The Edge: Manufacturing opportunities for Women

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As women, we certainly try to encourage and support other women to reach their goals. So, as women of all ages seek high-paying jobs, let's encourage them to take a look at careers in manufacturing.

Taken from a survey published by the Women in Manufacturing community, "more than 80 percent of women in manufacturing reported that their work was interesting and challenging. Half of the women said that compensation is the most significant benefit of the sector and 74 percent of women working in manufacturing agreed that the industry offered multiple job roles for women."

So why aren’t more women seeking the education, training and skill sets needed to work in manufacturing? It's all about misperceptions. The industry is shrouded in myths and plagued with stereotypes. A few include: manufacturing workplaces are dirty and dangerous; the industry is suited mostly for men; and the jobs are not professional or high paying. The truth is, most manufacturing facilities are cleaner than a person's home because of stringent quality and safety requirements. The work isn't reliant on heavy and hard labor but instead is automated or otherwise served by advanced
technologies. And as for the industry being suited for men and not professional or high paying? Just more myths.

Women of all ages have succeeded in manufacturing by working hard, networking with other women in the field, and by seeking the guidance of a professor, mentor or manufacturing professional.

I like what Carol Craig said about her job/role as Founder/CEO of Craig Technologies. "Today's manufacturing environment is super high-tech and very computer oriented. Machines do most of the heavy lifting and dirty work, so the people can focus on quality and efficiency. Women have a lot to offer in manufacturing, include skills in engineering, management and creative problem-solving."

According to the Huffington Post's blog contributor Dr. Bill R. Path, president of the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, "The female workforce already employed in manufacturing is working hard to attract more women to their ranks. There are already a number of organizations and professional groups focused on women in these industries."

Manufacturing is a career that's not only well-paying, but fast paced, challenging, rewarding and provides opportunities for upward mobility. CNC Machine Operators in Brevard County start at average salaries of $35,000 and can work up to a CNC Machinist position with a starting salary in the upper $40's or take the management track and make up to $70,000 or more. Women who work in manufacturing tell me they love what they do and that at the end of the day they can be proud of a product they helped create.

We can support young women still in high school by providing guidance and encouraging them to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Education, Art and Math (STEAM), attending career fairs, talking with high school counselors, and encouraging high-tech companies to open their doors for tours and mentoring programs. And we can motivate and encourage women entering or re-entering the job market or even those wanting to change their career path — to get the education and training needed to secure a career in manufacturing.

While it is my job to bring manufacturers, educators and other interested parties to the table to support careers in manufacturing, as a woman, it is my passion to help other women succeed. Together, let's inspire women of all ages to take a look at careers in manufacturing. Let's help dispel myths. Let's provide a clear picture of manufacturing jobs and the satisfaction and rewards that come from choosing a career in manufacturing.

For information on training and education for a career in manufacturing, contact jobseekersupport@careersourcebrevard.com.

Additional resources for sharing:

• Manufacturers Association of Florida, www.mafmfg.com
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