#2. C. Mr. Dorpain (#3)

Questions were asked to companies belonging to the Utah Steel Fabricators Association (USFA). They were answered by CEO's, Managers, and Human Resources professionals.

Question 1: Is there anything the state can do to remove barriers and encourage the success and growth of the manufacturing industry in Utah?

(#1 - USFA) I believe one of the greatest barriers manufacturing in the State of Utah is facing and will continue to face for some time is a lack of a skilled workforce. For many years the State has pushed within our high schools and community colleges that the future workforce should pursue traditional four year degrees from universities and colleges, with there being an often unspoken message of avoiding trade fields.

However, the reality of our workforce is that we need more skilled laborers in the manufacturing industry who pursue certification applicable to a given industry. Not only would this help the manufacturing industry, it would also help many individuals, who for whatever reason do not or are unable to pursue a four year degree, or find a field of employment they can succeed in. And often an individual's years in the manufacturing industry turn into a stepping stone they needed to transition into a career that will require them to pursue a four year degree, such as a field of engineering or architecture. The USFA has been trying to do our part by setting aside funds for an Education Grant in which the recipients of the funds must apply the funding towards furthering their education in a trade skill. But we need help in letting people know there is nothing wrong with pursuing a career in the manufacturing industry by attending a trade school.

(#2 - CEO) My thoughts went directly to education and training on Small Business. I have been shocked by the lack of information and expertise we have found as we have searched in Utah for help. It would be especially nice if there were some type of "quick reference" guide rather than being told to refer to the FAR. It would surely help new and existing businesses to understand the definition, requirements, and benefits of small business in Utah. It would also be nice to have some education and training or at least information easily available to understand what is required to be a large business in Utah as well. We have not found much help except on our own within other businesses.

(#3 – HR Manager) Encourage more high school students to take classes at the tech schools during the summer – it's free! Also promote succession planning: i.e., encourage an Engineering, IT, HR, Purchasing, etc., major to work in while they are in school.

Question 2: What else would assist the manufacturing industry?

(#1 - USFA) There is disconnect between the State recruiting businesses and working to keep the already established small manufacturing companies successful. A few years back the USFA had a speaker from the Governor's office address our annual business lunch and while we received a great presentation on how the state is recruiting large businesses to Utah, the majority of those in attendance walked away thinking, "Sounds like Utah is a great place to have a business, but what is the state doing for those of us who already have a small business in Utah? Do they care about what my business brings to the economy?"

And I would say those questions still stand. While many do want the State interfering in their business I do believe the small manufactures in the state would like to know the state appreciates what they do to improve our economy and our communities.

(#2 - CEO) I believe more support in education and training in efforts to promote craftsmen and trades in areas like machining and welding. It seems that the state could help promote the message of another alternative in career paths to highly technical and nicely compensated jobs in these areas. We need more high school students realizing that they can make a living as a machinist or a welder and working down that path to acquire the knowledge and experience needed to start young.

(#3 – H.R. Manager) For existing companies, help us upgrade facilities, machines, tools, and equipment. Also, help us help our employees with the work/life balance. Overtime and a lack of skilled workforce (as stated in the first question) isn't helping this balance. In addition, health insurance is looked at as a negative benefit even for "rich" plans like Petersen Inc. Help offsetting those costs would be beneficial to businesses.

Question 3: What more can the state and other partners do to promote economic success and to assist in maintaining and creating jobs in manufacturing?

(#1 - USFA) As the state continues to recruit new businesses, the manufacturing industry would be greatly benefited if various engineering firms who have their products built locally were targeted to relocate to Utah.

(#2 - CEO) The state needs to provide tangible, achievable cost benefits for job creation. It needs to be almost real time benefits as the costs are being incurred now. The long term benefits that we have currently been chasing may never prove out or benefit us at all…

It also seems that there needs to be a focus and equal benefits provided for existing and established businesses to succeed and grow and not just benefits for new companies to come into the area and recruit the current employees of existing businesses. We need to focus on developing and growing the workforce and not just moving it around to the newest move in.

(#3 – H.R. Manager) We need healthier workers before they get to us, mentally and physically. There are too many depressed and stressed-out people. We also have a record number of garnishments… people do not know how to manage their money. Free classes, seminars or taught more in depth in the school system would be beneficial to businesses and employees.

Another thing that we notice is that soft skills for employees are lacking. This was taught in the home by parents in the past, but we find that we have to teach it on the job in today's world. Whether we bring more awareness of this to families, or teach it in the schools at a young age, this issued should be addressed.

Petersen Inc. Demographics:

- 502 employees with 33 temps
- Average pay for Welders and Machinists is $18.75 per hour.