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On Building Resilience

These days the focus is on resilience, the ability to bounce back, the “rubber ball factor.” After our recent crash course in this topic, we continue to navigate our way out of a historic economic shutdown.

At the forefront of the effort to reopen New York, MACNY works with our member manufacturers and businesses to design and implement policies and procedures to ensure safe operations under extraordinary conditions. Our [Keeping People Safe and Factories Running](#) consortium, has developed the playbook for responding to this crisis.

As we communicate daily with NYS manufacturers facing painful events, we’re struck by their wisdom in maintaining the broader context, how they keep the long-term perspective. They are effectively building resilience. Not only will they bounce back, but they will be set up for success for the next challenge, the one that always comes. How are they doing this? Several NYS manufacturers retooled and started producing medical necessities when the infection rate surged first in the Northeast. Dave Christopher, Plant Manager of Cascade Maverik in Liverpool, recently joined us on [Voices of Manufacturing](#) to describe how his company went from producing lacrosse equipment to medical face shields to help fight the pandemic. Flexibility is a major asset in building resilience.

Others, like global medical device producer, Hill-Rom, continued manufacturing critical equipment, like ventilators, but never lost focus on the future. In collaboration with MACNY, they moved ahead with a new apprenticeship program, the Continuous Improvement Associate, now featured on the NYSDOL website for public comment.

Here at MACNY, we believe in the power of such programs to build resilience, if only to replace a rapidly retiring workforce. Steve Dadaris, Hill-Rom’s Director of Continuous

Improvement, responsible for 13 sites, states that the COVID-19 experience exposed the importance and the need for this type of career development path. “This is a role that didn’t exist 10 years ago,” says Dadaris. “Now everyone is looking for Continuous Improvement managers at a time when they really need doers.”

Where are these doers trained? Dadaris explained that classes in Lean Manufacturing (or the Toyota Production System that he oversees), don’t really prepare someone to do the work; that training comes from ground floor experience. He suggests that companies in search of Continuous Improvement authorities should review their own workforces to see who’s already performing and might desire to become experts. Those are the individuals who will provide on-the-job training to CI Associate apprentices, when NYSDOL approves the curriculum. When they reach journeyworker status, they will perform the non-technical, non-compliance jobs that ensure efficient productivity, even in the face of unexpected obstacles. By investing in training and development this way, Hill-Rom is building resilience from the ground up, growing Continuous Improvement Associates (and managers) from their own staff.

Hill-Rom is not the only NYS manufacturer in the process of balancing pandemic response and building resilience. We spoke with Beech-Nut, currently training 13 apprentices at their Amsterdam location. Even as they work to incorporate rapidly changing rules and regulations surrounding safe operation, they continue to review their programs to ensure that these workers will receive the most appropriate training, even if it means changing and reworking their curriculums.

Bausch + Lomb in Rochester added three new apprentices during the COVID-19 interruption, demonstrating their faith in the future and dedication to a resilient operation. Like Hill-Rom, Beech-Nut, and others, they are looking ahead.

As NYS-approved sponsors of apprenticeship programs, we work to assist and expand these development pathways for NYS manufacturers.

If you would like the chance to get the word out about your company, unique operations, the availability of rewarding careers at your site(s), consider letting us profile your organization during the 11th Annual Manufacturing Day on October 2, 2020. We’re compiling the roster now, reaching out to our NYS manufacturers and businesses to involve them in a robust presentation that will attract attendees from all over the state. Contact mponge@macny.org for details. Let’s build resilience together.