

In episode 44 of Ready for Work, LeeSa Page, a senior advisor with the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council, discusses the importance of Manufacturing Day and Manufacturing Month in October. She highlights the role of manufacturing in the American economy and the need to inspire various groups to pursue careers in the industry. From the stage of the recent ACT Workforce Summit in Nashville, LeeSa emphasizes the need for partnerships and initiatives to tap into untapped talent pools for a diverse manufacturing workforce. The episode concludes by acknowledging successful programs that have positively impacted manufacturing employment.

## Voices of Excellence on Episode 44



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## Links and Resources

- [Episode 44 of Podcast](#)
- [Video Presentation from ACT Workforce Summit](#)
- [Manufacturing Day](#)
- [Webinar Series: Driving Economic Growth with CTE and Workforce Policy Innovation](#)
- [ACT Work Ready Communities](#)
- [ACT Workforce Solutions](#)

## Transcript of Episode 44

Jingle Open with Music: Let's Get Ready for Work

LeeSa Page: Let's take what we've learned this week and look for new opportunities to tap that untapped talent and be a champion, forge those partnerships and let's make an impact and take the steps for our next generation workforce.

Jasen Jones: October is National Manufacturing Month and ACT's 2023 Workforce Summit joined the celebration with LeeSa Page, a senior advisor with the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council.

Jasen: In episode 44 of Ready for Work, we hear from LeeSa Page on the significance of Manufacturing Day and Manufacturing Month, which aim to educate the public, especially students, about modern manufacturing.

We'll hear the latest impacts of manufacturing in the American economy, highlighting the sector's contribution to GDP, employment, and innovation. LeeSa addresses the challenge of finding skilled talent in the manufacturing industry and the need to inspire more individuals, including military veterans, those reentering the workforce from incarceration, youth, women, and others to pursue careers in manufacturing.

The Workforce Summit closing plenary on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup> in Nashville launched the celebration with a short video on MSSC's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Following the video, LeeSa takes the stage with inspiration of successful programs and a call to action for more partnerships, champions, and initiatives to leverage untapped talent pools and ensure a skilled and diverse manufacturing workforce for the future.

MSSC Video: Manufacturing Skills Standards Council. 25 years Upskilling America's Workforce. In 1998, the federal National Skill Standards Board endorsed the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council as the Voluntary Partnership of industry, labor, and education. Responsible for defining the industry wide skill standards for front line production workers, industry provided thousands of workers to develop those standards. The substantive foundation for the MSSC is signature Certified Production Technician CPT certification, now commemorating 25 years of upskilling America's workforce.

MSSC has grown far beyond initial expectations into a national institution of over 2000 authorized assessment centers, 3300 plus authorized instructors teaching seven different national certification programs with two in manufacturing and five in supply chain logistics, helping to close the skills gap and enabling a path to secure in-demand, lucrative careers. With an unprecedented shift of companies reshoring and opening new plants in America, we are at the forefront of a new manufacturing renaissance.

At the same time, industry is going through a digital transformation with accelerated investments in industry 4.0 digital technologies. As industry further increases its embrace of these emerging trends. MSSC is leading the way to ensure that training and certification of front line technicians in manufacturing and supply chain logistics incorporates a central understanding of a wide range of transformational Industry. 4.0 digital technologies so that the workforce of today

and tomorrow was properly primed for the challenges that lay ahead. Are you ready to take the next step with your training program? Go to [MSSCUSA dot org](http://MSSCUSA.org) to learn more.

Leesa: Well, good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here today. It looks like you all survived the night out in Nashville last night. Glad to see so many faces here and honored to be here on Manufacturing Day to talk to you a little bit about modern manufacturing today. Why we have manufacturing day and manufacturing month and again, to share our story and talk about the impact of manufacturing on the American economy.

So really excited to be here today, but I am going to start with how many of you have ever been in a manufacturing facility? Oh, my gosh. Really? That's awesome. Yay! I'm so excited to hear that because that's why we have Manufacturing Day today.

In October 2012, the fabricators and Manufacturers Association decided to do a series of about 200 events in the Midwest to open up to the general public, show people what is manufacturing. I mean, if you think about it, people can go into retail stores and see things in retail stores. They see TV shows. I mean, how many people became forensic experts and went through classes after CSI? things like that that you see either regular touch, feel, see it every day. You don't see manufacturing every day. And I think, Mary, yesterday said, you know, you drive by that big building on the highway and you don't even pay attention to what that is. And so the whole point of manufacturing day is to open that up and show students what's going on.

So here we are, what, 14, 13 years later? And today, as a result, 13 years later, there were 200 events back in 2012, there are over 14,000 employers who are opening their doors to students today to show them what modern manufacturing is all about, to get to have tours and demonstrations and talk to the people who make their firms successful. And I think that's such an important thing to do for young people because they don't see that every day. And I do believe that there are many programs, and I'm going to talk about few of them that expose our young talent to these exciting careers. Also, as you just saw in the opening video, and I'll go through this pretty quick because the video really did give you a lot of really good information.

A couple of things that I'm going to talk about and the reason why some of these partnerships are so successful is because of the champions behind them forging these partnerships and really providing a strong support system and commitment. Before we were known as MSSC, we had put together an impressive nationwide partnership of employers labor unions. Let me - employers and labor unions! I know there's a lot going on right now, but it was so central to why we were successful in working together with also industry associations, education and training

and community based organizations, really the largest of its kind. And I know some of you were in some of the sessions and the pre concessions and sessions yesterday where I talked really about how we developed our standards on which we were based. And it's really this partnership that made it successful for all of our programs. Hundreds of companies came together and thousands of workers to identify what our production and logistics programs would end up looking like and what started out as a federal mandate under the National Skill Standards Act to develop a standard communication tool for workers has turned into a comprehensive solution to certify the manufacturing workforce, but one that also provides training, upskilling, and clear career pathways for individuals into these jobs. And as you saw today, the MSSC has four certification programs, four programs with seven certifications among them, and our network is fairly large nationwide.

Across the US, we have over 3000 instructors at 2000 centers to deliver this training, and it's not in just one place. It's very flexible. We have it at community colleges, high schools, prisons, correctional facilities. We work very closely with the military. Opportunity Youth, can go on and on and on. So very excited about that. But most importantly, with manufacturing the past two decades of MSSC's work to stay current and competitive based on new and emerging technologies and growing sectors is indicative of manufacture ring today in the US.

And so data from the National Association of Manufacturers reports that manufacturing employs just over 13 million people or just under 10% of the US population, and average annual salaries at about \$95,000. That includes pay and wages and benefits, and manufacturing contributed \$2.9 trillion to the US GDP in the first quarter of this year. For every dollar spent in manufacturing, there's another \$2.60 in the overall economy. And for every one worker in manufacturing, there are five workers hired elsewhere. I think even most importantly is that over 55% of private sector R&D is performed by manufacturing, which makes it the most innovative sector of any sector in the nation. Manufacturing is key to our economic strength, and it touches on every sector of our economy.

One of the biggest challenges is and we talk about this all the time in the manufacturing sector, as are other business sectors. We continue to face the shortage of finding skilled talent, finding new hires who are ready on day one, upskilling incumbents with the latest advancements in technology and retaining a skilled workforce are the largest problems that we have. There are currently 550,000 job openings in the manufacturing sector, with a projected 4 million more in 2030 and over 2.1 million. I think now it's 2.5 million are expected to go unfilled if we don't inspire more people to pursue these careers. The reshoring of American manufacturing to address

supply chain vulnerabilities will continue to add to that challenge and other contributing factors. People are retiring. Manufacturing is dark, dirty, dangerous. People don't want to go into it because it's low skill, low quality jobs and influenced by parents and older adults. Teens and young adults don't immediately think of manufacturing when they think about getting a job or starting a career. They can't see it. But let's talk about the opportunities.

Get rid of dark, dirty, dangerous, and let's focus on green, clean and smart. In advanced manufacturing, entry level does not translate to low skill. In fact, as manufacturers move to more automated systems, they aren't getting rid of jobs. They're creating new careers. These are highly skilled, educated and technical positions and tasks, equipment and processes will change rapidly and our workforce will have to as well. And the current unemployment rate is pretty low, about three and a half percent across the nation. And manufacturers are looking at historically high number of job openings. Where are they going to find that skilled talent? Well, in addition to the traditional pipeline of secondary and post-secondary students, which is still underutilized but growing, there is a massive pool of untapped talent. Our military citizens who are reentering the workforce from incarceration or addiction, opportunity youth, and women. Manufacturing related careers can be extremely intimidating to some people and stackable credentials like CRC and our CP and CLT programs are great entry points for those individuals on a nontraditional path.

So for instance, by combining math and reading in the CRC, students gain confidence in our ensured a higher level of success as they move on to more advanced credentials such as the CPT and the FANUC and Rockwell's Connected Smart Manufacturing program. This is just an example of a pathway program for students of any age that they can look at that and say, I can do this from one step at a time. These short term programs with different entry and exit points open up the possibilities to entire populations. What may have seemed daunting and impossible has now become a realistic attainable way for people to achieve their career goals. And the good news is there are great examples. I'm only going to do three, otherwise I'd be up here for the rest of the day.

I'm going to start with Heroes Make America program, something that we are very involved in and have been for quite some time. Since 2018, the Heroes Make America Program, which is run by the Manufacturing Institute of the NAM, has helped over 1000 transitioning soldiers, their spouses and veterans enter civilian careers in manufacturing and logistics through their skill bridge program. In addition to mechatronics, MSSC's, CPT and logistics programs have been a key element in which they include OSHA 10, OSHA 30, forklift, and career development wrap arounds. And most importantly, they have a very strong connection with employers to bridge that military

service to their civilian careers. They operate in Kansas, North Carolina, Georgia and Texas, right now. They run a fully virtual CPT program, our production program, and they will launch their fully virtual logistics program in early 2024.

The Heroes programs work with their local community and technical college and their employer community. Their Impact - Heroes has a 90% employment placement rate with over 350 companies nationwide and the average annual salary just the salary is over \$73,000. They're making a huge impact in that community and we're happy to be a part of that.

Let's turn to our youth apprenticeship model - GPS education partners. I think many of you have heard of them. I know they've participated in ACT events before. They are a great model working with at risk youth. They are a nonprofit, work based learning solutions provider, and they're based in Wisconsin and they've run their manufacturing youth apprenticeship program with local manufacturers at offsite facilities. Unlike many immersive programs, the students they serve wouldn't normally meet their attendance or GPA requirements, and they work with them to include the NCRC and CPT for their students so that they have multiple on and off ramps with these programs.

The apprenticeship model provides a structured and comprehensive path to success for these students, and they've graduated over a thousand from 50 schools and partnered with over 100 local employers in their community. Their impact has been high as well. From 2020 to 2023, they've graduated 95% of their students and 74% are employed full time.

The last program, Let's turn to second chances. The Madison Correctional Facility, based in Madison, Indiana, is at the forefront of certifying their students who are currently incarcerated and upon release, seek to enter a career into manufacturing or logistics. This is the first MSSC program of its kind where they are training while they are incarcerated.

They work through a partnership with Ivy Tech Community College Madison, and they begin with the students earning their full CPT to give them the confidence and the skills to start in these workplaces. And their impact has been strong. The Madison facility has graduated 75 women in production and 38 in logistics.

These are just a few examples of hundreds of partnerships that have made an impact again through champions in their community, forging strong partnerships, or none of this would work without all of the players coming together, working together to make this happen, and more importantly, make an impact for the individuals themselves and the community by having them employed. Let's take what we've learned this week at some awesome sessions, some that I

couldn't even attend because I'm like, Oh, I want to go here. I want to go there. So many great things that we learned this week and look for new opportunities to tap that untapped talent and be a champion, forge those partnerships and let's make an impact and take the steps for our next generation workforce. Thank you.

Jasen: Thanks to Leesa Page for leading us on the celebration of Manufacturing Day at the recent ACT Workforce Summit and our recap on episode 44 of Ready for Work. Check out our show notes for a video of this presentation from the Workforce Summit and links to MSSC and Manufacturing Day.

We invite you to join our five-part webinar series over the coming months for decision makers and experts tackling the challenge of building a skilled, resilient workforce in the face of persistent talent shortages. Explore the latest CTE and workforce development policies that drive economic growth. Webinars cover prioritizing talent in economic development, leveraging workforce data, promoting equity and CTE and workforce development, and aligning policies for sustainability. Don't miss out on charting a course for a prosperous, well-equipped workforce and economic future. You'll find a link in our show notes to join us in these informative gatherings to make a difference in your region's talent, pipeline and economic growth.

Closing with Jingle: Ready for Work is a service from your friends at ACT, a mission-driven non-profit dedicated to helping people achieve education and workplace success. Discover more at [act.org/readyforworkpodcast](https://act.org/readyforworkpodcast). Now, let's get to work!