

# *Educational Impact on the Health of the U.S. Economy:*

*How educators, students and parents can make a difference!*

An alarm bell is ringing at educators, parents, and students and it's a wake-up call about the recovery and health of our economy and employability opportunities for our youth. While the American-made product is making a comeback and companies are positioning themselves for growth, the general perception is that manufacturing jobs are unskilled and low-paying; they are even considered "dirty" work. We seem blind to the reality that today's manufacturing jobs blend design technology, robotics and an array of innovative challenges. In other words, the message needs to get out to our youth that ***manufacturing isn't dead in the U.S.; it has just gone high-tech.*** Without this fundamental knowledge being widely embraced, these high-tech, well paying jobs will go unfilled. It also means that business growth will be thwarted and in turn, our youth and the economy lose out!

The multiplying effect...  
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In "Manufacturing Skills Gap, an Education Branding Problem," presented by 60 Minutes and Eileen Markowitz, president of Thomas Industrial Network, our nation's skills gap workforce problem, is reviewed. Markowitz shares some of the factors that exacerbate the problem:

- 1. -lack of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in the U.S.**
- 2. -lack of support for technical and vocational schools**
- 3. -public's misperception of manufacturing work**

How big of a deal is this really, you wonder? As the U.S. labor market continues to advertise, the manufacturing sector clamors for skilled workers to fill thousands of jobs. The recent estimate is 600,000 positions are unfilled. Even more important though is to realize the multiplying effect this has on our economy. The Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates that for every \$1 generated in the Manufacturing sector, it translates into \$1.40 created in associated sectors of the economy. The Manufacturing sector accounts for two-thirds of U.S. Research and Development expenditures, employs more engineers and scientists than any other private sector industry, and overall employs close to 11.5 million Americans. It also affects employment of 7 million more people in related industries. Last year, manufacturing was responsible for 1.8 trillion dollars in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 12% of the total nation's economic output. In short, ***it drives more net-wealth creation than any other part of the nation's economy.***

With students increasingly encouraged to pursue four-year degrees while professional-technical education programs are often de-emphasized in favor of college prep, we send a clear message to our youth about which one offers better options. This very much limits their opportunities to learn about

and pursue well-paying technologically challenging work that is in high demand and is the corner stone to a healthy vibrant economy. It is estimated that only twenty percent of American adults would encourage students to pursue a manufacturing career. At the same time, we are witnessing more and more college students finding themselves graduated, strapped with high debt, and struggling to find well-paying employment opportunities aligned to their training.

Until we truly understand and commit to having the conversation with our youth in terms of aligning educational choices with the demands of our current workforce, students will struggle greatly with post-educational endeavors. It's not enough just to prepare students to enter college. Without taking appropriate action in both the focus of our curriculum and our counseling efforts, we limit our students as well as the potential growth of our economy.

Read more from ThomasNet's Industry Market Trends:

[http://news.thomasnet.com/IMT/2012/11/19/manufacturing-skills-gap-an-education-branding-problem/?utm\\_source=From+the+Director%3A+Skills+gap&utm\\_campaign=skillsgap&utm\\_medium=email](http://news.thomasnet.com/IMT/2012/11/19/manufacturing-skills-gap-an-education-branding-problem/?utm_source=From+the+Director%3A+Skills+gap&utm_campaign=skillsgap&utm_medium=email)

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