UWO survey collaboration shows manufacturing growth expected in region

by Charles Greenley - Thursday, February 03, 2011

http://www.uwosh.edu/today/8905/uwo-survey-collaboration-shows-manufacturing-growth-expected-in-region/

Despite the specter of a recession that still looms over the global economy, members of the Northeastern Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance were hardly surprised that a survey said local manufacturing businesses are growing.

“It’s good to see these results,” Jeff Pallini, Chair of the NEW Manufacturing Alliance, said. “It’s what we thought going in, but this confirmed it.”

The survey was executed by student interns at the UW Oshkosh Business Success Center, which has established a recurring partnership with the NEW Manufacturing Alliance.

Pallini presented the results at a 10:30 a.m. press conference Thursday in Reeve Memorial Ballroom, and he was just as enthusiastic about the results as he was about the Packers prospects in this weekend’s Super Bowl.

“Just like the Packers, manufacturing is rocking and rolling,” Pallini said during his presentation before an audience of about 40 manufacturers, represenatives of New North Inc., area business and Chamber of Commerce leaders and Wisconsin Secretary of Commerce Paul Jadin.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRXmOyIRGvU

Of the 179 manufacturing companies that responded to the survey, three of five companies saw sales increases in 2010, with three out of four expecting another sales uptick in 2011.

Among other findings, the survey said two out of five manufacturers plan to hire more employees in 2011, with half of them planning to modernize their plants in 2011-12.

According to Pallini, many companies slowed down in the second half of 2008 and during 2009, so this growth was somewhat inevitable.

“With manufacturing, if you don’t invest, you fall behind,” Pallini said. “So these results are a combination of growth and making up for lost time.”

“We can be very confident when we share these results, because it’s not just five, 10, or 15 companies that responded, it’s 179 of them sharing strong, positive results,”

Ann Franz, Strategic Partnership Manager of the NEW Manufacturing Alliance, was thrilled with the survey findings, but she hopes manufacturing workers will keep pushing themselves so they can adapt to

increasingly technological work environments.

“People assume when they get these jobs they’re done,” Franz said. “No. They need to be lifelong learners. You need to take a class in computers and you need a class in problem solving.”

Franz speaks from experience, as she is currently finishing her work towards a master’s degree at UW Oshkosh.

What kind of education—four year college, vocational college, or some parts of both—manufacturing employees should seek is something the NEW Manufacturing Alliance will take a closer look at with its next survey with the BSC, Pallini said.

- Read the full Manufacturing Vitality survey findings.
- See a photo gallery of the survey press conference.