Overcoming the Top 5 Manufacturing Challenges with NATM

By Sheli Sweeney, NATM Membership Director

The manufacturing sector is ever changing and NATM works to keep members updated, educated and prepared for the factors that impact the trailer industry. Below are five challenges as identified by Glen White of Manufacturing Global, and the NATM benefits and programs that assist members in addressing these challenges.

1. Regulation and Traceability

The manufacturing sector has faced increasing regulation and compliance measures for manufacturing, vehicle safety, workplace safety and more.

NATM:

- Created the NATM Guidelines and compliance verification program to make it easy for manufacturers to meet the minimum Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards
- Offers training on regulatory changes and trends at the annual convention and regional educational workshops
- Developed a step-by-step Guide to NHTSA Early Warning Reporting and Safety Recalls for its membership
- Advocates on behalf of its members to ensure the industry’s voice is heard when new regulations are considered and educates legislators through annual Capitol Hill Visits, local plant tours and round tables. One example was the 2015 “Tandem Towing” law that allows the delivery of trailers in tandem within certain size and weight limitations

2. Product Development and Innovation

To stay relevant, manufacturers need to be able to keep up with the wants and needs of consumers. This includes quality, innovation and speed.

NATM:

- Offers workshops such as "5S Workplace Organization," "Introduction to Project Management," "Creating a Culture of Safety," "Production Pay: Making Money on Both Sides of the Fence," and "A Comparison of Cargo Trailer Assembly Methods" at previous conventions
- Exposes trailer manufacturers to the most innovative products available during the annual trade show
- Publishes supplier-member articles in Tracks magazine to spotlight new and innovative technology
- Educates members on welding technology and quality improvement through Tracks magazine articles and its Members' Only section of its website, www.NATM.com

3. The Manufacturing Skills Gap

As baby boomers retire, manufacturers must inspire a new generation of manufacturing employees and experts, working with schools and programs in their communities to ensure a skilled employee base for their business needs.

NATM:

- Offers workshops such as "Listen to the Steel," "Fatigue of Welded Connections," "Attracting the Best Millennials," "Welding 101," and "Recruiting and Retaining Employees"
- Developed a collaboration with the American Welding Society (AWS) for members to obtain training at a reduced rate
- Published articles in Tracks magazine on hiring veterans and women

4. Environmental Concerns and Considerations

Although sustainability and environmental regulations can be expensive for manufacturing firms, they are good for the local environment and employee well-being. These costs can be built into the company budget and contribute to a positive working climate.

NATM:

- Offers workshops at its annual convention such as the "Is Green the Right Color for You?" workshop on
■ Tracks

implementing environmentally friendly practices into
the company's culture

• Awards the “Green Award” to a member company
  that is environmentally conscientious and implements
green technology and business practices in an effort
to encourage more members to actively pursue green
practices

5. Balancing Maintenance with Throughput

Keeping equipment functioning is an essential part of running
a manufacturing facility. Regular preventive maintenance can
help increase throughput and ensure customer satisfaction with
delivery lead times.

NATM:

• Offers workshops including "Lean for Trailer
  Manufacturing," "5S Workplace Organization,"
  "Introduction to Project Management," and "Creating a
  Culture of Safety"

For more information about NATM's membership benefits,
visit www.natm.com.