is not a strategy. There is plenty to hope for, even when doing all of the above. The high performing shops consistently focus on action.

I'd like to inspire you to think, question, change and act for your company's sake. NTMA's only focus is your success, which results in U.S. manufacturing's success. Our country, the industries you serve and the emerging industries need you, your capabilities and your people.

Sales and marketing do not just happen. It takes effort, action, and yes, it does

take an investment. It very well may take third party help to guide your actions and deployment to the market place. If you need outside partners, contact us at NTMA and we can introduce you to trusted industry partners in sales and marketing. Don't sit in the corner and wait; interject yourself and your company into the conversation. You may be surprised by the results. Like most things, results don't always come quickly, but consistency is the key. Make sales and marketing a consistent company action and I think its success will lead you on to steps two through six of manufacturing operational action.

This is month one of 12. We are at the starting line. As we said as kids, "get ready, get set, and go!" It's time to put the pedal down and "GO." Every opportunity is in front of you. There's no better time to start. In doing so, together we will advance Manufacturing America's Future.

Roger Atkins, President, NTMA

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SAND MOUNTAIN PRECISION

Arizona Chapter

Sand Mountain Precision is based in Prescott, Ariz. The company was established in early 2025 following the acquisition and rebranding of Bristemy Engineering and Machining, a company with a 14-year-foundation in the industry. Building on that legacy, Sand Mountain Precision has strengthened its technical capabilities and modernized its workflow to support high-accuracy, production-grade CNC manufacturing. The company operates a growing fleet of 3-axis CNC mills equipped with rotary 4th-axis capability, as well as CNC turning lathes that support both tight-tolerance production and rapid-turn prototype work. With plans to expand into fabrication, Sand Mountain Precision is focused on increasing capacity while strengthening core machining operations. The shop specializes in high-tolerance machining across aluminum alloys, stainless steels, alloy steels, carbon steels and engineering-grade plastics, producing clean, repeatable components for the aerospace, firearms and sporting optics, automotive and industrial/construction equipment markets. Known for consistent accuracy and dependable lead times, Sand Mountain Precision provides prototype-to-production support, quality inspection processes, and reliable communication throughout each job. As a small but fast-growing operation, the company remains committed to expanding its capabilities, taking on new partnerships and delivering the level of precision and workmanship customers expect from a dedicated machining team.

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Website under development



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WHO WE ARE & WE MADE THAT.

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ADVOCACY: DEPARTMENT OF ED. LAUNCHES NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING TO DEVELOP WORKFORCE PELL REGULATIONS



The U.S. Department of Education has begun the formal negotiated rulemaking process to develop regulations implementing Workforce Pell, the new federal aid expansion allowing students to use Pell Grants for short-term, workforce-focused training programs. The Department convened its rulemaking committee this week to review initial draft regulatory language and begin discussions on how to translate the statutory framework into operational policy. Workforce Pell, authorized under the One Big Beautiful Bill, will permit eligible programs of eight to 15 weeks to qualify for federal aid if they lead to recognized, stackable credentials and meet specific quality benchmarks. The draft language outlines potential eligibility criteria, including state approval of programs, requirements for credentials to be portable and related to in-demand fields and outcome-based accountability measures such as completion, job placement and earnings metrics.

Committee members began reviewing issues central to program implementation, including how states will determine eligible programs, how institutions must document employment outcomes and the extent to which noncredit or third-party training providers may participate. Several provisions remain open for discussion, such as the methodology for verifying job placement, how earnings thresholds will be calculated and what data institutions and states must report. The Department has proposed an accelerated timeline for the Workforce Pell portion of the negotiations, indicating that it intends to complete the committee's deliberations within a single week before shifting to additional higher-education topics in January. Some stakeholders have questioned whether this compressed schedule will allow adequate time for analysis and revision, noting the complexity of the new eligibility and accountability framework.

Following the December and January sessions, the Department is expected to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, which will open the draft regulations to public comment. Final rules are typically issued after the comment period and could take effect as early as July 2026, depending on timing and the Department's implementation decisions. As negotiations proceed, states, institutions and workforce partners are monitoring key questions that could shape program participation, such as the role of state workforce boards, the treatment of noncredit offerings and the data systems required to measure student outcomes. The Department's rulemaking decisions in the coming months will determine how Workforce Pell is implemented nationwide and how institutions prepare to offer short-term programs under the expanded Pell framework.



Omar S. Nashashibi is a founding member of Inside Beltway, a bipartisan lobbying and strategic consultant firm based in Washington, D.C. He may be reached at: omar@insidebeltway.com

TECH/AI: BREAKING THROUGH THE NOISE — WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM INFLUENCERS



Working for an AI company, I've seen firsthand the challenge in convincing someone to try an unfamiliar technology. Even when the benefits seem clear — greater efficiency, improved precision, higher throughput — new solutions often struggle to gain traction.

Tech adoption isn't just using and applying a new solution; it's also about finding a way to cut through

decades of ingrained habits, tight production schedules and understandable skepticism, while fitting into existing workflows.

So how do you convince a lot of people fast?

I just attended Boombastic — the Titans of CNC event in Texas, led by Titan Gilroy. Standing in the middle of his machine shop, Titan held court with the energy and intensity that has made him a trusted voice to many. When Titan talks, machinists listen. What was most striking wasn't just the size of the crowd — it was the willingness of attendees to engage with technologies they might otherwise have ignored.

Watching the room react as Titan spoke about the future of machining made something very clear: influencers matter in this industry, even if we don't always call them that. Titan's authenticity and credibility, along with his relentless advocacy for modernisation and educating the next generation, create a rare platform — one capable of shifting attitudes at scale.

For those of us developing advanced technology, that presents both an opportunity and a lesson. Technical specs and ROI calculators will always matter, but real change often starts with trusted voices who speak the language of the shop floor. If we want faster adoption, we need more moments like Boombastic — where technology isn't just explained, but championed by people like Titan who command attention.



Daniel Soderlund has worked for some of the leading companies empowering manufacturers with technology over two decades. Before joining CloudNC, he worked with ProShop ERP and FARO Technologies. He loves empowering organizations to achieve explosive results with tailored solutions driving growth and success.

FINANCIAL SERVICES: PROGRESS BEGINS WHERE BACK-OFFICE BURNOUT ENDS



The tooling and machining industry is the backbone of American manufacturing. Yet the skilled entrepreneurs running these shops are spending their nights second-guessing payroll calculations and their weekends wrestling with HR compliance forms.

This is back-office burnout, and it's killing progress for small businesses.

I recently spoke with a precision machining shop owner who employs 28 skilled tradespeople. He told me he spends more time managing payroll errors and navigating benefits administration than he does on the shop floor with his team. "I didn't get into this business to become an HR manager," he said. "I got into it to build things."

He's not alone. Manufacturers face unique workforce challenges: overtime calculations for shift work, prevailing wage compliance, skilled labor retention and so much more. These all demand expertise beyond what generic software can provide. When payroll mistakes happen, they don't just cost money. They erode trust with the craftspeople you depend on.

The irony? The same industry that has embraced CNC automation and precision measurement tools still relies on back-office systems that create more complexity than they solve. Technology should eliminate burnout, not cause it.

Small business progress — the kind that sustains families, apprenticeships and communities — requires business owners who can focus on what they do best. That means pairing intuitive technology with real human expertise: actual people who understand your industry, answer when you call and prevent problems before they cascade.

The tooling and machining shops that will thrive in the next decade won't be the ones with the fanciest software. They'll be the ones whose owners have the confidence and time to invest in their people, their craft and their growth — because someone finally eliminated their back-office burnout.



Chris Allen is the Chief Marketing Officer at Auris. He has a decade of executive leadership in marketing at B2B tech and SaaS companies. Prior to Auris, Chris was the SVP of Marketing at Global Payments where he scaled growth marketing, led through international mergers and acquisitions and redeveloped their worldwide product and company branding.

NTMA WELCOMES NEW LEADERSHIP

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AS WE COMMENCE THE NEW YEAR, IT IS WITH GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION THAT WE RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE POSITIONS OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRPERSON, BOTH PAST AND PRESENT, AND WELCOME OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS.



Passing the Torch

ERIC HAGOPIAN
PILOT PRECISION

At the Engage 2025 event in Detroit, Mich., Chairman Bonnie Kuhn announced the election of Eric Hagopian, CEO of Pilot Precision Products, as Chairman for 2026.

We look forward to Eric's leadership to strengthen

both our association and industry.

Pilot Precision Products is a niche industrial cutting tool manufacturer and distributor located in South Deerfield, Mass. Pilot is the largest manufacturer of precision broaching tools in North America. In addition to his work at Pilot Precision Products, Eric has served on NTMA Executive Committee since 2021 and as the 2025 Vice Chairman. He serves in many volunteer positions including The American Precision Museum and several private for-profit company boards. Eric has also served as the EC liaison to the Government Affairs Team. His commitment to the precision manufacturing industry and NTMA members will serve the association well as he leads the Executive Committee in 2026.

KEVIN AHAUS
AHAUS TOOL AND ENGINEERING, INC.

We would like to announce that Kevin Ahaus of Ahaus Tool and Engineering, Inc. will serve as the 2026 Vice Chairman of the Board. Kevin has served on the Executive Committee since January 2022. Kevin has been active in the NTMA since 1994 serving on various committees and forums including the Indiana Tooling and Machining Association Board program. Kevin serves as the EC liaison to the Government & Compliance and the Chapter Executives Teams.



JUSTIN QUINN
FOUSED ON MACHINING, INC.



It is with great excitement NTMA introduces Justin Quinn of Focused on Machining, Inc. as a new 2026 Regular Executive Committee Member, replacing Bonnie Kuhn, who served two terms on the committee from 2020-2025. Justin was approved by the Board of Trustees to serve his first term of

three years effective January 1, 2026.

Justin began his professional career in the Air Force where he spent 6 years as an Aircraft Mechanic on the C-17. Justin separated from the Air Force to pursue his Bachelor's degree full time. He then attended the University of

Colorado at Denver where he received his MBA while working at Centennial Bank.

With a strong interest in manufacturing Justin acquired Focused on Machining in 2016. Justin is currently the president of Focused on Machining where he manages the day-to-day operations, business development and strategic planning. The company's primary growth sectors have come from the aerospace, defense and medical industries.

Actively involved in the NTMA Rocky Mountain Chapter, Justin has served nearly all board roles including president, vice president, trustee and treasurer.

Justin's NTMA National Team involvement includes being a member of the Emerging Leaders Team, Manufacturing & Technology Team and the Governance & Compliance Team. He has also served as the team leader of the Nominating Team for the past four of his five years on the team. Please join us in welcoming Justin to the Executive Committee.

STEPHEN GAZY
SG CONSULTING AND US CONNECTIONS



It is with excitement NTMA introduces Stephen Gazy as the new External Executive Committee Member, replacing Debbie Holton who served two terms on the committee from

2020 - 2025. We thank Debbie for her six years of insight, time and dedication to the NTMA. It was during our Board of Trustees Meeting at Engage 2025

Stephen was approved by the Board of Trustees to serve his first term of three years effective January 1, 2026.

Stephen Gazy is the principal owner and consultant at SG Consulting and US Connections. As an entrepreneur, Stephen has more than 20 years of experience implementing continuous improvement methods for many area companies. Stephen's skill-sets include: large-scale and small enterprise project management, quality systems, unified work teams, single piece flow, setup reduction, 6S and SCM.

As an auditor, Stephen has developed a deep understanding of the aerospace, automotive, plastics, metal working

and warehousing industries. Stephen is a certified Lead Assessor and holds an undergraduate degree in advanced sciences from the State University of New York and master's from Kent State University.

Stephen's broad experience as an entrepreneur, executive, teacher, assessor and consultant have made him an ideal candidate for any company seeking to lead teams and drive improvement across all functional areas of their company. We are excited for him to share his focus and insight with NTMA.

Special Thanks



We also want to extend our thanks to Bonnie Kuhn for her service on the Executive Committee from 2020-2025. Bonnie led as the

first female Chairman in 2025 and Vice Chairman 2024. During that time she offered invaluable insight and direction to benefit NTMA and the precision manufacturing industry. During her leadership in 2025, Bonnie visited more than 37 NTMA member companies in nine or more chapters across

the country. This was a great endeavor proving her dedication and appreciation to the NTMA and its members. Bonnie's dedication and contributions to our industry are invaluable. And as such, she was presented the L.A. Sommer Memorial Award at the Manufacturing Engage 2025, honoring her long and outstanding service to the association. Thank you for your leadership, Bonnie.



SALES & MARKETING ARE NOT EXTRAS.

THEY ARE EVIDENCE THAT YOU CAN DELIVER.

HERNAN RICAURTE, PRESIDENT, RICAURTE PRECISION INC.

In advanced manufacturing, and especially precision machining, many companies still view sales and marketing as activities that sit outside the real work of producing precision components. Ricaurte Precision Inc. (RPI) sees these functions as essential tools that help us educate customers, strengthen communication and clarify the structure behind the work we do. Sales and marketing are not surface level activities. They are channels that reveal how we operate and how we think.

It is important to make something very clear. We do not believe the term “machine shop” reflects what modern precision manufacturers do. The term brings to mind dirty and dark garages filled with noise, smell, clutter and informal tribal knowledge. That image does not describe the reality of today’s precision machining companies. We are technology-driven organizations that invest in training, process control, digital systems, advanced equipment and a professional workforce. Our work is clean, structured, documented and disciplined. The term “machine shop” or “job shop” does not justify the depth of planning, engineering and inspection required to produce complex custom components; and it does not reflect the level of investment required to do this

work effectively.

This is exactly why we see marketing as an educational responsibility. Customers often see lead time and price, but they rarely see the planning, training, documentation and engineering required to bring a part from concept to finished component. Precision machining requires capital equipment, engineered fixturing, specialized tooling, careful programming and the accumulated knowledge of experienced professionals. When customers understand these realities, they gain a clearer view of the value behind the components they receive.

Marketing also helps us educate and attract the workforce our industry depends on. Young people imagine manufacturing through outdated stereotypes. They do not picture a clean facility with advanced equipment, structured training and real career opportunities. By showing what modern precision manufacturing looks like, we help shape the next generation of machinists, programmers, inspectors and engineers who will keep our industry moving forward.

This educational purpose is why we create content. Through our website, social media and printed material, we share

information that helps customers understand how parts are made, how designs influence manufacturability and how quality practices affect outcomes. The return on this work is not always immediate. Marketing rarely produces simple and predictable metrics. Yet we know that producing thoughtful content delivers both short-term and long-term value. It strengthens customer understanding and reinforces clarity inside our own organization.

We also share practical guidance that reflects what our team learns every day. Engineers and procurement specialists appreciate information that helps them solve problems, reduce risk and improve manufacturability. They want partners who think with them. When customers reach out, they already understand our approach to work and the standards we protect.

Sales and marketing must remain connected to operations. This connection is strengthened through digital structure. We invest in systems that improve traceability, scheduling, inspection data and process flow. The goal is not to display technology for the sake of appearance. The goal is clarity. When customers understand how information moves through our organization, they see discipline, predictability and structure. That clarity builds trust.

Marketing only works when performance supports it. This is why we organize the company around four essential areas: culture, production, financial discipline and sales and marketing. Each area has ownership and consistent review. This balanced structure helps us focus on opportunities that match our strengths, and it prevents us from relying on capability alone without strengthening communication.

Trust also comes from investment in equipment, people and quality systems. Certifications and registrations matter because they demonstrate consistency and reduce risk for customers who depend on reliable supply chains. Our marketing and sales processes make these strengths easier to understand and easier to evaluate.

The most effective approach we have learned is simple: Be useful, be clear. Provide information that helps customers make better decisions. Offer guidance that saves time and prevents mistakes. When you help someone before they are officially your customer, you demonstrate the type of partner you will be once the relationship becomes formal.

If I could offer one recommendation to any precision manufacturer, it would be this: treat sales and marketing as a form of proof. Share your process. Explain your thinking. Communicate in a way that reflects your real work. When communication and execution stay aligned, customers decide with confidence. That confidence strengthens relationships, supports long term growth and improves performance in every part of the organization.



5 TIPS FOR MARKETING TO THE MODERN INDUSTRIAL BUYER IN 2026

ANNE MARIE TRACEY, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING SOLUTIONS, PAPERLESS PARTS

For successful results in the manufacturing industry, it is vital to understand how companies requiring CNC machining, sheet metal fabrication and other services research, evaluate and make purchasing decisions. But it can be challenging when marketing is evolving at such a rapid pace. Here are five key insights to help make sure your marketing strategy is keeping your manufacturing business ahead in 2026:

1 AI IS CHANGING SEARCH, BUT TRUST STILL RULES.

One of the biggest shifts in marketing over the past year has been the way AI influences search behavior. AI-driven overviews in search engines are reducing click-through rates, meaning fewer engineers and procurement teams visit vendor websites directly. Instead, they are relying on AI-generated summaries and longer, more conversational queries to gather information.

BEST PRACTICE: Optimize your website and content to rank higher in SERPs so your content is influencing

AI-generated results. Additionally, focus on educational mid-funnel content that meets your customers' specific needs, such as guides, tips, case studies and technical deep dives, which AI struggles to summarize effectively.

ACTION STEP: Leverage subject matter experts (SMEs) to author content, feature author bios to communicate their credibility and create thought leadership pieces that AI cannot replicate.

2 BUYERS WANT TO SELF-SERVE.

Today's industrial buyers are more independent than ever. Manufacturers looking for custom manufacturing services want detailed specifications and interactive tools at their fingertips to aid their research.

BEST PRACTICE: Provide material comparison tools, hardware selection charts and easy-to-use RFQ systems on your website to cater to procurement teams' self-service habits.

ACTION STEP: Optimize your website with detailed material specifications, manufacturing capabilities breakdowns and case studies that answer buyers' questions before they reach out, solidifying your brand as a trusted resource.

4 VIDEO CONTENT REMAINS ESSENTIAL.

With search platforms de-prioritizing outbound links, video has become a critical format for engaging industrial buyers over the last year. Since AI struggles to summarize videos, they remain high-value assets in the buyer's journey.

BEST PRACTICE: Invest in the creation of YouTube content, and also repurpose it into short-form snippets for LinkedIn and other social media platforms.

ACTION STEP: Develop factory tours, process demonstrations and customer success stories in video format to boost engagement and showcase your expertise.

3 CONTENT MUST BE EXPERT-LED, NOT AI-GENERATED.

While AI is powerful for efficiency, relying too heavily on AI-generated content will erode trust. AI content is not new or innovative; it simply summarizes information that already exists, making it less valuable for differentiation and thought leadership. Manufacturing buyers want content from verifiable human experts, not generic AI-written summaries.

BEST PRACTICE: Use AI to enhance marketing efficiency (data analysis, initial research, automation), but ensure all public-facing content is sourced, reviewed, authored and approved by industry experts.

ACTION STEP: Focus on expert-led content: case studies, testimonials and content co-authored with industry partners or customers. Collect and leverage reviews and customer experiences in your marketing efforts.

5 MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE IS CRITICAL FOR ENGAGEMENT.

Google still rules for search, but social media channels like LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram lead the way in engagement traffic. Social media sites are rewarding posts that encourage the user to stay on their platform. This trend has been coined "zero-click marketing."

BEST PRACTICE: Develop zero-click social media content to align with shifting social platform practices.

ACTION STEP: Next time you share content on social media, include the majority or entirety of the content directly on the platform (rather than forcing people to leave the site to view the rest).

STRATEGIES FOR 2026 AND BEYOND

Building trust through engagement and consistent, valuable communication has never been more critical. The most successful manufacturers will be those who actively engage with customers beyond responding to RFQs, providing expert insights, transparent communication and personalized solutions.

Successfully navigating these trends and executing a comprehensive marketing and communication strategy requires time and expertise. Leveraging marketing experts to support your business can take the weight of this essential function off your shoulders and ensure consistency and effectiveness. Learn about Paperless Parts' marketing services at www.paperlessparts.com/manufacturing-marketing and reach out to our team to discuss your goals and how our marketers with deep manufacturing subject matter expertise can support your business growth.

Anne Marie Tracey is the Director of Marketing Solutions at Paperless Parts. Paperless Parts is the leading quoting and estimating software for manufacturers, with an in-house team of experienced marketing professionals dedicated to helping its customer base grow their brands. With deep industry roots, the Marketing Solutions team understands the ins and outs of manufacturing, delivering effective and comprehensive marketing programs that help shops retain and attract more business. To learn more, visit www.paperlessparts.com/manufacturing-marketing.

FROM BOOTH TO BUSINESS:

three phases to trade show success

GRACE KELLOGG, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS, DESIGN-2-PART

You hear it every year: “You’d be a perfect exhibitor. The networking will pay off big time.” They’re probably right, but trade shows can be a big investment — and ROI isn’t automatic.

That’s why the best exhibitors treat trade shows like a system, not a gamble. Yes, the costs add up, but so does the opportunity. The “good” shows are the ones that consistently produce a measurable pipeline. But how do you guarantee that consistency? After more than 50 years on the show floor, we’ve seen the same three-phase approach drive results every time: win the before, work the during and nail the after. Master this process, and every show gets better.

PHASE 1: PRE-SHOW — BUILD MOMENTUM BEFORE YOU EVEN ARRIVE

The best trade shows are half-won before the doors even open.

We live in a digital world where pre-show communication matters. Let your target audience know which shows you’re attending, where you’ll be and how they can register. Start early, increase reminder frequency and use this moment to strengthen your brand. It’s not just promotion — it’s building your brand identity.

Social media is your best friend. Post on Instagram, Facebook and X, but remember LinkedIn remains the workhorse for manufacturers, used by

roughly 97% of B2B marketers. Short, capability-focused reels are one of the highest-ROI formats heading into 2026 and a powerful way to capture attention quickly.

Don’t neglect your website. Add show mentions with registration links, and consider creating show-specific landing pages with booth details and featured capabilities. These pages also provide trackable data to see what’s working.

Plan your booth as a sales tool. Lock in design and layout before the show. Bring custom parts that prove your capabilities, printed collateral, practical swag, quick videos of your facilities or processes and be prepared for live demos! Today’s attendees have short

attention spans and crave interactivity, so give them things to look at, touch and discuss. Your booth should instantly say who you are, what you do and why you’re different. Booth design is an art — that’s why Design-2-Part helps manufacturers translate complex capabilities into booths that stop traffic and start conversations.

PHASE 2: DURING THE SHOW — WIN ATTENTION, START REAL CONVERSATIONS

You have seconds to earn a stop... and minutes to earn a lead.

Think like an attendee. In this quick-scan world, people decide whether a booth is worth approaching in three to seven seconds. With similar exhibitors nearby, be clear on what makes yours the go-to booth: What challenges are you solving? What are you the best at?

Now prove it. Put those capabilities front-and-center where someone can walk by and immediately think: “That’s exactly what I’m looking for.”

Work the Booth

- Don’t stand back waiting — approach and engage!
- Ask open-ended questions about what they’re sourcing and why.

- Look engaged and approachable. No phones. No sitting in the back.
- Stand near the front and project confidence and readiness.

PHASE 3: AFTER THE SHOW — WHERE RESULTS ARE WON

Follow-up is where trade shows either pay off OR quietly die.

Within a few days, organize leads and enter them into your CRM. Speed matters. That hot conversation you had at the booth won’t stay hot for long. Lives move forward, urgency fades and even the most exciting solution starts feeling less pressing if they don’t hear from you.

Segment Smartly

Grade leads A/B/C by:

- Potential value
- Urgency/timeline
- Size/scale of opportunity

And remember...B and C leads might not be ready now, but they’re your A-list invitations for future shows!



Be Active, Not Passive

- Send personalized thank-yous quickly.
- Follow up with both email and phone — sequences using both see 128% higher response rates.
- Don’t forget to reach out to current customers you missed at the show!

Trade shows aren’t about luck. They’re about process. Win the before, work the during and follow through after, and you’ll turn every show into measurable momentum. ROI won’t be a mystery anymore—the floor will pay you back.

CRM & AI:

ROB FELBER, PRESIDENT, FELBER PR & MARKETING

Customer relationship management (CRM) software has long been the backbone of sales, marketing and service operations. Ask any salesperson, and they will tell you that they live in their CRM. For decades now, CRM has stored customer and prospect data, has forecasted deal flow and has provided a solid reminder on when and why you should be following up. Now, along comes artificial intelligence (AI), and just like the internet and connectivity in manufacturing, the promise of transformation in how we use CRM is all anyone can talk about. My thought is to embrace and not be afraid. When used effectively, AI enhances decision-making, automates routine tasks and creates more personalized customer experiences.

Below are the best practices manufacturing salespeople should follow to get the most out of CRM + AI.

1. START WITH CLEAN, UNIFIED DATA

AI is only as powerful as the information feeding it. This to me gets the best Homer Simpson “Duh!” This has always been the case. The adage for data, “garbage in, garbage out” remains. Clean it up.

BEST PRACTICES:

- Consolidate data from sales, marketing, service and operations
- Remove duplicates and merge inconsistent records
- Standardized fields (phone formats, job titles, company names)
- Enforce data governance with clear ownership and rules

WHY IT MATTERS:

AI models rely on patterns. Dirty or incomplete data leads to inaccurate predictions, unreliable lead scoring and poor automation.

2. IDENTIFY REAL BUSINESS PROBLEMS BEFORE DEPLOYING AI

AI isn’t a magic button; it’s a tool. Start with the pain points.

COMMON GOALS INCLUDE:

- Reducing time spent on manual data entry
- Improving lead prioritization and lead scoring
- Analyzing engagement (with your website, emails, marketing content)
- Personalizing outbound messaging

Use tools that save time. “I love manually entering data!” said no salesperson, ever.

3. USE AI FOR AUTOMATION—BUT KEEP HUMANS IN THE LOOP

AI is excellent for handling repetitive, low-value tasks, such as:

- Logging calls and emails
- Creating follow-up reminders
- Auto-generating email drafts
- Tracking deal changes or anomalies

Human oversight is essential for judgment-based tasks like negotiation, customer escalation or interpreting high-risk data.

4. IMPLEMENT PREDICTIVE TOOLS FOR SALES AND SERVICE

Modern CRMs can predict behavior with surprising accuracy.

EXAMPLES:

- Predictive lead scoring to focus reps on the highest-value prospects
- Churn prediction models for customer success teams
- Next-best-action recommendations for sales and support
- Opportunity health scoring for pipeline forecasting

Use prediction insights to guide—not dictate—your strategy.

HOW MANUFACTURERS ARE IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES FOR MAXIMIZING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

5. PERSONALIZE CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS USING AI

AI can help deliver messaging and experiences tailored to each customer.

BEST PRACTICES:

- Segment audiences dynamically based on behavior
- Personalize email content, send times and recommended products
- Use AI to analyze sentiment in support conversations
- Automatically assign reps or routes based on predicted needs

Personalization improves conversion rates, loyalty and customer satisfaction.

6. TRAIN TEAMS EARLY AND OFTEN

AI adoption fails most often because teams don’t use the tools — not because the tech doesn’t work.

TIPS:

- Host hands-on workshops
- Create short playbooks or cheat sheets
- Share success stories to build confidence
- Encourage experiments with AI writing assistants and prospecting tools

If I can get a salesperson during training to state, “that’s so cool — I didn’t know our CRM could do that,” then I consider that training a success.

7. START SMALL WITH AUTOMATION RULES & EXPAND

GRADUALLY

Don’t automate everything at once.

BEGIN WITH:

- Lead assignment
- Task creation
- Email sequences
- Deal stage updates

Once the rules prove reliable, expand to more complex workflows like cross-department automation.

8. MEASURE ROI WITH THE RIGHT KPIs

Track improvement across measurable metrics, such as:

- Sales cycle length
- Lead-to-customer conversion rate
- Cost per acquisition
- Customer satisfaction
- Retention or churn rates

A strong CRM + AI integration should show results within 60–120 days.

BONUS

Know before you dial.

Sales time is limited and valuable. When I show clients how HubSpot’s integrated AI creates a recap of all their past activity, from attempted calls and email responses to conversation history, they are amazed.

When they start their daily outreach with this data, they are confident, informed and prepared.

On a recent call to my prospect Christine, she said “You really need to speak to Jarod.” I said cool, my system tells me I spoke with Jarod in 2019. My CRM AI recap of the record told me this — I cannot remember what I had for breakfast!

CONCLUSION

AI doesn’t replace CRM — it elevates it. When combined, CRM and artificial intelligence can deliver smarter decisions, faster workflows and more meaningful customer experiences. Organizations that embrace these best practices unlock a competitive advantage rooted in efficiency, responsiveness and customer-centric growth.

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NATIONWIDE

For more than a century, Federated has provided peace of mind to business owners through valued insurance protection. Federated was founded out of a need to fill a gap in the industry. From that singular directive it has grown into one of the country's superior insurers today.

As of January 2026, Federated is the exclusive insurance provider of the NTMA.

"With Federated's current support of many of our members and chapters, this new national exclusive partnership will give all our members and chapters the opportunity to align under one program," NTMA President Roger Atkins remarked.

As the NTMA's official partner for general liability and workers' compensation insurance, Federated will offer NTMA members quality insurance tailored to each company's needs at a competitive price.

Federated seeks input from clients through various sources. Many innovative products and services have been developed based on discussions and research involving business owners. Federated's Manufacturing Shield® line of coverages is an example of this. It was designed for a very specific niche of the tooling and machining industry, based on feedback from business owners who wanted more specialization from the insurance industry.

In addition to insurance coverage, Federated's industry-leading risk management support is evident in the value-added services it delivers to each client. Clients have access to resources specifically designed to help them develop their own solid risk management program, using proven

techniques and innovative services.

- Federated's mySHIELD®—an online source for risk management support.
- Risk Management Resource Center—remote risk management consultation with trained risk consultants.
- Risk Management Academy Seminars—industry-specific seminars that provide insight into an industry's loss control needs.
- Federated Employment Practices NetworkSM—an online resource for anytime access to human resources support materials and independent employment law attorneys.



- Federated's DriveSAFESM Telematics App—designed to help recognize and promote safe driving while giving you valuable insight into the performance of your company drivers
- Direct Marketing—The more than 500 marketing representatives located throughout the contiguous 48 states and the District of Columbia make up a direct marketing force unique in the insurance industry. The one-on-one relationship clients and prospects develop with their Federated representative is a valued part of their total insurance package.
- Major Client Service Standards—provides frequent opportunities to meet with your local marketing representative to help him or her understand and review your business insurance and risk management needs, which helps coordinate the insurance coverage and risk management programs best suited for you.

"I am excited about this new partnership and believe it to be a great value opportunity for all our members to consider," Atkins said.

The Federated Insurance Mission Statement reads: As a mutual insurance company, we believe our value is measured by the success of our clients. It's Our Business to Protect Yours®. That mission continues to guide Federated.

Federated Insurance is rated A+ (Superior) by A.M. Best® Company and is headquartered in Owatonna, Minnesota. Please be sure to take the time to visit with your local Federated Insurance marketing representative to learn about the insurance and risk management programs they have available to help your business succeed.

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- ROGER ATKINS
NTMA PRESIDENT

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A NO-COST WAY TO STRENGTHEN YOUR MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE

JENNY STUPICA, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, NTMA

Finding and keeping skilled employees is one of the biggest challenges facing today's manufacturers. From recruiting qualified candidates to onboarding new hires and retaining experienced team members, many small and mid-sized shops are feeling the strain. To help address this challenge, NTMA is partnering with the U.S. Navy's Talent Pipeline Program (TPP) as a National Facilitator to bring a proven, no-cost workforce solution to NTMA members nationwide.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO MANUFACTURERS

Industry reports continue to show a sharp decline in skilled trade talent across the U.S. manufacturing base. These workforce gaps directly impact productivity, growth and the ability to meet customer and defense requirements. The Talent Pipeline Program was created to help reverse this trend by giving manufacturers practical tools and expert support to improve how they attract, develop and retain high-performing employees. Through this collaboration, NTMA is expanding access to the Talent Pipeline Program across its national membership network. Building on successful pilots in several NTMA chapters, the program is now available to member companies across

the country, helping ensure manufacturers have the skilled workforce they need to compete and grow. This partnership directly supports NTMA's mission to strengthen U.S. precision manufacturing and maintain a resilient supply chain critical to our economy, national defense and communities.

WHAT IS THE TALENT PIPELINE PROGRAM?

The Talent Pipeline Program is fully funded by the U.S. Navy and delivered at NO COST to employers. The program is managed by TMG of Virginia and offers a structured, proven approach to improving workforce systems in industrial manufacturing environments. Participating companies work with experienced coaches who guide them through a four-step process:

- Map your current workforce system — from recruiting through the first year on the job.
- Identify opportunities for improvement in hiring, onboarding and retention.
- Implement practical changes tailored to your organization.
- Connect with local workforce pipelines and resources to support long-term success.

This is not a one-size-fits-all program. The Talent Pipeline Program meets companies

where they are and helps them make meaningful, manageable improvements that lead to stronger teams and better business outcomes.

LEARN FROM OTHER MANUFACTURERS

When you join the Talent Pipeline Program, you also become part of a national network of more than 450 employers who are committed to strengthening their workforces. Participants have opportunities to learn from peers through conferences, seminars and one-on-one discussions — sharing what works and learning from others facing similar challenges.

WHY THE PROGRAM WORKS

TMG of Virginia serves as the "connecting tissue" between the Navy, employers, local workforce partners and other stakeholders. Key success factors include:

- Strong, value-added relationships across the workforce ecosystem
- Deep expertise in talent acquisition, onboarding and retention systems
- A clear, easy-to-understand program model with a strong focus on employee retention

With hands-on coaching, practical templates and proven tools, the Talent Pipeline Program helps manufacturers re-energize

their talent systems — leading to improved performance, higher retention and increased defense industrial capacity.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Any NTMA member company can participate. Companies are simply asked to:

1. Have a need for at least one new hire
2. Be open to doing things differently when it comes to recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retaining employees
3. Share best practices and lessons learned with fellow program partners

Together, NTMA and the Talent Pipeline Program are helping Defense Industrial Base companies build stronger workforces, run better businesses, and support our nation's manufacturing capacity. And because the program is fully funded by the U.S. Navy, there is no cost to participating employers.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

Learn more about the Talent Pipeline Program at <https://dibtalentpipeline.com>. To find out how the Talent Pipeline Program can help your company, contact Jenny Stupica, NTMA Workforce Development Director, at jstupica@ntma.org.



The Record 20

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Please contact Kristen Hrusch, our Events Manager
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or visit www.ntma.org/upcoming-events

www.ntma.org/events

EMERGING LEADERS COHORT

LEADERSHIP TRAINING
POWERED BY NTMA

The new Emerging Leaders 2.0 design streamlines the structure into six high-impact experiences. The program will combine performance coaching and learning through play and leadership communication. Moving from nine total sessions to six high-impact experiences. The program will be co-designed & co-facilitated by Emma Doyle & Jenny Drescher, combining performance coaching, learn through play and leadership communication

2 In-Person Meetings | 4 Virtual Sessions

EMERGING LEADERS ADVANCED

LEADERSHIP NETWORKING COHORT
POWERED BY NTMA

The Emerging Leaders Networking Group is a dynamic community for up-and-coming professionals ready to grow and connect. Facilitated by Tiffany Bryson of Blaser Swisslube, the group meets three times a year to build relationships, share ideas, and gain new perspectives. It's an energizing space designed to develop and inspire emerging leaders.

3 In-Person Meetings

EXECUTIVE COHORT

POWERED BY NTMA

Facilitated by Mike Griffith, Major Tool & Machine & Petersen, Inc., an experienced manufacturing leader and trusted guide to this distinguished group. This established cohort of top executives dives deep into today's challenges and opportunities, collaborating to exchange insights, refine strategies, and share best practices in a trusted, confidential setting.

3 In-Person Meetings

EXECUTIVE COHORT

POWERED BY NTMA

The Executive Cohort is a focused peer-to-peer community for leaders navigating the daily challenges and opportunities of running a manufacturing company. Moderated by Ralph Hardt of Belleville International, the group meets in confidential, on-site sessions hosted at member facilities to share insights, exchange best practices, and tackle real-world issues together. It's a collaborative, high-level forum designed to support and strengthen today's manufacturing executives.

3 In-Person Meetings

BENEFIT PARTNER

HOW NTMA MEMBERS CAN BUILD A STRONGER SALES PIPELINE IN 2026

ELIJAH CONDELLONE, SR. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, FACTUR

I talk to owners of machine shops multiple times a day, every week, and have for the past six years. I've heard versions of this statement hundreds, if not thousands of times, but it still hits just as hard every time I hear it:

"Elijah, we do great work. But our future is tied to just a handful of customers, and that keeps me up at night."

The most profitable and stable machine shops I meet have one thing in common: they refuse to let their future depend on a handful of legacy customers. Diversification isn't a luxury, it's the number one driver of growth, stability and valuation. Yet, most precision shops still rely on the same one, two or handful of long-term accounts for the majority of their revenue.

As a result, they feel the pressure every day:

- Larger customers demanding price cuts and extended payment terms
- Revenue cycles swinging up and down based on someone else's workload
- No freedom to "fire" bad customers who drain margins and resources
- Their core competency that they've spent years developing is really only valuable to one customer, making it hard to break free

Shops get stuck because they simply don't have a consistent way to find, develop and win new business. Without a modern sales engine generating high-quality leads and RFQs, ones that fit your capabilities and can turn into long-term partnerships, developing new business is nearly impossible. Without new opportunities coming in, the shop stays dependent, vulnerable and undervalued.

When I talk to NTMA members across the country, this is the real story behind stalled growth. It's not a lack of skill. It's not a lack of quality. It's not a lack of capacity. It's the absence of a scalable sales and marketing system built specifically for manufacturing.

FRUSTRATED WITH FAILED ATTEMPTS?

Many shops have tried relying on manufacturers reps or generic marketing agencies, but those approaches consistently fall short. Reps prioritize whichever supplier pays the highest commission. Agencies don't understand machining, capabilities, tolerances, lead times, quoting rhythms or the long sales cycles that define this industry. And bidding platforms? They almost always push shops into the worst kind of RFQs, the "race-to-the-bottom" buyers who see you as interchangeable and who reward the lowest price, not the best value.

A MODERN SALES ENGINE IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL.

If you want predictable growth, better margins and stronger negotiating leverage, you need a system that can identify ideal target customers, prospect them effectively, warm them up and convert them into long-term relationships you actually want. Here are a couple of examples of clients we've helped:

- **Production Machine Shop:** A \$17 million shop once dependent on four oil-and-gas customers (80% of revenue) diversified its base with Factur's support. Within three years, oil-and-gas work dropped to 20%, the customer base expanded to 20 accounts and the company grew enough to open a second facility.

- **Tool & Die Shop:** A \$9 million shop was hit hard when aerospace work collapsed during COVID. They engaged with Factur and the shop added 35 new customers in two years, grew to \$11 million in revenue and generated \$2 million in profit.

At Factur we've built a sales and marketing engine specifically for machining and manufacturing companies, one that prioritizes strategic outreach, capability-aligned opportunities and long-term customer development. We don't work on commission. We don't hand you random, low-quality leads. And we don't ask you to gamble on platforms filled with price-shoppers.

For NTMA members, we also offer preferred pricing with an 8% discount because we believe the industry needs partners who understand manufacturing, not generic providers who treat every business the same.

If you're ready to reduce dependence on a few customers, generate consistent RFQs and build the type of diversified customer base that increases both stability and valuation, let's talk.

You can reach me directly at:
elijah.condellone@facturmfg.com
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You can also visit facturmfg.com to learn more.

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CHAPTER CHECK-IN

\$50,000 GRANT AWARDED TO CALIFORNIA MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE FOUNDATION

KAITY VAN AMERSFORT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SoCAL CHAPTER NTMA

The Precision Manufacturing Foundation is pleased to announce a generous grant of \$50,000 awarded to the California Manufacturing Workforce Foundation (CMWF). This funding will support CMWF's ongoing efforts to provide scholarships to students pursuing manufacturing careers.

As the manufacturing sector continues to evolve, it is vital to nurture the next generation of skilled workers. The grant from the PMF will enable CMWF to increase accessibility to education and training, equipping students with the necessary skills to thrive in today's dynamic manufacturing environment.

"We are thrilled to partner with the California Manufacturing Workforce Foundation in their mission to empower aspiring manufacturers," said Micheline Varnum, Trustee of the PMF. "Investing in education and fostering talent in the manufacturing sector is crucial for the growth and sustainability of our industry."

The California Manufacturing Workforce Foundation has been instrumental in providing students with resources and opportunities to explore various manufacturing pathways. With this grant, the foundation will expand its scholarship programs, reach a wider audience and inspire

more students to consider a future in manufacturing.

"This grant will significantly impact our ability to support students in their pursuit of manufacturing careers," said Heather O'Connell, Board Member of the California Manufacturing Workforce Foundation and owner at Schaffer Grinding. "We are grateful for the trust placed in us and are excited to see the positive changes this funding can bring to our community."

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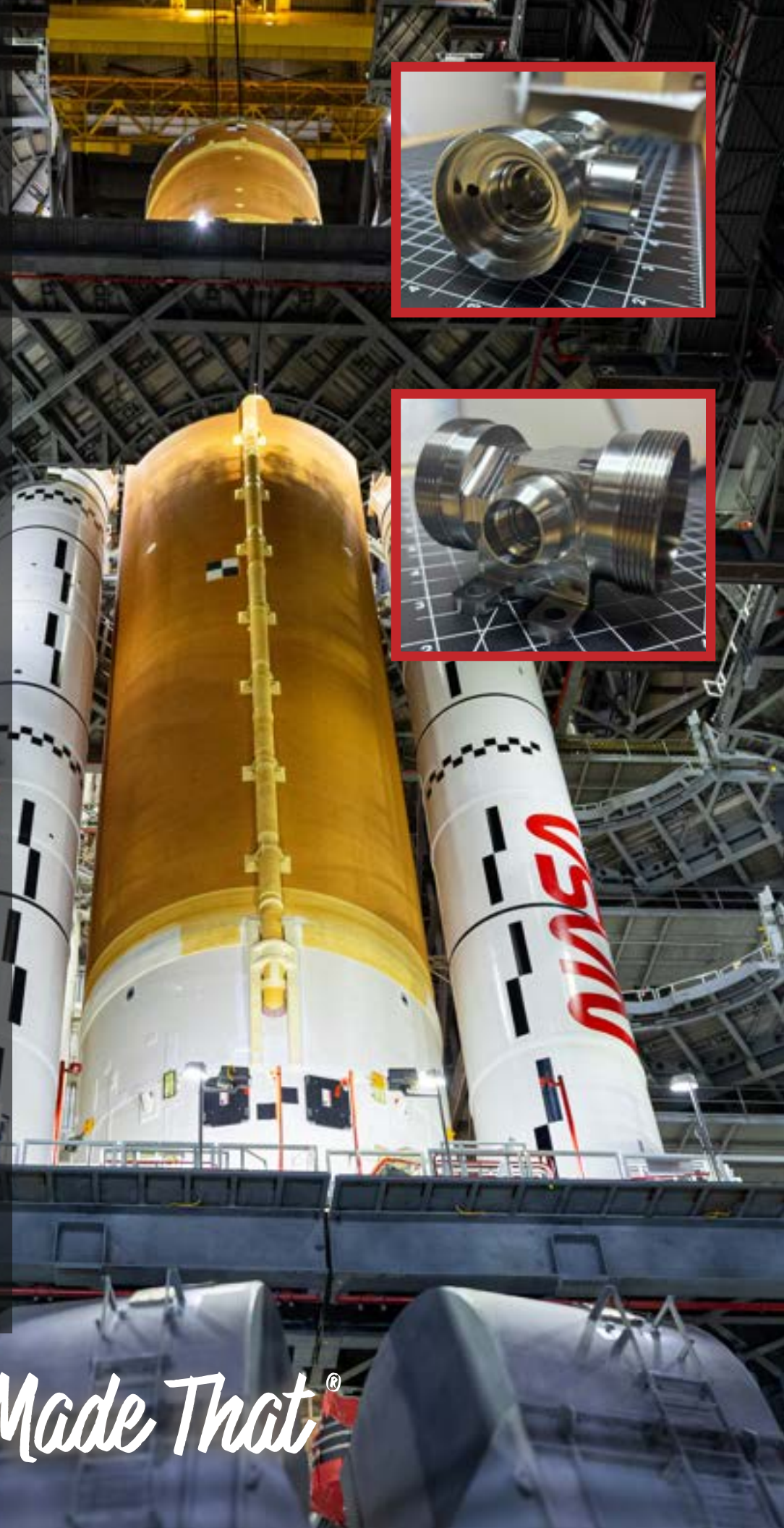


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- MATT SAND, PRESIDENT & CEO
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