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Current Challenges Facing Manufacturers in the Northeast

[see page 3]

The Power of Media Coverage: Building Trust Through Credibility in B2B Markets

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DECEMBER / JANUARY 2026 | ISSUE 313

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

- 03** Current challenges facing manufacturers in the Northeast U.S. (2026)
- 11** The Power of Media Coverage: Building Trust Through Credibility in B2B Markets

This month, we take a close look at the evolving challenges facing manufacturers across the Northeast. From workforce shortages and rising energy costs to supply chain uncertainty, cybersecurity risks, and tightening margins, today's manufacturers are navigating a complex and rapidly shifting landscape. In this issue, we explore the pressures shaping the region's industrial economy — and the strategies companies are using to adapt, invest, and stay competitive in 2026 and beyond.



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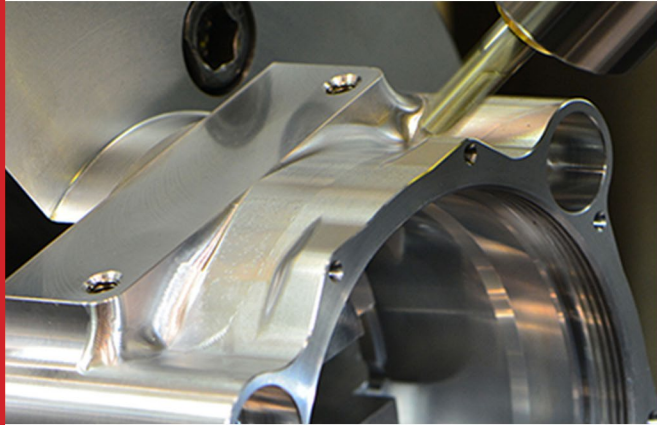
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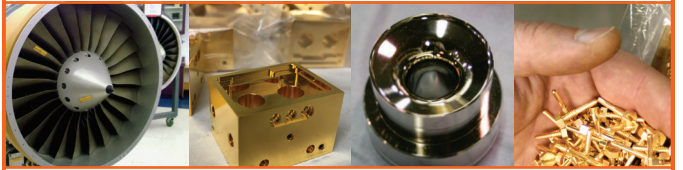
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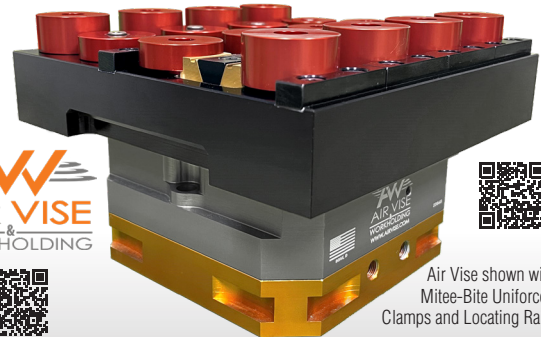
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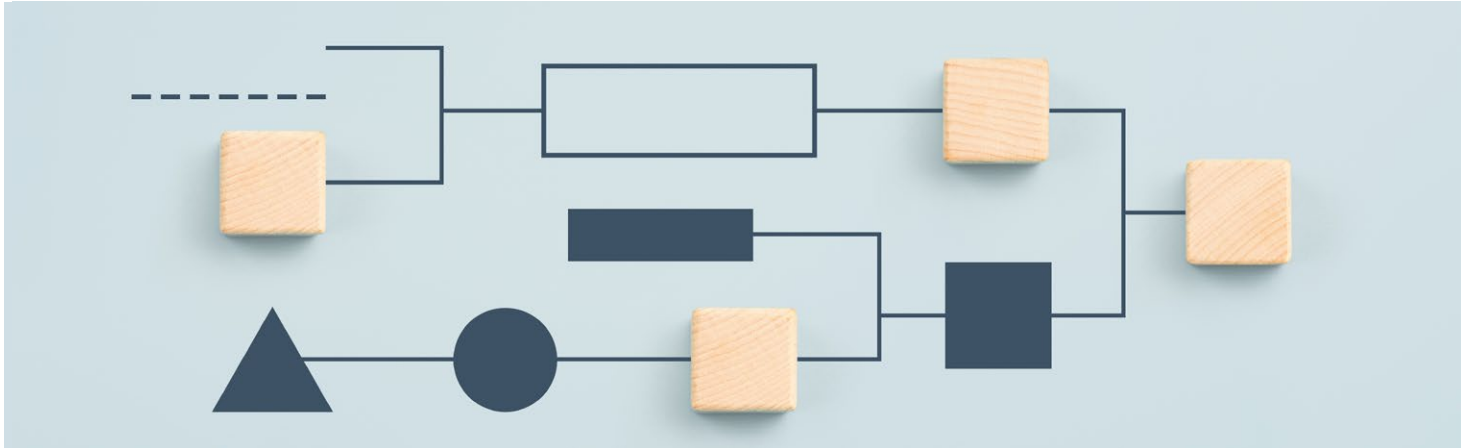
ISSUE 313

1

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING MANUFACTURERS IN THE NORTHEAST U.S. (2026)

Manufacturing in the Northeast U.S. has always been a study in contrasts: world-class universities and R&D clusters alongside aging industrial corridors; dense customer markets alongside some of the country's highest operating costs.





Heading into 2026, many manufacturers across New England and the Mid-Atlantic describe a similar reality: demand is “okay” in pockets, but the margin for error is thin. The biggest pressures aren’t just one-off shocks—they’re compounding frictions in labor, energy, supply chains, cybersecurity, and capital investment.

Below is a grounded look at the challenges showing up most consistently for Northeast manufacturers right now, and why the region feels some of them more acutely than other parts of the country.

1) Workforce constraints: not just “shortage,” but mismatch and succession

Ask a Northeast plant manager what keeps them up at night and you’ll still hear “people” early in the conversation—though the problem is evolving. In the Federal Reserve’s Boston (First District) reporting, labor conditions have been mixed: hiring has become somewhat easier in certain roles, but employers still cite the need for specialized skills and continued pressure in certain occupations.

What’s particularly challenging in the Northeast is the combination of:

Aging skilled workforce and knowledge transfer risk. Many precision machining, industrial maintenance, and controls roles rely on deep tribal knowledge. Retirement waves don’t just reduce headcount—they remove process stability.

A skills mismatch in modern manufacturing. Even when applicants exist, the gap is often in CNC programming, metrology, robotics/automation maintenance, PLCs, and quality systems.

Cost-of-living and housing constraints that limit recruiting radius. Employers in Massachusetts, for example, routinely cite the “cost of doing business” and “cost of living” as barriers to growth—factors that make it harder to attract and retain talent without pushing wages beyond what the P&L can support.

In practice, manufacturers are spending more time on training pipelines, partnerships with vocational programs, and retention—because replacing experience is slower and costlier than it looks on paper.

2) Energy costs and reliability: a disproportionate Northeast headwind

Energy is a uniquely sharp pain point in much of the Northeast, especially New England, where prices can be volatile and structurally higher than many other regions. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported that wholesale day-ahead electricity prices rose in 2025 across most hubs—and called out New England (ISO-NE) as having the largest increase among major trading hubs in the Lower 48.

Two related dynamics matter for manufacturers:

Higher and more volatile electricity prices complicate quoting and long-term contracts—particularly for energy-intensive processes (thermal operations, plastics, food processing, metalworking).

Winter reliability risks remain a planning factor in New England due to fuel constraints in cold snaps; NERC’s Winter Reliability Assessment continues to flag scenarios where constrained natural gas pipelines and fuel replenishment timing can create stress.



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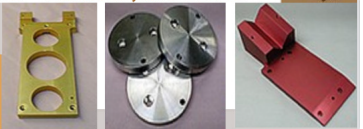
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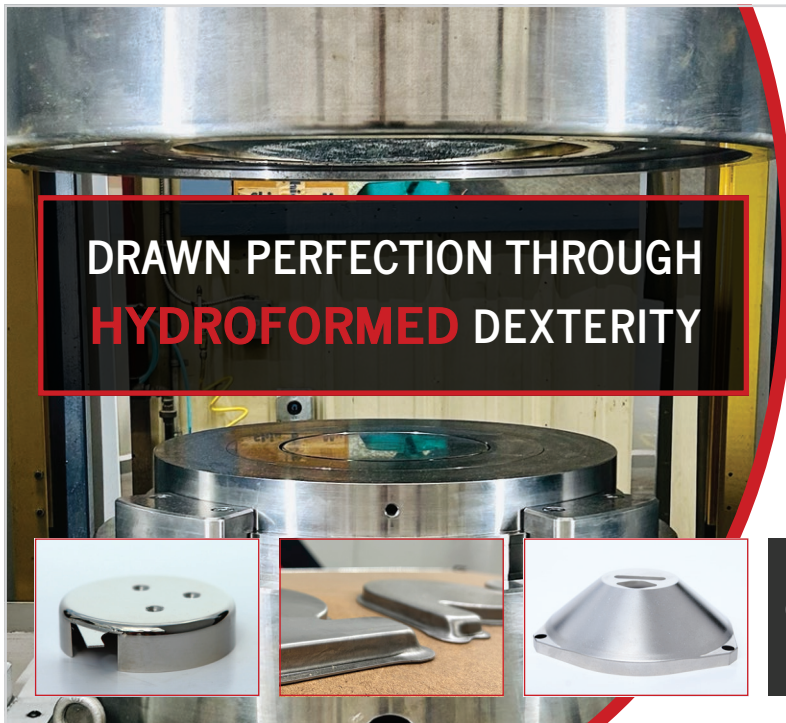
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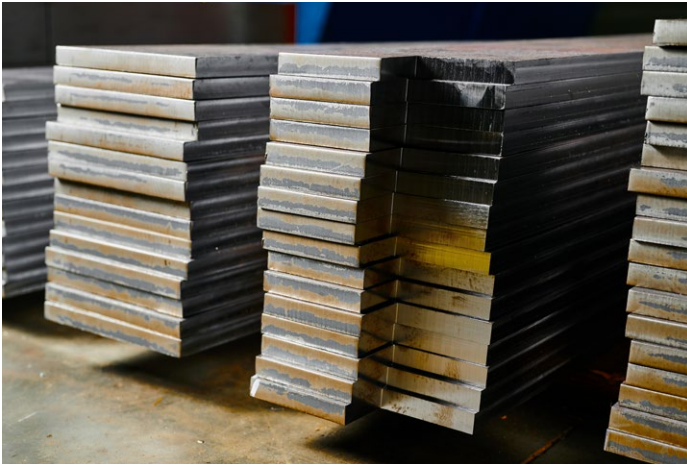
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Meanwhile, national electricity demand is projected to keep rising into 2026–2027, driven in part by data centers and broader electrification—adding more competition for generation and grid capacity.

For Northeast manufacturers, this translates into real strategic questions: invest in efficiency upgrades, lock in power through supply contracts, consider on-site generation, or redesign processes to reduce peak demand exposure.



3) Input costs, pricing power, and margin compression

Even when top-line orders look stable, the squeeze often shows up between “prices paid” and “prices received.” Surveys and regional reporting continue to show elevated input cost pressure and uneven ability to pass those costs along.

The National Association of Manufacturers’ Outlook Surveys in 2025 repeatedly highlighted trade uncertainty and rising raw material costs among the top concerns.

In New York’s Empire State Manufacturing Survey (January 2026), firms reported that input price increases remained elevated while selling price increases slowed—exactly the sort of pattern that compresses margins.

For Northeast producers—many of which compete on quality, compliance, and speed rather than lowest unit cost—margin pressure tends to accelerate investments in automation and process control. But that leads directly into the next challenge: capital.

4) Capital investment decisions are harder under uncertainty

Manufacturers don’t invest in new lines, automation, or facility expansions because it’s fun—they do it to stay competitive. The problem is that the “inputs” to a confident investment decision have been noisy:

Trade and tariff uncertainty has been persistent enough that it shows up as the top concern in NAM survey results, and it also appears in regional business commentary.

Financing costs and project risk (particularly for small and midsize firms) can turn a sensible productivity project into a “maybe next year” decision.

In the Boston Fed’s January 2026 district update, firms noted that tariff-related uncertainty had abated somewhat due to policy stabilization and adjustments by businesses, contributing to improved outlook sentiment. That’s encouraging—but “less uncertain” is not the same as “predictable,” and manufacturers still have to decide whether to commit to equipment lead times, implementation downtime, and training costs.

5) Supply chain: better than 2021–2022, but not “fixed”

Supply chains have improved from the worst pandemic-era breakdowns, yet Northeast manufacturers still face a set of practical constraints:

Long lead times in specific categories (controls components, specialized electronics, certain castings/forgings).

Vendor concentration risk—especially in regulated industries (medical, aerospace/defense, food), where qualifying a second source is slow and expensive.

Logistics friction in a region with older infrastructure and dense traffic patterns—where “last 50 miles” can cost more than cross-country freight.

Many firms now carry more inventory than they used to, even if they dislike tying up cash, because the cost of a line stoppage is worse than the carrying cost.



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6) Cybersecurity and operational technology risk is now a manufacturing operations problem

Ransomware and OT/ICS vulnerabilities have shifted from “IT’s issue” to an operational continuity issue—especially for manufacturers with legacy equipment, mixed vendor environments, and limited internal security staffing.

Recent public reporting and advisories underscore that manufacturing remains a major target:

CISA has continued to update and publish ransomware advisories (including updates tied to ongoing activity), emphasizing the threat to small and midsize organizations as well.

Independent threat reporting entering 2026 has also highlighted manufacturing as one of the most impacted industries in the ransomware landscape.

In the Northeast—where defense, aerospace, medical devices, and specialty industrials are common—cyber maturity is increasingly tied to customer requirements. Security questionnaires, vendor assessments, and compliance frameworks can become gating items for winning work. That means cybersecurity spending competes directly with production investments for scarce budget dollars.

7) Compliance and sustainability expectations: growing complexity, uneven support

Environmental compliance has always been part of manufacturing. What’s changed is the pace at which expectations (from customers, regulators, and investors) evolve:

Decarbonization and electrification pressures collide with the Northeast’s energy-cost reality. It’s hard to justify electrifying thermal processes if your power price is high and volatile—yet customers may still expect emissions reductions.

Reporting and documentation requirements are rising, especially in regulated supply chains.

Facility upgrades (filtration, waste handling, chemical substitutions) can be significant capital projects.

Even when incentives exist, many smaller manufacturers struggle with the “application and implementation tax”—the time and expertise needed to navigate programs, integrate new technology, and document outcomes.

Bottom line

Northeast manufacturers in 2026 aren’t facing one single crisis—they’re navigating a portfolio of pressures that interact: labor and housing constraints raise wage demands; energy volatility punishes inefficiency; cost pressures collide with softer pricing power; and cyber and compliance demands consume time and capital that could otherwise go straight into throughput.

The good news is that the region still has the ingredients for durable, high-value manufacturing: deep technical talent, proximity to sophisticated customers, and strong specialty clusters. The challenge is converting those advantages into resilience—by investing in skills, operational efficiency, and risk management faster than the headwinds intensify.

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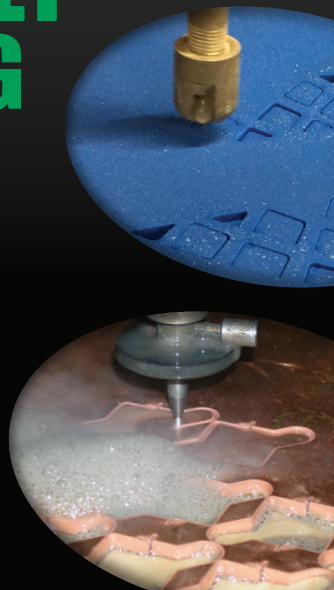
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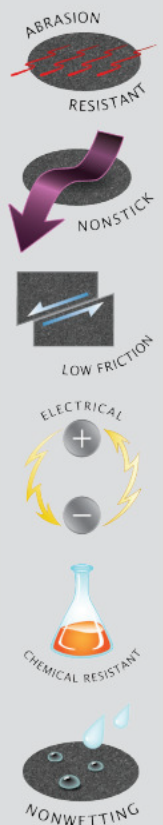


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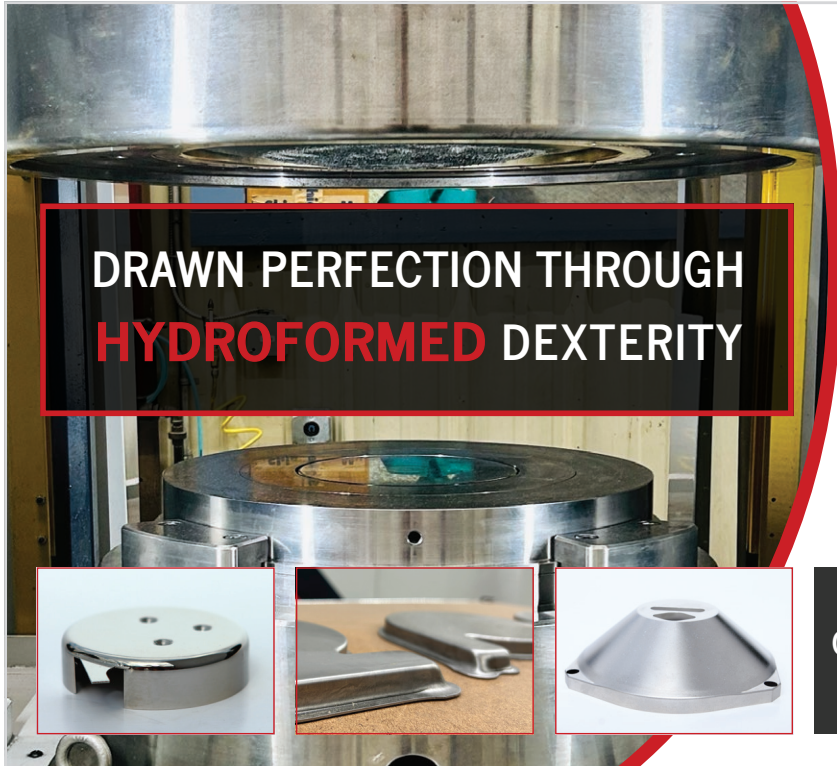


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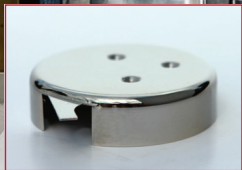


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But don't take our word for it. This month's feature was written by Jeff Elliott, President of Power PR who voices his views on the power of independent media coverage and what it means for your business.

Psychological research, particularly by Dr. Robert Cialdini in his seminal book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (1984, Harper Business), underscores the power of social proof and authority. Social proof explains how individuals look to the actions and opinions of others to guide their choices, especially in uncertain situations. Authority reflects the weight carried by those perceived as knowledgeable or credible. These principles are at the heart of why third-party media coverage resonates so deeply with audiences.

In today's competitive industrial market, gaining credibility and trust can be challenging. Independent media coverage has proven to be one of the most effective ways to establish authority and demonstrate reliability. By focusing on newsworthiness and merit, companies can ensure their stories are featured in reputable publications, significantly enhancing their market presence and influencing customer decisions.

“The more often people hear about you from third-party sources, the more comfortable they become with you. The more people that see your name, the more they recognize your company as legitimate.”

For EonCoat, a company producing innovative protective coatings, this approach has been transformative. Over the past 15 years, their technological advances and dedication to solving industry challenges have resulted in more than 200 articles published in respected trade publications.

“People read articles in a trade magazine, and they don't see it as marketing. They view it with much more credibility than they would any form of marketing,” explains Tony Collins, founder of EonCoat.

Each well-crafted article not only highlighted their expertise but also differentiated their technology by focusing on real-world applications and customer success stories.

“The more often people hear about you from third-party sources, the more comfortable they become with you. The more people that see your name, the more they recognize your company as legitimate,” adds Collins.

Here are the key advantages:

- Articles in trusted publications are perceived as unbiased and authoritative.
- Repeated exposure in respected media builds recognition and trust, helping potential customers feel more confident in their decisions.

- Telling a customer's story within an article creates a doubling effect of trust and credibility, as it showcases real-world results and customer satisfaction.
- For complex technologies specific to industrial markets, these articles provide a platform to clearly and effectively tell your story, often with a depth not possible in other formats.

Independent media coverage also complements other promotional efforts. Data shows that well-placed articles can build trust and authority, which in turn makes advertisements more compelling. When used

together, articles and advertising create a synergistic effect—articles provide the credibility and authority that make audiences more receptive to ads, while ads broaden the reach of the articles by driving traffic to the content. Reposting articles, sharing key excerpts, and integrating mentions in advertising campaigns can significantly extend the value of both, ensuring a cohesive and effective promotional strategy.

Published trade articles remain available and relevant for extended periods, serving as enduring endorsements. Prospects often encounter these articles during independent research, making the discovery feel organic rather than promotional. For industrial firms, this approach is particularly valuable, as it establishes authority, builds trust, and showcases expertise in solving real-world challenges.

“An article was published over a decade ago on a specific benefit of our product and we are still on the first page of Google [organic] search term results under the primary keywords, and we still get calls about it fairly often,” says Collins.

EonCoat's success story highlights how strategic media outreach can drive meaningful results. For companies aiming to strengthen their industry position, independent media coverage offers a powerful means to demonstrate value, establish trust, and ultimately, foster growth.



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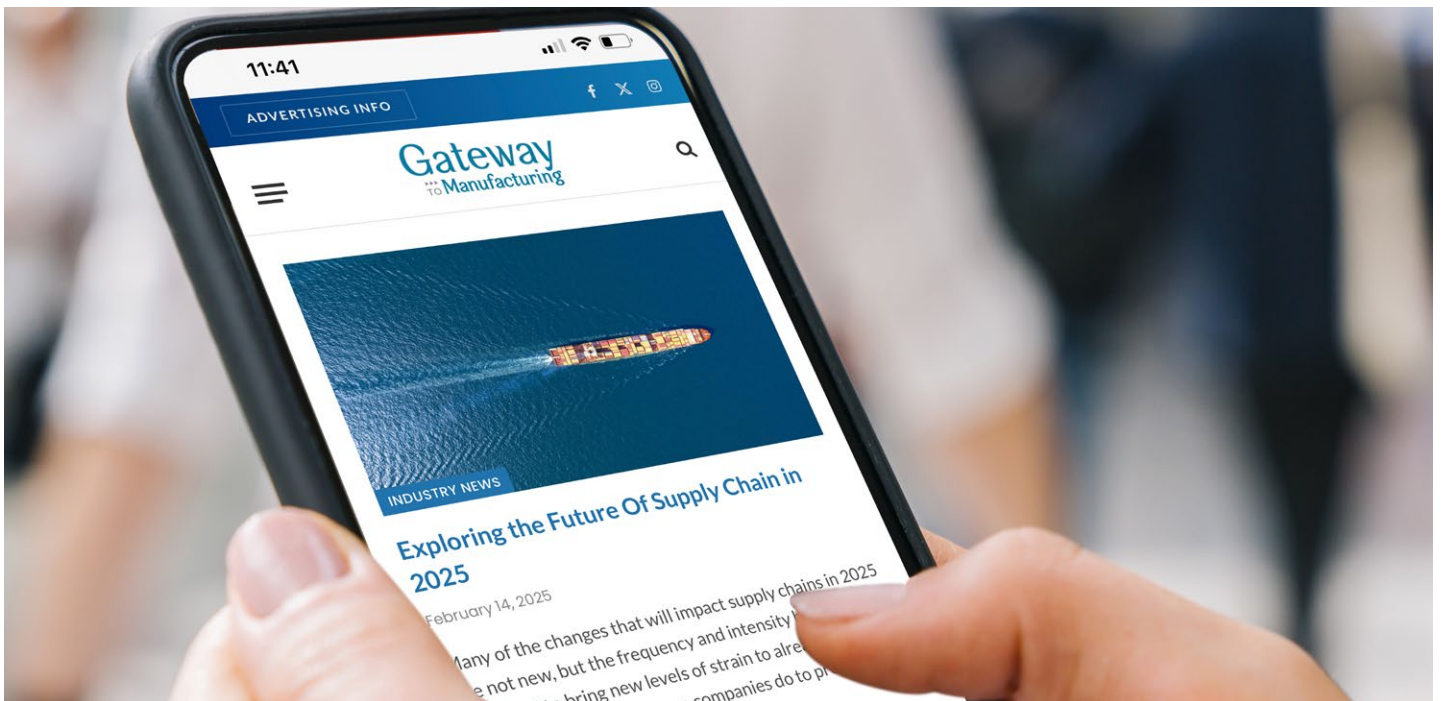
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“An article was published over a decade ago on a specific benefit of our product and we are still on the first page of Google [organic] search term results under the primary keywords, and we still get calls about it fairly often...”

Moreover, this enhanced visibility and credibility can also contribute to increasing the overall value of your business, making it more appealing for various opportunities such as attracting new partnerships, securing investor interest, entering new markets, improving employee recruitment, retaining top talent, and, when the time comes, achieving a higher valuation in a potential sale.

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CAD/CAM Leader Acquires Longtime Channel Partner to Strengthen Local Customer Support and Service Delivery

TOLLAND, Conn.- Mastercam, the world's leading CAD/CAM software provider and part of the Sandvik Group, announced today the completion of a strategic acquisition to strengthen its market presence across the Midwestern part of the United States. The company has acquired key assets of QTE Manufacturing Solutions, a longtime Channel Partner with nearly four decades of CAD/CAM industry expertise.

This acquisition integrates QTE's extensive regional knowledge and customer relationships directly into Mastercam's operations, enhancing customer support and service delivery across this key market.

Strengthening Market Leadership Through a Proven Partner

QTE Manufacturing Solutions, founded in 1985, has evolved from performing tool and fixture design for the aerospace industry into a leading CAD/CAM solutions provider serving manufacturers across Missouri, Kansas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Southern Illinois. The St. Charles, Missouri-based company has been recognized as a top-performing Mastercam maintenance retention Channel Partner and operates as a certified Mastercam training center, providing specialized solutions to industries ranging from aerospace to automotive and beyond.

“This acquisition represents a transformative step in elevating the customer experience through enhanced local support and service capabilities,” said Russ Bukowski, President of Mastercam. “By bringing the deep regional expertise and established relationships of QTE Manufacturing Solutions directly into our operations, we're delivering on our commitment to provide manufacturers with immediate, localized technical support, and solutions tailored to their specific regional manufacturing needs. This direct customer relationship model gives Mastercam a significant competitive advantage and ensures our customers receive the most responsive, expert service in the industry.”

Delivering Superior Local Customer Support Through Direct Operations

The acquisition represents Mastercam's commitment to providing unparalleled local customer support and service excellence as a key market differentiator. By transitioning from a traditional channel partner model to direct operations in the Midwest market, Mastercam can now offer customers immediate access to technical expertise, accelerated problem resolution, and customized training programs delivered by in-market specialists who understand local manufacturing requirements and industry practices.

This direct customer relationship approach aligns with Mastercam's broader growth objectives of combining organic innovation with strategic acquisitions to expand market reach and enhance customer service capabilities. As part of Sandvik's intelligent manufacturing portfolio, Mastercam continues to advance connected manufacturing processes and provide comprehensive support to manufacturers worldwide.

For more information, contact Melanie Frenkel, Sr. Media Director, Berkeley Communications, phone: 760.421.7719, or email: Melanie.Frenkel@berkeleypr.com.

About Mastercam

Shaping the Future of Manufacturing®, Mastercam is the world's leading provider of CAD/CAM solutions. As part of Sandvik, we empower manufacturers to enhance productivity, streamline processes, and drive innovation. With a global network of channel partners and an extensive developer community, Mastercam continues to set industry standards by delivering comprehensive, connected solutions across the manufacturing enterprise. We lead the way with cutting-edge technology and unparalleled expertise. Discover more at www.mastercam.com, follow us on LinkedIn, and join the conversation with #mastercam.



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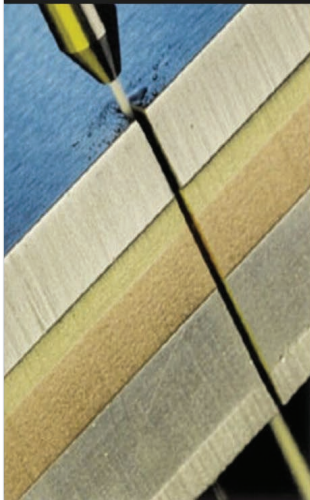
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