

The CEO Perspective: Leadership Challenges for Manufacturers

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(Business, U.S. Manufacturing) Recently I came across the PriceWaterhouseCoopers Annual CEO Survey online and listened to several 3-6 minute videos about leadership challenges for manufacturers. The speakers talked about both new and old trends they are focused on as company leaders, with several that could apply to small and medium-sized manufacturers.

The top five leadership challenges included harnessing digital media, integrating diversity of the workforce, technology adoption in manufacturing, developing emerging markets and partnering.

Alex A. Molinzaroli, Chairman, President and CEO of Johnson Controls, Inc. spoke about deemphasizing North America and Europe, as growth lessens there, and expanding into emerging markets. A second theme was partnering to accelerate their growth, creating more co-dependency with suppliers and customers. Improving the diversity of their company is also top of mind and the CEO needs to relate to employees by being flexible and trusting people.

A second interview was with Rodney O'Neal, CEO and President of Delphi Automotive Systems LLC talking about how advanced car systems are today (did you know there are over 50 computers in cars today?) and what features we might expect in the near future through technology adoption. He discussed the idea that you can count on change, therefore the CEO has to connect the dots, listen to what the world is saying to create the vision, strategy and tactics for the company and decode the message.

Denise Morrison, President and CEO of Campbell Soup Company US talked about building purpose, a shift in demographics and the change in families that have affected their product lines, using eCommerce with retailers and their customers

and the growth of a middle class in emerging markets. As the millennial generation grows up, both as customers and employees, the company faces challenges in products and within their own culture they have to respond to.

Perhaps my favorite video was the interview with Alan Wilson, Chairman, President & CEO of McCormik & Company. He talked about this 125-year-old spice company learning best practices from other industries, dealing with cybersecurity, working with social networks for new product development and using lab robots to mix and identify origins and flavor notes. He also spoke to diversifying their workforce to leverage talent around the world and a natural curiosity that a CEO must have to be successful.

These are short, poignant videos that are interesting to listen to and not just because 3 of the 4 companies have been MEP clients. If you are interested in executing any of the concepts discussed in these videos around emerging markets, technology adoption, workforce development or supply chain partnering, contact your local MEP Center. They can help translate large company successes into success with your business.