



LIBERTY
TABLETOP
A DIVISION OF SHERRILL MANUFACTURING, INC.

Located in Sherrill, NY, Sherrill Manufacturing--Liberty Tabletop is the only manufacturer of stainless steel flatware in the nation. Gregory L. Owens, CEO, recently met with MACNY Member Focus to answer a few questions.

MACNY: What does your company make or do?

GO: We are the only manufacturers of stainless steel flatware in the United States. Our company makes the Liberty Tabletop line and we also manufacture flatware for other specialty brands such as Cutco, Kleynimals, Heath Ceramics, Farmhouse Pottery and others. Sherrill Manufacturing also has a contract with GSA and supplies part of the flatware used by the U. S. Military.

Currently we are expanding our business model to go beyond just flatware and will soon become a complete Made in America brand for everything you need relating to tabletop and kitchen.

Where are your products sold?

GO: Our main focus is on the B2C business model selling the Liberty tabletop brand on our website. We also sell on the web via Amazon and 12 web re-listers which mainly focus on American made products. Liberty is also found in several small retail outlets but we do not sell through mainstream retailers such as Macy's , Bed Bath and Beyond, or Walmart. We do have contracts with several brands and produce private label for them. Our biggest single customer is the U.S. Government via GSA and GSA Advantage.

How has business been going for you?

GO: Web sales via the Liberty Tabletop site are growing nicely although not at the pace it grew at last year. We believe that there was a pullback after the election on the Made in America theme. People were basically tired of hearing anything political in nature but we sense it is rebounding a bit lately.

Our business with the Government is steady and growing and our OEM business is growing as well.

What are some of the challenges you encounter operating in NYS?

GO:

- We have always enjoyed a good relationship with the DEC which is something many complain about. The fees are a bit high but other than that we have no issue.
- Property taxes are outrageously high.
- The workers' compensation area is an issue although we were able to work with the ratings board to have our classification corrected.
- The social welfare system is taking its toll on the workforce. We know there are 100+ able bodied young men and women living in Oneida who could work tomorrow. Unfortunately, they have figured out that they can get more money and benefits by playing the social welfare system. It is particularly bad in New York and getting worse as Albany hands out more and more. This is not only a problem in New York I believe it is becoming a national crisis. Businesses like ours can not find workers as they have literally dropped out of the workforce and onto the social welfare rolls.



MEMBER FOCUS

- If you can find workers they are not trained. For decades people have been told to go to college. The result is a lot of college grads with worthless degrees, no jobs, and lots of debt. What we need are people trained in the trades and hopefully government supported apprenticeship programs to train young people in specific jobs. This is something we will be working on with MACNY as we expand production and train the next generation of flatware manufacturers.

What are some of the benefits of operating in NYS?

GO: Economic development organizations from EDGE to ESD have been great to us. The cost of living, except for real estate taxes, is lower than major metropolitan areas so the quality of life is better for our workforce than it may be otherwise.

What has contributed to your company's success?

GO:

- The B2C business model has allowed us to compete with established flatware brands who rely almost exclusively on mainstream retail to distribute their product.
- Growing support for American Manufacturing, from both sides of the political extremes, has been very helpful. Until the recent presidential campaign American manufacturing received nothing more than rhetoric from Washington while behind the scenes the established Republicans and Democrats supported the globalist agenda, counter to their rhetoric. That seems to have changed and is a positive development for us and for manufacturing employees in general.
- The internet and social media marketing are driving our business forward. Traditional retail is a dying business model. We are latched onto the web and will likely be staying away from mainstream retail going forward.

Why are you a MACNY member? What service or resource do you most utilize?

GO:

- Hiring and developing qualified workers at the factory level
- Helping us spread the word about our company
- Understanding and taking full advantage of NYS economic development programs
- Assistance with networking in Albany and Washington to advance the cause of American manufacturing and our company

Please share additional thoughts on manufacturing or doing business in Central New York:

I have spoken with many struggling manufacturing companies over the past 13 years. The ones who have made it through have been the companies that abandoned the past and are embracing the modern economy which is e-commerce based and driven by the use of Social Media to promote their brand. The internet is the "wild west" of our time and is changing every day. Even the so-called experts can quickly fall behind. It is something that presents many challenges both technical and philosophical in terms of how we must adapt to be successful in 2017. Modern day business leaders are going to either fully embrace this radical change in the American marketplace and make it the central focus of their business from marketing to selling to crowdfunding to hiring and training or they will simply be left in the dust.

