

**NAM CHIEF RECOMMENDS NEW CAREER PATH
TO DRAW BRIGHTEST STUDENTS INTO MANUFACTURING**
Four of Five NAM Members Have Trouble Finding Qualified Workers

NASHVILLE, Tenn., April 11, 2002 – The nation is facing a critical shortage of skilled labor that demands creation of a “new career path” to channel bright and ambitious students into industry and manufacturing, said Jerry Jasinowski, president of the National Association of Manufacturers.

Speaking to a workforce development conference sponsored by the State of Tennessee, Fortune magazine and the NAM, Jasinowski said a survey of more than 6,000 members of the NAM found that 80 percent of them were having trouble finding qualified workers. “The shortage is most evident among production and skilled craft employees – the very heart of manufacturing,” Jasinowski said. “For every five skilled machine tool operators now on the line, we have only one trainee in the pipeline. A majority of these and other highly-skilled workers are nearing retirement. When they begin to leave the workforce, our skills shortage will become critical.”

Jasinowski said that changing technology and more intense global competition were creating unprecedented demand for highly-skilled labor. “The notion of blue collar labor is obsolete,” he said. “Workers today no longer run the machines of industry; they monitor and program the computers that run the machines. We have entered the no collar generation. A few highly-skilled employees are responsible for major industrial operations involving highly complex ‘Star Wars’ environments. The jobs they do are sophisticated and challenging. They earn excellent pay, including comprehensive benefits packages.”

However, Jasinowski said the nation’s schools were not producing the high quality labor that modern industry and manufacturing needs. “Too many graduates of our K-12 educational systems do not emerge qualified to handle entry-level jobs in a skilled industrial setting,” Jasinowski said. “They lack basic reading, writing and mathematical skills. They lack basic problem solving and teamwork skills. Most businesses must invest substantial amounts of time and money preparing these entry level workers for rudimentary responsibility. Businesses believe this is the job of the schools, and they are right.

“There is too much emphasis on four-year college educations,” Jasinowski said. “We are conveying the false impression that the four-year college curriculum is for everyone. We are sending more than three-fourths of our high school graduates to college and only about one-fourth of them will graduate. This is a terrible mistake that wastes vast resources and does extensive damage to many of our finest young people.”

Jasinowski called for a “new career path” based upon a carefully-crafted technical certification program to qualify young people for productive careers in manufacturing and industry. “We have to change the way people think about alternative careers,” he said. “Our brightest young people with a sense of adventure are needed in the critical work of creating the products that enhance the quality of life and make our economy strong.”

The NAM chief challenged business to take the lead working with public schools and workforce boards to forge a new ethic for education and training. “This is an education and cultural issue, but it is foremost an economic issue,” Jasinowski said. “Workforce development and economic development are inseparable.”

The National Association of Manufacturers is the nation’s largest-industrial trade association. The NAM represents 14,000 member companies (including 10,000 small and mid-sized manufacturers) and 350 member associations serving manufacturers and employees in every industrial sector and all 50 states. Be sure to visit our award-winning Web site at www.nam.org.

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