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

LEADERS NEED LEADERS

PEER SUPPORT MOTIVATES AND MULTIPLIES IMPACT



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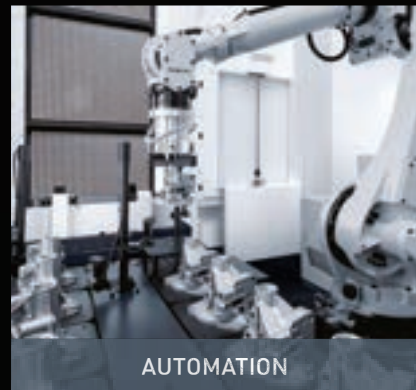
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FROM ROGER

a message from the president

This month we focus on leadership — something every team depends on to move forward, adapt and ultimately succeed.

Too often, we automatically equate “leader” with “leadership.” We assume the person with the title, the corner office or the ownership stake is the one providing direction. In many cases, that’s true, but not always. In fact, some of the most impactful leadership I’ve seen over the years has come from people whose names never appeared on an organizational chart.

The reality is simple: being in charge does not guarantee leadership. Leadership is not assigned — it’s earned. It shows up in the people others choose to follow, regardless of title, position or formal authority.

Think about it in your own organization. Who do people turn to when there’s a problem? Who sets the tone on the shop floor, in meetings or during difficult moments? Who do others watch before they decide how to react? That’s where leadership lives.

Some of the strongest leaders I’ve encountered never held a formal leadership title. In my career, I’ve seen this play out time and time again. I once knew a shop planner who, on paper, had limited authority. He didn’t have a large team reporting to him. He didn’t hold an executive title, but he

had something far more powerful — credibility, consistency and the respect of everyone around him.

His actions spoke louder than any title ever could. He showed up prepared. He followed through. He cared deeply about the work and the people doing it. Because of that, others naturally followed him. I’ve often said that if he walked onto the floor and told the team they were going to run through a wall, they would have done it — no hesitation, no second-guessing. That’s not authority. That’s leadership.

Leadership, at its core, is about influence. It’s about making things happen through others — not through force, but through trust, clarity and example. The best leaders don’t just tell people what to do; they show them how to think, how to act and what matters most.

Here’s an important truth that sometimes gets overlooked: most employees don’t resist work — they resist confusion. They don’t disengage because they lack ability. They disengage because they lack direction. When people understand the mission, see consistency in behavior and trust the person guiding them, they tend to rise to the occasion.

A lack of leadership is often the root of frustration inside organizations. It’s not the job itself that causes the problem —

it’s the absence of clear expectations, consistent decision-making and visible accountability. People want to be part of something that is going somewhere. Leadership provides that “somewhere.”

Another misconception we need to challenge is the idea that longevity equals leadership. Just because someone has been with a company for 10, 20 or 30 years does not automatically make them a leader. Experience matters — no question — but experience alone doesn’t inspire followership.

Leadership is a gift. Some individuals seem to have a natural ability to bring people together, to create clarity out of chaos and to move a group forward. But, that doesn’t mean leadership is exclusive to a select few. It can absolutely be developed. People can grow into leadership roles over time through mentorship, experience and intentional effort.

However — and this is important — not everyone will become a true leader, and that’s okay. Strong organizations aren’t built on the assumption that everyone leads; they’re built by identifying who can lead and putting them in positions where that leadership can have impact.

As leaders of our companies, our responsibility goes far beyond setting strategy or hitting financial targets. Our job is to find those individuals within our teams who already demonstrate

leadership and invest in them.

They are often the quiet influencers. They are the people others listen to. They step up when something needs to get done. They hold themselves—and others—to a higher standard without being asked.

When you find them, don’t ignore them. Don’t assume they’ll just keep doing what they’re doing. Recognize them. Develop them. Give them opportunities to expand their influence. These individuals are your culture carriers. They are the bridge between what leadership says and what the organization actually does.

At the same time, we also have to take a hard look in the mirror. For those of us in formal leadership roles, the question isn’t, “Do I have the title?” It’s “Am I actually leading?”

Are we setting the example we expect others to follow?

Are we providing clarity or creating confusion?

Are we building trust or eroding it through inconsistency?

Are we visible and engaged or distant and reactive?

Titles may give us authority, but only our actions will

determine whether people truly follow us.

In the end, leadership is less about position and more about behavior. It’s not about being the loudest voice in the room — it’s about being the most trusted. It’s not about control — it’s about influence. And it’s not about having all the answers — it’s about creating an environment where the right answers can emerge and be acted upon.

If we want stronger organizations, we need to broaden our definition of leadership. We need to stop looking only at titles and start recognizing impact. The future of any company won’t be determined solely by the person at the top. It will be shaped by the leaders at every level who others choose to follow.

Find them. Develop them. And just as importantly — be one worth following.

Roger Atkins, President, NTMA

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Central At Large Region

Formed By Makers is a vertically integrated industrial design and manufacturing company based in Metro Detroit, Michigan, specializing in vacuum forming, CNC routing and tooling design for engineered plastic components. The company supports the signage industry, automotive and aftermarket applications, agricultural equipment, biotechnology, consumer products, industrial components and furniture manufacturing.

With more than 15 years of automotive and consumer product development experience, Formed By Makers operates as both a design house and contract manufacturer. Services include industrial design, CAD development, design for manufacturability (DFM), 3D scanning, reverse engineering, rapid prototyping and functional 3D printing. Engineering and production are integrated from concept through launch to ensure scalability, production efficiency and margin-driven cost control.

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Western At Large Region

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Arizona Chapter

MajX CNC is a precision machine shop located in Tempe, Arizona. Our mission is to deliver evidence-based and compassionate solutions through tangible products and exceptional customer service. With more than 25 years of combined expertise in manufacturing process development, repair, design and aerospace engineering, MajX CNC offers a unique integration of advanced technical proficiency and superior leadership. We leverage industry-leading software including SolidWorks, Mastercam and MiCAT for precision modeling, CNC programming and automated inspection, ensuring optimized workflows and robust revision control. Our capabilities are anchored by a 5-axis machining center and a 5-axis CMM, supported by a strong commitment to automation, innovation, operational excellence and continuous improvement. These foundations enable us to consistently deliver superior products and outstanding service to our customers. MajX CNC maintains ProShop as its ERP system and is committed to achieving AS9100D/ISO 9001 certification while maintaining ITAR compliance.

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MASTERS PRECISION MACHINING, INC.

Akron Chapter

Masters Precision Machining provides a wide range of machining, turning, milling, fabricating and prototyping services for our customers.

Mission: To take all that we know about precision machining and use it to the benefit of our employees, our customers, our suppliers and our community, bringing all honor and glory to God who we serve.

Masters Precision Machining Inc. started like most companies did, as a dream, and after having a small taste of business ownership, we truly believed this was the work the Lord was calling us into. So trusting in the Lord's leading and our more than 30 years of machining experience, we started praying and searching for where the Lord would lead us.

We knew before our search ever began, that this company, if He ever willed it to be, would be an instrument to be used for His glory, and in this, its name would honor Him. Jesus Christ is the reason we exist today, so no other name was more fitting than, Masters Precision Machining, Inc.

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www.mpmachininginc.com



CORRECTION:

In the April issue we improperly identified the chapters of two new members. Penn Manufacturing is a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter and Precision Manufacturing is a member of the Arizona Chapter

Would you like to see your company on the pages of The Record?

We want to hear your story.

Our editorial staff is currently scheduling member companies for our regular features:

WHO WE ARE & WE MADE THAT.

If you think your business would be a good fit, please email:

editor@ntma.org

ADVOCACY: ADMINISTRATION REVISES SECTION 232 METAL TARIFFS



The Administration issued an April 2, 2026 proclamation, effective April 6, 2026 revising how Section 232 tariffs apply to steel, aluminum, copper and a range of downstream products. The action reorganizes tariff coverage into four annexes.

Under the updated framework, Annex I-A applies a 50 percent tariff to products made predominantly of steel, aluminum or copper, while Annex I-B assigns a 25 percent rate to specified steel and aluminum derivatives. Annex II removes certain items from Section 232 coverage, and Annex III establishes a temporary 15 percent tariff through December 31,

2027, with a scheduled increase to 25 percent thereafter. The proclamation also provides authority to accelerate the Annex III rate increase for specific countries if import volumes are deemed to undermine national security objectives.

The proclamation includes expanded product-level specificity across a range of industrial goods. Covered items include iron or steel, structures (excluding prefab structures of heading 9406) and parts of structures, nesoi (HTS 7308.90.95), iron or steel, articles forged or stamped but not further worked, nesoi (HTS 7326.19.00), and articles of aluminum, nesoi (HTS 7616.99.5190) which remain subject to a 50 percent tariffs. Derivative articles such as castors, of base metal (HTS 8302.20.00), other mountings, fittings and similar articles suitable for motor vehicles, and parts thereof, of iron or steel, aluminum or zinc (HTS 83202.30.3060), and door hardware nesoi of iron or steel, aluminum or zinc (HTS 8302.41.6045) are now subject to a 25 percent tariff.

A key change in the proclamation is the method for calculating duties. Section 232 tariffs will now apply to the full customs value of covered imports, replacing the prior approach that assessed duties based only on the value of the metal content. The administration indicated this revision is intended to simplify enforcement and reduce ambiguity in valuation.

The action also formally ends the Section 232 derivative product inclusion process, including for copper. That process previously allowed stakeholders to request the addition of downstream products to tariff coverage. At the time of the proclamation, several submissions from the September 2025 steel and aluminum derivative round remained pending, leaving some uncertainty regarding how those requests will ultimately be addressed.

For the full annexes of covered articles, visit: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/ANNEXES-I-A-I-B-II-III-IV.pdf>. For CBP implementation guidance, including entry filing instructions, see: https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDHSCBP-4117593?wgt_ref=USDHSCBP_WIDGET_2



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: IN THE AGE OF AI, LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT CLEAR DIRECTION



Leadership in 2026 isn't about having all the answers. It's about setting direction when the answers are cheaper, faster and sometimes generated by machines.

New technology — especially AI — has changed the tempo of decision-making. Information is abundant, options are endless and tools can produce plans in seconds. That can make leaders

feel they need to move faster than ever.

But speed without clarity just creates noise. The best leaders I see today are calm filters: they decide what matters, what "good" looks like and what gets ignored.

In manufacturing, that starts with plain language outcomes. Not "digital transformation," but "reduce programming time," "increase spindle utilization" or "quote faster without adding headcount." Clear goals turn shiny tools into useful experiments.

Next comes trust. AI can feel like a black box, which means teams need guardrails, not hype. Leadership looks like defining where the tool helps, where a human must verify and what standards never change — quality, safety and accountability. People adopt change more readily when they know the craft is still respected.

Finally, leadership in 2026 is creating a learning culture that survives busy weeks. Protect time for training, peer-to-peer sharing and quick retros. Reward curiosity and honesty, not just firefighting. The competitive edge isn't the newest software — it's the team's rate of improvement.

Technology will amplify your strengths or expose your habits. Leadership is choosing which, and making the choice visible every day.



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

FINANCIAL SERVICES: THE EVOLUTION OF A LEADER



A century ago, leadership was simpler. Expectations were clearer, and the role centered on setting the tone — showing up, working hard and earning respect through example. Today, the definition hasn't disappeared, but the environment around it has changed.

Modern leaders operate inside a web of compliance requirements, tax obligations, wage laws and employee expectations. What once sat in the background now demands daily

attention. As a result, many leaders find themselves managing tasks instead of leading people.

The shift isn't about doing more. It's about doing the right work.

Strong leaders today recognize that control is not the same as effectiveness. Holding onto every responsibility may feel necessary, but it often limits growth. Delegation — done thoughtfully — is not a loss of control. It's a decision to focus on what moves the business forward: developing people, strengthening operations and creating continuity. That includes being honest about administrative work that falls outside your core focus.

Outsourcing payroll and HR is one way leaders create space, but not all partners operate the same. A few things matter:

Tax responsibility: Who makes deposits, and who is accountable if something goes wrong?

Scalability: Can the service adapt as your workforce and complexity grow?

Support model: Do you have consistent access to people who understand your business?

Leadership today still requires setting the example. The difference is knowing where your time has the most impact — and building the right support around it.



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.

LEADERSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY:

how NTMA shaped my journey



ERIC HAGOPIAN, CEO, PILOT PRECISION PRODUCTS AND CURRENT NTMA CHAIRMAN

Leadership is often described as vision, decisiveness or resilience. While those qualities matter, my experience has taught me that leadership is something more enduring: the willingness to learn from others and grow alongside them. For me, that lesson came through the National Tooling and Machining Association (NTMA).

My family's journey with NTMA began in 1945, when my grandfather, A.J. "Hoppe" Hagopian — an Armenian immigrant, toolmaker and entrepreneur — joined what was then the National Tool, Die and Precision Machining Association. What started as a small job shop in a garage in 1941 became Hoppe Tool over time, growing into a full-scale operation built on craftsmanship and determination.

Twenty years later, leadership passed to the second generation — my father, Gary Hagopian. My dad not only carried the business forward, but deepened its involvement with NTMA. He became active in chapter leadership, education initiatives and national events. More importantly, he instilled in me a belief that leadership doesn't happen in isolation — it happens in community.

When I joined the business in 1990, the world was changing. The Cold War was ending, and like many shops, we had built our foundation on defense work. Suddenly, we needed to adapt. Under my father's guidance, we diversified into commercial markets, working with companies like Borg-Warner, IBM and Gillette, while maintaining a presence in defense.

Shortly after joining the company, my father strongly encouraged me to get involved in our local NTMA chapter. That decision would shape the rest of my career.

I joined the chapter board in 1993 and remained involved through 2016, serving as president twice. During those 23 years, I saw firsthand how leadership is developed — not just through running a business, but through serving others. Together with fellow members, we helped establish vocational training programs and worked to build the pipeline of skilled labor our industry depends on.

At the same time, my brother Doug and I were building our company. When we took over in 1995, we were young and

ambitious — but we were far from having all the answers.

What we found in NTMA was transformational.

Our competitors became collaborators. Then they became friends. And eventually, they became trusted advisors.

Instead of guarding information, we shared it. Instead of fearing competition, we leveraged each other's strengths. We passed work back and forth, solved problems together and learned from one another's successes — and failures.

That collaboration directly impacted our growth. From 1995 until we sold the company in 2011, our business grew sixfold. I can say without hesitation: that growth would not have been possible without NTMA.

One of the most powerful lessons came from simply visiting other shops. We saw that the best-performing companies shared common traits — discipline, organization and pride in their environment.

We decided to raise our own standards.

What began as an effort to "clean up the shop" turned into a full-scale transformation. We relocated equipment, renovated in phases,

installed epoxy floors, improved lighting, enclosed machines and implemented mist collection systems. Over time, we created a world-class facility — and expanded our footprint by 50 percent.

That transformation changed everything.

Our shop became a destination. Customers wanted to visit. Employees took pride in their workplace. And our reputation grew, not just locally, but nationally. Recognition followed — from customers, from industry peers and even from elected officials — especially during critical periods like Operation Desert Storm, when we were producing essential components for night vision and infrared systems.

As we grew, so did the complexity of our challenges. And once again, NTMA was there.

At the chapter level, we had built strong relationships. At the national level, we found something equally valuable: perspective. Through national conferences and roundtable discussions, we connected with companies facing the same challenges we were — just at a larger scale.

We spoke openly and confidentially about issues that matter deeply to every business owner: OSHA compliance,

long-term agreements, insurance, employment law and technical challenges. These weren't theoretical conversations — they were practical, experience-based solutions shared among peers who genuinely wanted to help each other succeed.

That is leadership.

It's not about having all the answers. It's about knowing where to find them — and being willing to both give and receive guidance.

Looking back, my journey — from joining the family business as a young man to helping grow it into a company attractive to private equity — was shaped at every step by the relationships, insights and opportunities that came through NTMA.

The bottom line is simple:

We would not have succeeded the way we did without NTMA. And more importantly, I would not understand leadership the way I do today. Leadership is not a solo endeavor. It is built through shared experience, mutual trust and commitment to lifting others as you climb.

That is the legacy of NTMA—and it's one I am proud to have been a part of.

LEADING WITH INTENTION

TIFFANY BRYSON, HEAD OF INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIPS - AMERICAS, BLASER SWISSLUBE INC.



If you ask me what type of leader I am, I'd describe myself as a direct leader with compassion. I am the type of person that doesn't like to dance around a challenge. I hit it head on. I bring people together and we talk it through. I care deeply for my team, and there is a standard that I set. I am going to help you get there, but there has to be a solution when we leave a room. If we don't have a solution, we have the next date on the calendar to bring solutions to the table and attack them.

That is MY style. It won't work for everyone. My style has evolved – with intention. With every position and with every project, I've gained a deeper understanding of the type of leader that I want to be, and I've focused on how I'm going to get there.

As the facilitator for this year's NTMA Emerging Leaders, my role isn't to teach leadership, it's to facilitate intentional development. I believe the same simple questions we use with this group can help leaders at every level.

What type of leader do you want to be?

What are you doing now to get you there?

What's holding you back?

Leadership isn't something you stumble into — it's something you choose. And yet, many professionals spend more time mastering operations than defining how they want to lead people. Companies often prioritize output — making parts, hitting numbers — while leadership development becomes an afterthought. In reality, leadership isn't secondary to performance. It's the engine behind it. When leadership and culture click into place, everything else follows.

There are many types of leaders. We've all had good leaders, and we've all had bad leaders. I encourage anyone who is honing their leadership style to look back on their career thus far. Who were the people that inspired you? How did they make you feel and what was it about him or her that made you WANT to pursue success? What type of leader do you

want to be? That question is more powerful than it sounds. Because once you answer it, everything else becomes more intentional.

In our Emerging Leaders group, we dive deep. What's working? What's not? We talked a lot about accountability and delegation. How do you get someone to rise up and do what you are asking? For a lot of young leaders, this is difficult. How much power do I have? What should I say? How do I get them to do these things? Once they get comfortable, they really start sharing. It's great to watch it unfold.

This is the beauty of a networking group. It's where the true work happens. Each member has a challenge, and as we got to know each other more, we started to share our challenges. We discussed as a group: What should you be doing or implementing? What is your challenge? What are you going to do about it now?

I highly recommend the Emerging Leaders group for this type of connection, but if you aren't able to participate, find

your crew among your peers. While refining your leadership style can be intensely personal, having a trusted network to share ideas with can be a game-changer. This may be in the form of a leadership group or a mentor. Choose professionals who you respect, who hold your information confidentially and who you can share with openly. Lean into this model.

It's no secret that today's manufacturing industry is operating with a workforce deficit. Now, more than ever, strong, intentional leaders are making a difference in their organizations. Gone are the days of autocratic leadership. To keep a productive, successful team, today's leaders need to be able to read their employees. What motivates them? What drives results? Know the men and women in your organization. But then, be sure you know yourself. Are your actions and decisions pointing you to the leader you want to be? Check in often with yourself and your peer network. Intentional leadership isn't a destination, it's a process.

EMERGING LEADERS 2026

KRISTEN HRUSCH, EVENTS MANAGER, NTMA

Emerging Leaders 2026 brought a motivated group of rising professionals to Grand Rapids, Michigan in April for an energizing, insight-packed experience focused on leadership development, meaningful connections and real-world application. Designed for those stepping into and preparing for leadership roles, the event struck a balance between professional development and authentic conversation, leaving attendees with both inspiration and a clear path forward. Emerging Leaders is more than a conference. It's about engaging with ideas, people and challenges in a way that is relevant and actionable. Participants were able to connect with others based on shared roles, interests and goals. This intentional style of networking resulted in a room full of professionals who didn't just exchange business cards — they built relationships. The Emerging Leaders Conference was an environment where ideas could be tested in real time and challenges could be unpacked collaboratively.



One of the highlights of the event was the lineup of top-tier speakers who brought a wide range of perspectives from across the industry. Rather than focusing on theory, speakers shared candid insights drawn from their own leadership journeys — what worked, what didn't and what they learned along the way. Sessions covered key topics like navigating

the transition from individual contributor to manager, building trust within teams and leading with both accountability and empathy. The emphasis on real-world application made it easier for participants to see how these ideas could translate into their own roles, whether they were leading a small team or preparing for broader organizational responsibility. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions, share their own experiences and engage in dialogue with both speakers and peers. This collaborative atmosphere fostered an environment where challenges could be explored openly and solutions could be developed collectively. It also reinforced a key theme of the event: leadership is not a solo journey.



Participants had the opportunity to connect in a more relaxed, albeit competitive, setting during the social night at Gimme's Par and Grill. The high-energy atmosphere featured golf simulators and other interactive games. The evening event also offered a chance to continue conversations outside of the formal agenda.

Throughout the conference, a consistent message emerged: leadership requires intention. It's not enough to simply move into a leadership role — you have to decide what kind of leader you want to be and then

intentionally become that leader. The event reinforced the importance of self-awareness, communication and continuous learning as foundational elements of effective leadership. Attendees left with more than just ideas — they left with actionable strategies. From improving communication with their teams to approaching delegation and accountability with greater clarity, participants walked away with tools they could implement immediately. Just as important, they left with a network of peers and mentors they can continue to learn from and with. It wasn't just about what happened during the event — it's about what happens next.

Each year, NTMA accepts a new cohort of Emerging Leaders. If you or someone you know would be a good candidate for this program, please reach out to Kristen Hrusch at: khrusch@ntma.org



Connect. Grow. Lead.



“EMERGING LEADERS IS MORE THAN A CONFERENCE. IT'S ABOUT ENGAGING WITH IDEAS, PEOPLE AND CHALLENGES IN A WAY THAT IS RELEVANT AND ACTIONABLE.”

GROWING *into* LEADERSHIP

ANDY REINWALD, PRESIDENT, RIPLEY MACHINE



Ripley Machine was established in 1994 by my grandfather, Quentin Bensink. The business itself has been around since the 1950s, but that's when we got our official name. Two of the team members that worked here when my grandfather bought the company still work here today, and two more recently retired.

When I graduated from high school in 2011, I had previously worked at the shop, but I didn't find it appealing. I always had a mind for entrepreneurship and the thought of owning the business one day excited me, but I was not very interested in the work or culture I had experienced in my summer work at the shop.

However, as I started to work more in the business and understand how exciting and rewarding the manufacturing world can be, I fell in love with manufacturing and decided to purchase the business from my grandfather in 2015 at 21 years old.

One of the nicest things for me was that I was able to work alongside my grandfather for several years. Any time I had issues or questions, he was there for me to turn to.

The most influential and critical trait that my grandfather instilled in me was the role of God in our lives and our business. God has placed us in this business, in this community and the lives of our team members for a reason. That is at the heart of everything I do and every decision I make. The business is more than just a way to make a living. It's an opportunity to impact the lives of many people. My

grandfather laid that groundwork, and every day I work to advance that mission.

When I came into the business there was definitely an "old school" mentality. I cringe thinking of some of the things I went through or heard 15 years ago. However, going through some of those experiences helped me know with certainty what I did and didn't want for Ripley Machine, and we quickly addressed those issues.

I love the blended generations at Ripley Machine. We had a foreman who had been at the business for nearly 50 years when he retired a few years ago. He worked closely with a few of our leaders from my generation and it led to some impactful strides for our company. He offered us the wisdom of five decades in machining while we brought the excitement and willingness to try something new. It made for a great combination to help us grow.

One of the best things we have done at Ripley Machine is implementing a Daily Drumbeat. All of our team members gather, and a member of management leads the drumbeat. We address: safety concerns, QMS updates, quality issues, provide sales updates (we give actual dollar values!), give updates on hot and late orders, discuss 6S and the 8 Wastes as well as other lean initiatives and key updates. We also announce any visitors we have that day and honor birthdays and work anniversaries. This meeting helps everyone know what is going on.

It has helped to eliminate any barriers to communication we have had in the shop. I am really proud of our team and how they have embraced this meeting and are actively participating in it.

As the owner of Ripley Machine, I'm very proud of the strides



we've made over the years. I've also dealt with my own set of leadership challenges. Communication can be a struggle, particularly when it comes to difficult conversations. I am a people pleaser. Over time, I have realized that good leadership is being able to say the tough things. Sometimes that means delivering bad news to a customer in a timely manner. Sometimes that means addressing our team members about an ongoing issue.

I'm learning to recognize challenges for what they are instead of seeing them as failures. Over the last few years, I have recognized that when issues (scrap, delays, etc.) happen, it can easily be traced back to a process problem and not a person problem. When we have an issue, I take responsibility for the process but try not to see it as a personal shortfall.

As a leader who has poured tens of thousands of hours into Ripley Machine, it can be hard for me to delegate. This company is like my child. I know that I have a great team

around me but I still struggle to hand off tasks or responsibilities and just trust my team. This is something that I am working on and I am grateful for mentors from the NTMA who have helped me grow.

Going forward, my prayer is to continue to develop my leadership at Ripley Machine to be a Biblical leader. Our church has an "Awake the Lake" initiative. The goal is to equip members of the church to "follow Jesus as we live out God's story every day." I am excited to embrace my role as a leader and improve my ability to positively impact others. I am lucky to be surrounded by team members at Ripley Machine who are as excited as I am about our future and what we are building. I can't wait to see what is to come.



LEADERSHIP:

MARK J. DORMAN, CEPA, CFBS, ChFC, AIF, PRESIDENT, SUCCESSION +

the central pillar of a successful business transition

For any business — from large to small — succession planning is a vital component of future success. Corporate strategy notwithstanding, succession strategy holds the key to business stability, employee morale and financial growth.

A strong succession plan requires thoughtful and confident leadership. In a closely held business, decision making is often concentrated solely with the owner, or a tightly knit group of leaders within the company. The ability of those men and women to remain secure in the present, while at the same time demonstrate the foresight a future transition demands, foretells that company's future success.

What then, is the role of leadership within succession planning? The following points demonstrate where leadership will drive the successful transition of your business:

PRESERVATION OF ENTERPRISE VALUE

In a manufacturing business, for instance, oftentimes the owner maintains all the key relationships, be

it with customers, vendors or financial institutions. When all roads lead to one individual, there are inherent risks involved when transitioning those primary relationships to the next generation of owners, whether they are family members or a third party. When the business is central to the owner, that centrality can actually erode the value of the business.

TRANSFER OF INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE FROM THE CURRENT LEADER TO THE FUTURE LEADERS OF THE BUSINESS

Again, if only one individual owns not only the primary business relationships, but the knowledge tied to them, that reflects a lack of leadership. True leadership involves disseminating the knowledge and sharing the relationships with others in the business. Moving this beyond the owner's door allows the business to become more attractive to — and less risky for — the next owner. All told, it makes the business more valuable.

CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND STABILITY

In this case, culture has to do with the decision-making style of the current owner. A strong succession plan develops leaders who understand the company's history and heritage. A successful leader is willing to evolve the culture of the company without detracting from its past.

LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND THE LONG-TERM VISION OF THE COMPANY

Succession planning requires the development and mentorship of the next generation of leaders. In developing future leaders, maintaining the status quo simply falls short. They must be able to navigate the unforeseeable (remember Covid?) and adapt accordingly. Nurtured leaders are responsible for preserving the business's competitive advantage.

STAKEHOLDER CONFIDENCE

Think of this as the most important

shared responsibility of the current and future leadership teams. Key stakeholders in any business include:

- Employees
- Clients/customers
- Banks/financial institutions
- Vendors
- Minority shareholders

Clear, consistent communication to these groups is imperative. Without it, the messages signal too much risk and a potential decline in the future of the business.

A FORMAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

By their very nature, entrepreneurs eschew formality. A succession plan anchored in leadership and development introduces defined roles of authority. Structure is especially critical when a company is transferring from a founder-led organization to a team-led organization or, from a family-owned business to one that's professionally managed. In particular, the following should be well-understood:

- Accountability
- Decision making protocols
- Key Performance Indicators

EXECUTION OF THE SUCCESSION PLAN

Without good leadership, a succession plan never gets started. The initial steps are:

- Begin the succession process
- Let go of control (this is often the most difficult step)
- Mentor your team with intention
- Transition current relationships

Incoming leaders must earn credibility, make sound decisions, be allowed to fail and balance the legacy of the company while still making forward progress.

ALIGNMENT OF CURRENT OWNERSHIP WITH THE FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TRANSITION PLAN

The outgoing leader must align themselves with ownership incentives, (without being greedy) along with the cash flow requirements of the business

to include any and all debt obligations.

In a privately held business, like those of you within NTMA, leadership is the business. Assets, systems and brand are secondary to the individuals making decisions and maintaining relationships.

The optimum time to start succession planning is three to five years out. Exercise good leadership and start your succession plan.

Are you ready to begin?

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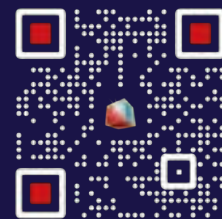
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“Even if you are not in the industry, going to **IMTS** exposes you to a **new frontier of crazy machinery, connections, and opportunities.** Just walking that show could totally change your career path.”

Roadtripping parents-to-be Jeff and Crystal knew the importance of planning – and being flexible. They brought an open mind to **IMTS – The International Manufacturing Technology Show** and found new technologies, great people – and new ways to do business.

Transform your approach at IMTS on Sept. 14-19, 2026, in Chicago.

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CHAPTER CHECK-IN

RRVTMA WELCOMES THIRD GENERATION LEADER

TAYLOR HOHN, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST, DIGITAL HIVE MIND, INC.



The Rock River Valley Tooling & Machining Association (RRVTMA), the Stataline's chapter of the NTMA, has appointed Anthony Busse of Rockford Toolcraft as Director of Membership Engagement, effective immediately.

Busse represents the third generation of his family to serve on the RRVTMA Board, reflecting a long-standing commitment to the regional

manufacturing community and the association's mission to advance workforce development and technical excellence.

A 2020 graduate of the RRVTMA's Tool & Die Apprenticeship Program, Busse completed his four-year apprenticeship in partnership with Rock Valley College while working full time in the toolroom at Rockford Toolcraft. His career progression reflects a comprehensive understanding of the manufacturing process — from the toolroom floor to executive leadership.

Busse began at Rockford Toolcraft in 2015, working during the summer between his junior and senior year of high school and continuing after school throughout his senior year. From 2016 to 2020, he completed his apprenticeship while accumulating 10,000 hours of on-the-job training. He

later transitioned into Rockford Toolcraft's cost estimating department, where he created strip layouts using SolidWorks and Logopress to support customer quotations. In 2024, he moved into the engineering department, designing metal stamping dies run in-house or sold to customers. In 2025, Busse attended the NTMA Emerging Leaders Conference in Orlando, FL, and later that year was promoted to Vice President of Rockford Toolcraft. He now assists his father, Tom Busse, a RRVTMA Trustee, in leading the company.

As Director of Membership Engagement, Busse will focus on strengthening relationships among RRVTMA members, encouraging participation in association programs and supporting initiatives that connect manufacturers across the Rock River Valley.

"Anthony's journey—from apprentice to vice president and now board member—exemplifies the strength of our apprenticeship model and the future of manufacturing leadership in our region," said Jared Lyford, President of RRVTMA. "His experience across multiple facets of manufacturing will be a tremendous asset to our members, as well as current and future apprentices. Coupling this with the legacy leadership the Busse family has provided for the association, we are excited to have Anthony join the association to help continue our mission."

FRESH WEBSITE LAUNCH FOR SO CAL NTMA

KAITY VAN AMERSFORT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SO CAL NTMA

The NEW So Cal NTMA website is officially online. The upgrade was designed with members in mind and brings innovative features to help our manufacturing community connect, collaborate and thrive like never before.

The new website includes tools and features our community has never had before — making it easier to network, access resources and stay informed about the latest industry news and events. We're confident these enhancements will strengthen our community and provide greater value to all our members.



You can check out the new site at: socalntma.org



ASSET-BASED LENDING AND FACTORING: *a practical financing guide for NTMA members*

CONTRIBUTED BY THE SECURED FINANCE NETWORK

For machining and tooling companies, growth often strains cash flow. Long lead times, customer specific tooling, high material costs and extended payment terms can delay incoming cash even when demand is strong. Asset-based lending (ABL) and factoring are financing solutions that address these challenges by unlocking working capital tied up in existing assets.

WHAT IS ASSET-BASED LENDING (ABL)?

Asset-based lending provides revolving credit or loans secured by collateral — most commonly accounts receivable, inventory, and often machinery and equipment. Unlike traditional bank loans that emphasize profitability, ABL focuses on the value and quality of these assets.

Borrowing capacity is determined through a borrowing base, which advances a percentage of eligible receivables and inventory with equipment frequently structured as a separate term loan. As receivables increase, financing availability can grow alongside the business.

For machining and tooling companies, ABL is commonly used to finance raw materials and work in process, support new customer programs, manage long production and billing

cycles and supplement or replace traditional bank lines that may not scale. ABL is widely used by healthy manufacturing businesses and is considered a strategic working capital tool.

WHAT IS FACTORING?

Factoring allows companies to sell invoices to a finance provider for immediate cash rather than waiting 30, 60 or 90 days for payment. This structure helps manufacturers convert shipments or billings into liquidity shortly after invoicing. Factoring is often used by smaller or growing companies, especially those with concentrated customer bases or limited operating history.

Why These Solutions Matter

ABL and factoring align financing with the production cycle of your company. Key benefits include improved liquidity without giving up equity, financing that scales with sales and continued access to capital despite uneven earnings.

ABL generally works best for established companies with diverse assets and larger capital needs, while factoring can be an effective solution earlier in a company's growth. Many businesses transition between the two as they evolve. For more information contact Secured Finance Network.

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Scan to learn more about manufacturing industry insurance and the options available to help meet your business needs.

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Read Their Story

THE MFG MEETING

SIGNALS, STRATEGY, AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR MANUFACTURING:

The MFG Meeting 2026 recap



ABOVE: AMT President Doug Woods opened The MFG Meeting with his presentation, "Bridging the Physical and Digital: MTCconnect, USD, Omniverse and the Future of Industrial AI."

What happens when AI moves beyond a buzzword to measurable value? At The MFG Meeting 2026, produced by AMT, industry leaders explored that shift alongside economic signals, leadership dynamics and new growth opportunities in defense and biomanufacturing.

CONNECTING DATA, MACHINES AND POLICY
AMT President Doug Woods opened by highlighting manufacturing's accelerating convergence of the physical and digital worlds. Open standards like MTCconnect, combined with platforms such as Nvidia's Omniverse and OpenUSD, are advancing interoperability and enabling greater visibility, simulation and decision-making. New models, including programmable cloud labs and "fractional AI factories," are lowering barriers to experimentation and adoption of advanced capabilities.

FROM HYPE TO APPLICATION: AI OPERATIONS AND AUTOMATION
Jannik Wiedenhaupt of SupplyCo AI demonstrated practical AI applications across commercial and operational workflows—from improving CRM performance to identifying and prioritizing opportunities—allowing teams to focus on higher-value work without large-scale transformation. Simon Lapeyry of Intrinsic, an AI and robotics group at Google, outlined how AI-driven perception, grasp and motion planning and sensor-guided insertion are improving efficiency and accelerating time-to-value in high-mix environments.

ECONOMIC CLARITY IN AN UNCERTAIN CYCLE
Connor Lokar of ITR Economics projected a manufacturing uptick through 2026, led by aerospace

and defense, followed by a more challenging environment in 2027, reinforcing the need for disciplined planning.

RETHINKING STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP
Kaihan Krippendorff, founder of Outthinker, emphasized the "proximity revolution," where leading companies create value closer to demand in both time and space. Sam Potolicchio, Ph.D., president of the Preparing Global Leaders Forum and professor at Georgetown University, highlighted how cognitive bias and assumptions continue to impede effective decision-making in complex environments.

MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONAL



LEFT: J.R. Martinez, a wounded U.S. Army veteran, spoke about adapting, shifting perspective and moving forward when the path is unclear.



RIGHT: Veronica Daigle, president of Red Cell Partners' National Security Practice, joined Brennan Grignon, CEO and co-founder of Vantive AI, to discuss the growing importance of data and digital tools in managing the complex supply chains behind modern defense systems.

SECURITY
Veronica Daigle of Red Cell Partners' National Security Practice and Brennan Grignon of Vantive AI addressed the increasing role of data and digital tools in managing complex defense supply chains. A panel on defense engagement, moderated by Dan Bagley of Strategic Ink with retired Navy Cmdr. Vince Stammetti of Blue Forge Alliance and Jon Glass of the Defense Industrial Base Institute at Northeastern University, reinforced the strategic importance of industry engagement in national security.

in Iraq by focusing on what he could control in the moment. His journey underscores how perspective, curiosity and action — especially in adversity — can drive meaningful progress, reminding attendees that "adversity is a terrible thing to waste."

BEYOND THE SESSIONS: CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

The meeting also fostered strong peer engagement through networking events, including the AMT Chairman's Reception and Dinner, sponsored by SMW Autoblok, where Woods presented the AI Moore Award to Harry Moser for his leadership in advancing reshoring.

SAVE THE DATE, APRIL 13-15, FOR THE MFG MEETING 2027 IN MAUI, HAWAII.

Read the full article at www.amtonline.org/article/executive-insights-real-connections-inside-the-mfg-meeting-2026

BELOW: At the AMT Chairman's Reception and Dinner, sponsored by SMW Autoblok, AMT President Doug Woods presented the AI Moore Award to Harry Moser, founder of the Reshoring Initiative, in honor of his decades of leadership in reshoring and strengthening U.S. manufacturing.



ABOVE: As speakers delivered their insights, The MFG Meeting 2026 created space for conversations. Highlights featured a Havana Nights-themed reception sponsored by Kennametal; a craft beer break sponsored by Rego-Fix; a golf outing; and two guest programs showcasing Fort Lauderdale.

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WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON NEXT?

Real World Machining Solutions



Manufacturers today face constant pressure to improve productivity, control costs and keep operations running efficiently. At PT Solutions, our mission is simple: to be the Total Solution for everything our customers need to keep production moving strong.

Built on deep metalworking expertise, PT Solutions supports manufacturers with far more than just products. Our nationwide

team includes specialists with engineering and machining backgrounds who understand the realities of the shop floor. Their knowledge comes from years of hands-on experience solving real production challenges and improving performance where it matters most.



That experience allows us to work alongside customers as true partners. Rather than simply supplying tooling, our teams consult on complex challenges, provide brand-agnostic recommendations and help optimize processes at every stage of production. Whether improving tool performance or refining machining strategies, our focus remains the same: helping manufacturers work smarter, safer and more efficiently.

One area where we drive measurable impact is inventory management. Many manufacturers struggle with excess tooling, manual purchasing and downtime caused by stock shortages. Our inventory management systems bring visibility and control to the shop floor by automating purchasing, tracking usage and maintaining optimal stock levels. This approach can reduce excess inventory by 10% to 40% while ensuring critical tools are always available. By streamlining procurement and eliminating manual processes, manufacturers can reduce overhead and improve operational efficiency. Our proprietary customer portal further enhances this capability by providing real-time visibility and control over inventory, products and usage data.

While technology plays an important role, the foundation of PT Solutions remains the relationships we build. Every recommendation, service and solution is built on trust, performance and a commitment to long-term success.

At the end of the day, PT Solutions isn't simply a supplier, we are a partner dedicated to helping manufacturers improve performance, control costs and keep production running strong.



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PURPOSE:

To improve the perception of American manufacturing by promoting and recognizing excellence in member shop organization and efficiency.

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6. Sustain

Certificates are awarded every year for the first five years based on self-assessments submitted. Once the recipients receive five certificates, they are also presented with a trophy.

SUBMISSION DUE DATE:

Please submit your application by Tuesday, September 15th, 2026 to be considered.

For more information, please contact:
Linda Warner at lwerner@ntma.org or 216-264-2824.

Applications and self-assessment documents can be found here:

<https://ntma.org/resources/ntma-awards>

Applications should be sent to 6Saward@ntma.org

IMTS2026

TECHNOLOGY LUNCHEON

DATE: September 14-19, 2026 | LOCATION: Chicago, IL

During IMTS, NTMA will host a members-only luncheon to explore new products and emerging technologies. Connect with industry partners in a focused setting and walk away with insights you can put to work right away.

ENGAGE 2026

THE PRECISION MANUFACTURING CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY NTMA

DATE: November 10-13, 2026 | LOCATION: Las Vegas, NV

ENGAGE is NTMA's premier leadership experience built to develop the next generation of leaders in precision manufacturing. Connect with peers nationwide while tackling real-world challenges and opportunities shaping our industry. Walk away with practical insights you can apply immediately to strengthen your company and your impact across the NTMA network.



2026 NTMA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please contact Kristen Hrusch, our Events Manager for more information and to register:

Kristen Hrusch - Krusch@ntma.org 216.264.2845 or visit www.ntma.org/upcoming-events

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NTMA SERVICE AWARDS 2026 NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS

The Service Awards are given out each year at the Manufacturing Engage Conference. We need your help finding the best candidates for these awards.

Award categories are:

MEMBER AWARDS

HONOR AWARD

For continuing meritorious service and dedication to the Industry and/or Association by an NTMA Regular Member. Traditionally rendered for longevity of service and/or dedication, as opposed to a single act of service in a short-time Industry or Association position.

L.A. SOMMER MEMORIAL AWARD

For outstanding and continuing service of the highest magnitude by an NTMA Regular Member. Emphasis is placed on service to the Association, both of the highest order over a period of time, demonstrating excellence in a particular role in NTMA, rather than as a participant in a single event.

WILLIAM E. HARDMAN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TRAINING

For a company or individual of Regular, National Associate, or Education member status of NTMA that has consistently demonstrated strong support and active participation in "structured training" for the precision custom manufacturing industry.

NON-MEMBER AWARD

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

For outstanding service to the Industry and/or Association by a Non-NTMA Regular Member Company Representative.

ELIGIBILITY RULES & REQUIREMENTS

1. If honoree has previously received the LA Sommer Award, he/she is not eligible to receive the Honor Award or William E. Hardman Award.
2. If honoree has previously received the Honor Award and/or the William E. Hardman Award, he/she is eligible to receive the LA Sommer Award.
3. All Award nominees must be currently active in their company and/or industry, or active in the Association as a Past Service Member.
4. If no candidates are nominated for any of these awards, the particular award in question will not be presented in that given year.
5. Nominators cannot nominate the same person for multiple awards, but can nominate multiple persons for multiple awards.

Help us recognize deserving individuals and/or companies that have supported and advanced the industry and the Association.

**Submit your nomination(s) by Monday, August 31st, 2026.
Scan the code or contact Linda Warner at lwarner@ntma.org
for a nomination form.**





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