

Report provides roadmap to address gender gap in manufacturing

Build a Dream and Trillium Network advice for increasing representation, fill gaps: start with one lesson

(April 15, 2021 -- Windsor, Ontario) Within its skilled trades and senior ranks, the manufacturing industry has low representation from several groups including youth, newcomers to Canada, and women. In the summer of 2020, non-profits the Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing and Build a Dream partnered to create an action plan for industry aimed at increasing representation from one of these under-represented talent pools.

[*Gender Diversity and Ontario Manufacturing: Lessons from Five Leading Companies*](#), released in February 2021 online by the Trillium Network, highlights the work that five Ontario manufacturers have done to bring balance to their workplace by increasing the number of women in their plants. The report includes 10 lessons from leading manufacturers with strategies, policies, and practices to build diversity and inclusion (and support ongoing initiatives). Brendan Sweeney, the Trillium Network's Managing Director and co-author of the report says that his organization is encouraged by the amount of interest in the report from manufacturers.

The biggest question he gets: "How do we do this?"

Sweeney says the benefit of the report's lessons is that many can be implemented relatively quickly and with minimal cost. "Start with one lesson as a guideline. It might be getting together with key female employees and just talking to them...they might identify barriers that exist that you never realized were an issue."

Focusing on diversity has benefitted all of those who participated in the report. Increasing the representation of women has resulted in different benefits for each including attraction of top talent, increased job satisfaction and retention, and growth in employee-driven referrals.

There is still work to do in manufacturing. When it comes to initiatives like these, there are two myths that the Trillium Network and Build a Dream are tackling. For industry, there may be an assumption that the advice is to just hire to hit a quota. "It's not about quotas," says Sweeney. "It's about having good practices and good policies to attract talent." For the general public, it's highlighting that manufacturing is not just automotive; there are well-paid manufacturing careers available in a variety of industries including pharmaceutical, food, automation, and aerospace.

Companies looking for guidance should contact Build a Dream for advice, tools, and resources to take the first step.

"We are proud to partner with organizations who want to create change within their environment but may not know where to begin," says Nour Hachem-Fawaz, President and Founder of Build a Dream. "The task may seem daunting but it's about showing current (and future) talent that you are willing to build diversity and inclusion initiatives that benefit your whole team."

Sweeney is also interested in talking to manufacturers that pay a living wage or above and have started the process of bringing balance to their workplace. "What's really going to be important to keep a project of this nature going, is finding a network of companies -- beyond the five featured in the report -- that are willing to share their stories."

About Build a Dream

Build a Dream is an organization with a powerful initiative that attracts, encourages, and empowers all female students to explore careers in skilled trades, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), emergency response, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Through specialized, data-driven programming, the organization works to connect industry, education, government, and families to amplify young women, highlight careers in fields under-represented by women, and spotlight strong role models. They are a catalyst for workforce development, driving to create diverse, inclusive, and equal opportunities for all girls and women.

About the Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing

The Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing is a provincially-funded not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to raise public and investor awareness of Ontario's advanced manufacturing ecosystem.

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For more information about **Build a Dream**, please contact:

Nour Hachem-Fawaz, *President & Founder*, Build a Dream

Mobile: 519-560-7877

nour@webuildadream.com

www.webuildadream.com

For more information about the **Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing**, please contact:

Nick Persichilli, Communications Officer, Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing

Office: (519) 661-3351

<https://trilliummfg.ca/>

REPORT: *Gender Diversity and Ontario Manufacturing: Lessons from Five Leading Companies*
https://trilliummfg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Gender_Diversity_And_Ontario_Manufacturing.pdf

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WHERE WE ALL WIN.**