The Current State of Manufacturing According to Jay Timmons

Jay Timmons, President and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers, was the keynote speaker at the 2015 Alabama Manufacturer of the Year Awards.

Timmons’ speech was the final one on his national State of Manufacturing Tour about manufacturing and associated issues that are important to the nation’s economy. “Today, the state of manufacturing is as resilient and robust as ever – and that’s why, once again, America is rising,” Timmons said.

Timmons said that U.S. manufacturing has succeeded because the industry and its solutions are grounded on four fundamental values that also happen to be the foundational and unifying principles of the nation.

The four principles are free enterprise market forces that drive innovation and growth better than any other system ever conceived; competitiveness that enables investment and market expansions to succeed in the global economy; individual liberty to create,
The Business Council of Alabama and the Alabama Technology Network, in partnership with The Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama and the National Association of Manufacturers, presented the prestigious Alabama Manufacturer of the Year Awards to three outstanding Alabama manufacturers earlier this year.

Recipients of the 2015 awards were in the large, medium, and small manufacturing categories: North American Lighting of Muscle Shoals, Raytheon Redstone Missile Integration Facility in Huntsville, and Watring Technologies Inc. of Huntsville, respectively.

The awards recognize Alabama manufacturers that exhibit excellence in leadership, performance, profitability, and workforce relations. An independent panel of judges select the winners that demonstrate superior performance in customer focus, employee commitment, operational excellence, continuous improvement, profitable growth, and investment in training and retraining.

The first awards ceremony was in 2000. This year’s event was attended by about 250 people at the Alabama Activity Center in Montgomery.

“Now in its 16th year, the Business Council of Alabama is honored to salute Alabama’s best manufacturers for their valuable participation in not only the state’s economy but also the economies of their employees and the suppliers who do business with them,” said BCA President and CEO William J. Canary.

BCA Chairman Marty Abroms, of Abroms & Associates in Florence, said the BCA and its partners are...
honored to recognize Alabama’s best manufacturers for the key role they play in Alabama’s economic health.

“Alabama has been blessed for more than a decade by diversification and expansion of the state’s industrial base,” Abroms said. “New names and faces are joining an ever-expanding group of internationally competitive companies that choose to make Alabama their home.”

The 2015 Manufacturer of the Year finalists and their locations, in alphabetical order, were: AL-MAG Aluminum Corp., Ardmore; BP Decatur Site, Decatur; Futaba Corp. of America, Huntsville; Induron Coatings, Birmingham; Life Data Labs Inc., Cherokee; Lockheed Martin Pike County Operations, Troy; Micro Industries Inc., Decatur; Mitternight Inc., Satsuma; North American Lighting, Muscle Shoals; PerformanceScrubs dot-com, Florence; Quincy Compressor, Bay Minette; Raytheon Missile Systems, Huntsville; Sanmina Corp. Plant 1438, Huntsville; SPOC Automation, Trussville; Spurr's Big Fix LLC, Tuscumbia; Vulcan Materials Co. Scottsboro Quarry,
Scottsboro; and, Watring Technologies Inc., Huntsville.

The categories are based on the number of employees: the large category is for 400 or more employees, the medium category is for 100 to 399 employees, and the small category is from 1 to 99 employees.

“The Manufacturer of the Year Awards continues to be a premier event for the BCA, the Alabama Technology Network, the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama, and the National Association of Manufacturers,” Canary said. “The BCA is proud to be the exclusive affiliate in Alabama to the NAM and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.”

The BCA presented the annual Best of the BEST award to the Wetumpka High School BEST Robotics Team. In March, the Wetumpka High School team represented Alabama at the 2015 White House Presidential Science Fair. BEST Robotics is a program that excites and inspires students about engineering, science, and technology careers through participation in sports-like competition. TMA
North American Lighting, Inc.

North American Lighting is the 2015 Manufacturer of the Year in the large manufacturer category.

North American Lighting, the largest manufacturing-based employer in Northwest Alabama with more than 1,300 employees, makes automotive lighting products for several vehicle brands. It has helped transform the Shoals.

Today, a former soybean field is the site of the Shoals Research Park where North American Lighting began in a 200,000-square-feet plant producing rear lights for General Motors, Honda, Nissan, and Toyota.

North American Lighting started out with 100 employees. In 2011, it doubled the size of its facility to 400,000 square feet and increased the number of employees. In 2013, it did it again, adding another 200,000 square feet, bring the plant’s size to 600,000 square feet.

Incidentally, North American Lighting has three suppliers that are located in the Shoals that provide 200-plus jobs.

North American Lighting employees are active members of the community. Several members of the leadership team serve as advisers to the Muscle Shoals Career Academy and Workforce Development Council, as well as providing support to the Shoals Chamber of Commerce’s “Turn it Up” initiative that is aimed at supporting existing industry shipments, employee retention, and financial progress. The benchmarks were reached while successfully launching new vehicle model products.
Raytheon

RRMIF, as it is called, employs 316 employees in its production and factory operation on Redstone Arsenal. A division of the Raytheon Co., Raytheon Redstone Missile Integration Facility is on a 200-acre site housing a 50,000-square-feet facility where missile final assembly began in 2012.

A unique Raytheon program allows employee participation in defining goals and objectives. Training courses and opportunities offer chances for employees who have access to coaches and mentors to help enhance their skills and achieve developmental needs.

Since the plant involves munitions, all employees are required to maintain training certification by completing specific courses involving detailed instruction in appropriate areas.

The Raytheon Redstone Missile Manufacturing team also supports and participates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math events. Last year, RRMIF teamed with the University of Alabama in Huntsville to bring in more than 100 fifth-grade students to participate in STEM experiments and activities.

Employees have served as judges at regional science fairs and as coaches for local robotics teams. RRMIF Plant Manager Angel Crespo is a new board member for the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce. Employees also participate in the American Heart Association's annual Heart Walk.

Weapon Integration Center Director Randy Stevenson supports the Economic Development Leadership Team of Limestone County and serves on the Business Council of Alabama’s Manufacturing Advocacy Council. TMA
2015 Small Manufacturer of the Year (1-99 employees)

This Alabama-grown small business is a leader in the design, development, and manufacture of custom products in scientific research and products and services for aerospace, medical, public safety, and industrial markets. Watring’s 42 employees produce space-based defense systems, magnetic-resonance imaging patient tables, medical-radiation oncology equipment, vehicle immobilization devices, and solar-powered water pumps that help sustain developing countries.

Only 18 years old, Watring Technologies was founded by Dale and Lisa Watring who are committed to customer service and quality products that include Original Equipment Manufacturing. Watring Technologies focused on the design and manufacture of semiconductor crystal growth equipment and within six months delivered the first product to a customer.

Watring engineering and fabrication capabilities include expertise in systems engineering, system integration, technology development, and hardware design. The company’s founding vision is still the guiding force - enable technologies and products that allow customers and clients to remain leaders in their respective markets.

Serving civilian, military, automotive, medical, casting, and mechanical and electrical industries has allowed Watring to realize outstanding growth based on management principles, focused marketing and strategic planning. Employees are encouraged to offer improvements and suggestions are reviewed weekly during the operations meeting.

Watring’s significant civic involvement in Huntsville includes the University of Alabama in Huntsville Mechanical & Aerospace Advisory Committee, the accreditation board for engineering and technology for the UAH Department of Engineering, U.S. First Robotics, the Moon-buggy Race, guest speeches at public schools to encourage interest in the manufacturing sector, and at Alabama A&M University’s business department. TMA

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Profiled in a FOX News documentary entitled, “The Man Who Killed Usama Bin Laden,” Robert O’Neill will share insights and experiences as one of the most highly decorated combat veterans of our time at the Business Council of Alabama’s 2015 Chairman’s Dinner. If you’re a contributor to the BCA’s Carrying the Flag for Business campaign, you can be there. Contact Nathan Lindsay for more information at nathanl@bcatoday.org.