For some career-focused women and students, the idea of entering into a manufacturing career might seem unappealing … some of us immediately get visuals of Rosie the Riveter, standing on an assembly line in a manufacturing plant, sweating over components while getting paid minimum wage for a somewhat thankless job of assembling widget after widget after widget …

I’m here to tell you this notion is old-fashioned. There are truly some incredible opportunities for women in the manufacturing world. Today, local companies are owned by women, hiring women in roles of management such as production managers, vice presidents and CFOs. Savvy companies know having a woman-owned and/or -led business gives you a distinct advantage among the competition when it comes to trying to secure sometimes elusive government contracts.
When I was a child, my grandfather owned a tool and die shop — needless to say there wasn’t a woman in sight. When I first got into manufacturing and donned my first spotless white lab coat and clean room booties, I quickly realized the manufacturing world had changed.

No more dirty assembly environment. These businesses are high tech, processes are computerized, work areas incredibly clean. When you walk most manufacturing facilities today; you’ll see clean, desirable work environments, with plenty of room for career advancement. It is no longer the “good ole’ boys” network.

Today, many female students are trying to determine their next steps and may shy away from manufacturing roles, but I would strongly suggest you reconsider. I’ve personally worked with more than 200 manufacturing companies in Central Florida; I can tell you first-hand women are holding higher positions than ever before in the management/ownership of these companies.

Take a look at the companies in our community — Craig Technologies, Pridmore Corp. and GEM Industries for example; all women-owned. Even better news — there are more than 450 manufacturing companies in Brevard County alone! Your opportunities are practically limitless.

So give some serious consideration to pursuing manufacturing, whether you’re a fresh graduate or a seasoned professional looking for a career refresh.

You’ll be glad you did.

Julie Song is the owner of FL Business & Manufacturing Solutions Inc., a local company that assists, trains and supports process improvements for manufacturing and high-technology companies. FLBMS also provides certification and re-certification support for ISO/AS quality systems and ITAR programs. www.flbms.com

She also serves as chair of the Brevard Small Business Assistance Council and sits on the board of directors for the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast.