Growing with the Brand at Allegra

By Deborah Nash, MMEC

The owners of Allegra Print and Imaging in Helena, Toni and Clark Broadbent, historically ride the cusp of change in the industry. Today, the increasing pulse of the operation is in the flow of ink, whirring presses and busy bindery equipment located in the lower level of its downtown location. Streams of activity are visible in design, copy service and the unique retail sales areas on the main floor as well.

To better meet changing customer demand and reach a new niche in the highly competitive printing industry, Allegra recently made a million dollar investment in a state-of-the-art Ryobi sheet-fed press along with other equipment upgrades and improved plant layout.

Back in 1982, the Broadbents opened their print business as an Insty-Prints, the first shop of its kind in Helena to offer the then revolutionary desktop publishing, overnight print services, high speed and engineering copies. In 1992, the owners moved press production to the top floor of the Eaton Building on Last Chance Gulch, adding another 5000 sq. ft. to the operation. In 1997, they merged with two other local printers and moved to the historic Carriage House, location of an early-day livery stable and the former Grimes Motors building. Change has not stopped there.

“The best part of being in a competitive industry is working for a company like Allegra. It’s a fantastic place to work, especially because Toni and Clark re-invest in new technology and keep the equipment in tip top condition all the time,” says Trevor Parrish, who is Allegra’s general manager and has been with the company for 11 years.

Gaining with Lean

Over the past several years, Parrish has been working to implement Lean Manufacturing techniques learned at an MMEC workshop. Driving these changes is print communications becoming more intertwined with binding, according to Parrish.

“I started concentrating on workflow with Todd Daniels from MMEC for better utilization of space about a year and a half ago. We actually flipped the press and bindery areas for better flow and to reduce material handling,” Parrish said.

He started applying Lean’s just-in-time concepts because he wanted to better manage a huge inventory and liked the idea of improving on the visual controls that were in use. That effort has led to even greater gains from reconfiguring the press room and bindery, making space in the burgeoning business for more advanced equipment, including the Ryobi press. Less efficient presses and equipment have been sold while keeping workhorses and several revered early-day Heidelberg presses: a 1950 sheet-fed Quick Master and one pre-electric era 1895 model that uses cast dies. It was converted for electricity long ago. Each of these is still used for specialty printing and unique business cards.

Another interesting piece is an Halm Jet Envelope Press capable of printing 50,000 pieces an hour. While not old, it has history as the only press still being manufactured in the USA, according to Parrish.

And typical for a growing company, “space was an issue when I got started,” he said. “It still is.”

Thinking Through 5-S

“My involvement started out along the lines of helping Trevor with 5-S (continued on page 4)
Drop Your Line In for Real Opportunity

My recent participation in a trade mission to Italy rekindled the conviction that opportunities to expand markets internationally are very real for Montana companies.

Did you know that 97% of U.S. exporters are "small and medium-size enterprises" (SME’s), having fewer than 50 employees? What’s relevant here is that 70 percent of those exporting actually have fewer than 20 employees, not unlike Montana where 84 percent of manufacturers employ fewer than 20.

Two-thirds of SME’s that export currently sell to just one foreign market, and nearly half to just four. Similarly, in Montana, four markets attract most of the export business, with Canada at roughly 50 percent followed by Japan and Germany each with 10 percent and Taiwan at 6 percent. A real window for capturing market share around the world is in the offing as domestic demand surges for many developing nations and skyscrapers can also play a significant role in the decision not to export.

It recommended more effort through public/private partnerships to "demystify the process.” That’s where trade missions fit. Traveling with a contingent made up of an official from government and knowledge-able organizers who pre-arrange and vet local connections for key meetings maximizes every minute of the trip. Combining governmental meetings, company visits and university ties is a real ice breaker in foreign lands where establishing relationships comes before business deals.

Trade missions help bridge this gap in several important ways:
1. Identify opportunities so our companies can take advantage of them.
2. Help develop important relationships that lead to business deals.
3. Enable wise use of time and money by prearranging meetings with potential customers.

(continued on page 10)
Growing with the Brand at Allegra

(continued from cover)

layout possibilities, for major flow of materials when Trevor wanted to expand improving the bindery layout. It was a first step.

Later, when Parrish was seeking space for a new folding machine, Daniels suggested reducing the old paper storage area and to consider using space where older equipment was being stored for “On the days where we were looking at stored inventory and asking, ‘Have you anything left over to sell? ’” The answer was “No, we just don’t have it left.” He had the cart custom made to “be stronger and more pleasant and safer.”

Two things were moved around for better movement through the area and to fit in new equipment. “Essentially, we configured more of a production line, even in bindery,” Parrish said. He estimates that materials handling has decreased by at least two-thirds.

“We have really valued Todd’s input. I trust and use his advice. When he doesn’t have the answer, he talks to others, takes photographs for ideas and helps me work through it,” Parrish said in relation to the relationship with Daniels at MMEC.

“At Allegra, we think of Todd as a partner in our growth,” added Toni Broadbent. “He has seen us through a lot of changes through the years. We now have one-third more employees and growing every year. Most of equipment we had has now been replaced.”

We think of Todd at MMEC as a partner in our growth.

New Technology, New Opportunity

The November installation of the Ryobi four-color press is just one example of the evolution from a revolution.

ary quick-print shop in the early 1980s to a full-service print shop today. When asked why the switch from German-made Heidelberg presses, a long-time industry standard in bindery, to Japanese Ryobi, Parrish said, “At first, we looked at an older Heidelberg but decided we don’t want to go back in technology.”

In his opinion, the German products have not adapted as fast to changing technologies. And for Allegra, the Ryobi offers self-loading and self-cleaning features and auto-color register for easy, fast, and better printing. These features, coupled with a sheet size of 354.50 inches and the ability to print half sizes, have positioned the company to cultivate an underserved “in between” market.

“It’s enabled us to enter a market (continued on page 9)

Cars in order, shine, standardize, sustain (sort, set in order, shine, standardize, sustain)

Thinking Lean, Parrish envisioned a more pleasant and safer work environment. He had the carts custom made to be “stronger and more pleasant and safer.”

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“It’s enabled us to enter a market (continued on page 9)

Business Health – The Numbers Tell the Story

By Guest Writer, John Vander Laan, SCORE

Is your business succeeding? You may think so, but the reality may be quite different.

Good sales and happy customers are not necessarily indicators of a health business.

No doubt you’ve read about seemingly prosperous businesses that suddenly shut down without notice. Those businesses may have closed because the owner did not understand the company’s true financial health.

Accounting and financial figures can provide you with the information you need to gauge the health of your business and where it’s heading. If you’re unfamiliar with balance sheets and profit and loss statements, you may think they are nothing more than just pages with a bunch of numbers. Actually, they are very valuable tools that can provide you with the information necessary to make good decisions regarding sales, expenses and profits.

Let’s start with the balance sheet. Thought of as a snapshot of your business at a given point in time. The amount of capital distributed over the various accounts in the business and the surplus of assets over liabilities shows profitability. If the snapshot shows liabilities greater than assets, you see a loss position for the company at that time. Even more important are trends over time.

How to Spot Trends

A company may have a month with high expenses that result in a loss for the period. The trends, however, may show five months of profitability. The net of the six months may show profit ability even though one month showed a loss. If three months showed a loss it would be cause for more concern, and you must decide how to overcome the negative cash position.

Comparing balance sheets over a period of time helps you gain an understanding of your assets and liabilities. Let’s say you review your quarterly balance sheets over several years. By comparing these on an item-by-item basis you can spot trends. You are now beginning to gain a real understanding of the overall financial picture of your company. For example, seeing larger quantities of inventory on hand from one period to another may be a reflection of a decision to buy ahead because of special pricing.

A great resource for help is SCORE – Counselors to America’s Small Business. SCORE provides free and confidential business counseling, including information and assistance on how to interpret balance sheets and profit and loss statements.

SCORE has eight Montana chapters located in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Havre, Helena, Kalispell and Missoula. More than 190 volunteer business counselors are available to assist you in starting a new business or getting through some rough times in an existing business.

SCORE is a national, non-profit organization and a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration. It is now easier than ever for you to contact SCORE. Check out the Web site http://www.montanascore.org for chapter information, individual counseling skills, workshop schedules and more.

John Vander Laan is a member of Northwest Montana SCORE.
Montana’s Manufacturing Industry

Montana’s manufacturing industry had increased sales, employment, and worker earnings in 2006 building on improvement both in 2004 and 2005. The sector in 2006 produced approximately $8 billion in product output, employed close to 27,500 people who earned $1.2 billion in labor income. The manufacturing sector accounted for over 20 percent of Montana’s economic base.

Manufacturing employment has shown steady increases in the past three years (10 percent), and income to workers rose commensurately. Three years of declines have now been followed by three years of consistent increases in Montana manufacturing output and employment.

With the exception of the wood products sector the continued improved conditions in 2006 were broad based. Nearly 60 percent of surveyed Montana manufacturing firms reported increased profits in 2006; sales were up for nearly two-thirds, and production increased for 61 percent.

The continued increase in manufacturing activity in 2006 can be attributed to a strong global economy which spurred demand even as growth rates in the U.S. economy slowed. This resulted in high prices for a number of base commodities (such as petroleum and metals) as well as high technology products.

Also, positively impacting some Montana manufacturers was the continued growth of the economy in Montana and adjacent states.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
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<td>116</td>
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<td>Metals</td>
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<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>136</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>136</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,162</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,218</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,789</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,453</strong></td>
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* Estimate

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2006 Manufacturing Employment*</th>
<th>% of State’s Manufacturing Employment</th>
<th>2006 Manufacturing Labor Income [thousands 2004$]*</th>
<th>% of State’s Manufacturing Labor Income</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yellowstone</td>
<td>3,778</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>$253,363</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flathead</td>
<td>3,456</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>$196,230</td>
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<td>Missoula</td>
<td>3,188</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>$144,270</td>
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<td>Gallatin</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>$119,032</td>
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<td>Ravalli</td>
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<td>Cascade</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$44,808</td>
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<td>Lake</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$30,367</td>
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<td>Lewis &amp; Clark</td>
<td>853</td>
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<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>562</td>
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<td>Silver Bow</td>
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<td>$17,228</td>
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<td>Remaining 46 Counties</td>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>$143,860</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<td><strong>Montana Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,606</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,025,121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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* Estimate

Table 3

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<td>81</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>4,681</td>
<td>4,959</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimate
Outlook: 2007 and Beyond

The U.S. economy is projected to slow further in 2007 as are Japan and most European economies. However, continued strong economic performances in China and India will help maintain global economic activity. A weakening U.S. dollar should help U.S. exports and make imported products less competitive in the U.S. market. Lower interest rates and lower energy prices could stimulate business and consumer spending as 2007 progresses. Montana manufacturers who responded to our annual survey are surprisingly optimistic in the face of a slowing U.S. economy. Forty-five percent still foresee improved conditions for 2007, and 43 percent think 2007 will turn out about the same as 2006. Only 12 percent expect worsening conditions. Over half of manufacturing respondents expect to keep their workforce at the same level in 2007, while well over one-third foresee an increase.

When manufacturers were asked to rate a list of issues in terms of general importance to their business (Table 3), 78 percent of respondents rated health insurance cost as very important, followed by the availability of qualified workers (73 percent), and workers’ compensation rates (64 percent). Energy costs and raw material availability and cost were very important to just over 50 percent of respondents.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percent Responding “Very Important”</th>
<th>Ranking 2006</th>
<th>Ranking 2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance Costs</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of Qualified Workers</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workers’ Compensation Rates</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of Energy</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Material Availability</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers’ Compensation Rates</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of Workforce Development</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign Competition</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimats

Growing with the Brand at Allegro

(continued from page 4)

we’ve never been in with very quick turn around. We are now niche in between a quick print and a high volume commercial option,” he said. Management expects 10 percent growth this year as a result of new printing options

Re-branding Is Important

In the continuing evolution to a full service, higher volume print communications center, the Broadhearts have not only chosen to take advantage of the latest printing technologies, they also consolidated off-site operations and re-branded the business under Allegro Print & Imaging in 2004.

The shop now has a team of 37 highly motivated professionals and the largest physical plant in the nation for Allegro branded stores. But becoming branded as Allegro was no easy task.

“The certification process included improving the way we do business all around and took over two years,” says Toni. “Qualifying our processes has given us new capability and much more speed to meet the demand of the marketplace.”

The next step, according to Toni, is to make press and bindery areas more of a show place for customers and a more pleasant environment for employees by adding some color and art like that enjoyed at ground level.

What’s Happening with WIRED

(continued from page 3)

program. Grant recipients include Sustainable Systems, LLC, Fort Peck Tribes, Peaks and Prairies, LLC, Western Bio-Products Innovation Center, and Ethanol Producers and Consumers of Montana, Inc (EPA).

“These WIRED awards are helping fund cutting edge operations in Montana’s bio-product industry,” said Governor Schweitzer. “All of the recipients are devoted to expanding the economic base of bio-products in Eastern Montana, and these grants will allow Montana to advance to the next level.”

Last summer, the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center was one of the first WIRED grant recipients to enable MMEC to use its knowledge base and field resources to assist new and existing bio-product companies to improve efficiencies and provide customized training to workers. Additionally, companies may receive assistance for a proportionate cost of equipment and inventory used in that training.

Through related program grants to other Montana organizations, WIRED funds can also be used for curriculum development, intern and apprenticeship programs and school-to-work opportunities to help citizens with skill sets they will need in the bio-based workplace.

“Businesses involved in the support or production of bio-products in the WIRED region may be eligible for assistance from MMEC,” Haider said, noting that other Montana firms that support bio-product development should also feel free to give MMEC a call. Haider can be reached through his office in Helena at 406-447-8543 or jhaider@one.montana.edu.

Choices Health Insurance Program Tops 6,000

The Montana Chamber of Commerce rang in the New Year with the news that they had more than doubled enrollment in Chamber Choices, its group health insurance offering, since the beginning of last year. Enrollment has topped over 5,000 lives with more than 400 employers involved. By February enrollment had climbed to 6,000.

“Even better, about 60% of our lives covered previously had no insurance,” noted Webb Brown, Montana Chamber President/CEO. “We’re finding solutions for a major problem facing employers.”

Montana Chamber Choices started in May 2004 as a group health insurance plan. It is available to members of the state chamber and 41 local chambers of commerce. The program continues to grow with over 50 employers signing up this past November alone.

More information is available at the program’s website, www.chamberchoices.com, or by calling the Montana Chamber at 888-442-MONT (6668), Blue Cross at 800-447-7828 ext 8065, or Associated Benefits of Montana at 877-799-2225.
Manufacturing News

Drop Your Line! (continued from page 2)
4. Offer opportunity to become familiar with and adapt to cultural differences so future business deals work better.
5. Interact with local resources that can help reduce the learning curve, with answers to: What are the paperwork requirements? How do I get paid? How do I ship my product? Will I have to pay tariffs? Will my intellectual property be protected?

Since it can take as long as two years for a novice firm to successfully complete its first export transaction, the investment of time and resources to further relationships through participation in a trade mission offers real value.
And such trade missions do yield results. This was my third mission with the Congressman, and previous trips have delivered at least $20 million in new revenue for Montana businesses so far.

While the Lombardy region is much smaller than Montana geographically, it has populations. However, it is similar to Montana in a number of ways. Manufacturing firms are mostly small family-run firms. There is a broad mix of manufacturing sectors. And it attracts the eco-oriented potential of many Montana businesses, according to MWT.

MSE Technologies of Butte had a representative on the mission, and outdoor products from three Bozeman companies, several from Missoula and one from Stevensville were among the Montana-made items that delegates pitched while we were in Italy. The Montana Wheat and Barley Committee, the Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Office of International Programs also participated.
I recall this key comment before the mission by Jeff Ruffner from MSE: “You have to drop a line in the water in order to catch a fish.”
Steve Holland, MMEC Director

Pipe Manufacturer Expands Operations

Poly Warehouse, Inc. in Stevensville expanded operations to a newly built 12,000-square-foot facility over the New Year. Further expansion is planned as a result of an equity investment by InvestAmerica, a private equity management group based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Founding owner and CEO Neil Sheldon was assisted in locating financing by the Montana Office of International Programs in the Office of International Programs also participated.

Growth Projections for Aerospace Firm

Sonjo Industrial, Inc. (www.anodizecoating.com) an aerospace component manufacturer in Kalispell, has projected workforce growth from 37 employees to 150 over the next two years as a result of diversification and current efforts to complete AS9100 quality system certification. A formal registration audit is scheduled in March. News story by Lynnette Hetzko, Daily Inter Lake, Feb. 11, 2007.

UPS Looks to Boeing

Atlanta-based UPS announced that it is adding 27 Boeing 767s to its fleet with delivery expected between 2009 and 2012. The order will keep the 767 production line in Everett, Wash., running for several more years while Boeing seeks a $10 billion contract to replace hundreds of aging Air Force refueling planes, possibly with 787s, according to a Seattle Times Business & Technology report. http://www.seattletimes.nwsource.com

Rapid Growth for Clean Energy Predicted

Clean Edge, a research firm, predicts rapid growth in clean energy markets by 2015. Wind power will expand from $11.8 billion in 2005 to $48.7 billion in 2015. Solar photocell markets will grow from an $11.2 billion industry in 2005 to $51.1 billion by 2015. These four clean-energy technologies, which equaled $40 billion in 2005, will grow fourfold to $167 billion within the coming decade. See http://www.cleanedge.com.

Made in Montana Marketplace

The annual Made In Montana Marketplace convened at the Mansfield Convention Center in the Great Falls Civic Center for a two-day food and gift trade show on March 2 and 3. The event is strategically timed to connect exhibitors with buyers looking to purchase for coming spring and summer season. Watch for information about 2008 at www.ci.great-falls.mt.us/events/madetomontana/index.htm

Montana Manufacturing Center

MMEC Clients Report $88M Impact in FY2006

From July 5th through June 2006, Montana Manufacturing Center (MMEC) clients reported nearly $88 million of positive economic impact. The companies were surveyed by an independent survey house that collects data quarterly to assess the effectiveness of MMEC services in delivering measurable returns to clients and investors.

Clients also reported that direct services resulted in an increase of 169 jobs and retention of 550 positions. The survey results indicate that MMEC clients are modernizing, investing in their people, increasing sales, saving money and becoming more productive and competitive.

Montana manufacturers are benefitting from strategies to boost competitiveness, and those gains are having a very positive impact on their bottom lines and on our state economy,” said Steve Holland, MMEC director.

Survey respondents also indicated that they were highly satisfied with MMEC services, giving the center a rating of 4.7 out of a possible 5. MMEC Field Engineers are based in Bozeman, Billings, Kalispell and Helena to provide technical, engineering and professional business management assistance as well as training and information to manufacturers across the state. The Center has been assisting companies since 1996.

Select data from Synovate survey of MMEC clients. Synovate is independently contracted by NIST/MEP.

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President
Artina Doors of MT
Kalispell, MT

Steve Holland
MMEC Director

Kim Gillan*
State Senator
Billings, MT

John Sinrud*
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Bozeman, MT

Evon Barrett
Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity
Helena, MT

Loren Smith
Owner/CEO
Prairie Kraft Specialties
Great Falls, MT

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President
Béquet Confections
Bozeman, MT

Tom Spika
President
Spika伟德/Wrighting & Manufacturing
Mccaslin, MT

Bob Bergren*
State Representative
Havre, MT

Corey Stapleton*
State Senator
Billings, MT

Neal Blossom
Technical Director
American Chemet
East Helena, MT

John Unterreiner
President
Kalspell Area Chamber of Commerce
Kalspell, MT

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Director of Operations
Simms Fishing Products
Bozeman, MT

Joe McClure
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Big Sky EDA
Billings, MT

Havre, MT

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Whitefish, MT

Jerry McConnell
President
Spectrum Products
Missoula, MT

Susan Hubble
President
Anderson Steel Supply
Great Falls, MT

Mary Moe
Dean
MTU College of Technology
Great Falls, MT

S&K Electronics
Ronan, MT

John David Pickering Sr.
CEO
Great Falls, MT

Lauri Hall
President
S&K Electronics
Ronan, MT

Dave Lubs
President
Artisan Doors of MT
Helena, MT

Billings, MT

Tim Kengen
Director of Forest Industry Research
BEN/School of Business Administration
Missoula, MT

Bob Macket
President
Red Oxe Manufacturing
Billings, MT

Todd Béquet
President
MSE Technologies of MT
Kalispell, MT

Sonja Industrial, Inc.
President
Sonja Industrial, Inc.
Bozeman, MT

John Sinrud*
President
Kalspell Area Chamber of Commerce
Kalspell, MT

Trevor Beach
Director of Operations
MT Dept. of Commerce
Helena, MT

Loren Smith
President
Prairie Kraft Specialties
Great Falls, MT

**pending board vote

Made in Montana Marketplace

Steve Holland, MMEC Director

For the Montana Manufacturing Center

Send News Briefs to dnash@coe.montana.edu

ForwardFocus is a Newsletter for Montana Manufacturers Published Quarterly

FEEL FREE TO CONTACT MMEC ABOUT manufacURING TOPICS OR ISSUES THAT CONCERN YOU AND SEND YOUR COMPANY NEWS BRIEFS TO DNASH@COE.MONTANA.EDU

http://www.ci.great-falls.mt.us/events/madetomontana/index.htm

“you have to drop a line in the water in order to catch a fish.”

Select data from Synovate survey of MMEC clients. Synovate is independently contracted by NIST/MEP.
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