


The Wisconsin Manufacturing Report

*Documenting the condition of manufacturing and
the mindsets of manufacturers throughout the state*





First Business Bank is your trusted partner. Our experts understand the unique challenges faced by manufacturers like you, leveraging industry insights and strategic connections to help you overcome obstacles and achieve your business goals. As your financial needs shift or new challenges arise, we're here to support your success every step of the way.

Ready when you are.

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Welcome to the fourth annual Wisconsin Manufacturing Report (WMR)

Our report documents the condition of manufacturing and the mindsets of manufacturers throughout the state. We create these insights through 400 interviews with manufacturing executives to create comprehensive data on key issues and five focus groups to get the stories behind the numbers. The end product is a clear, unbiased view of our state's manufacturing base.

Manufacturing stakeholders across Wisconsin use the WMR for the data and insights they need to understand our manufacturing base and inform their decisions on investments, policy, and actions that improve their position. This data provides a solid starting point for creating a bright future for our manufacturers and our state.

Manufacturing represents the largest single sector in Wisconsin's economy in both employment and GDP. Our state consistently rates first or second in the percentage of employment engaged in manufacturing and we lead the country in production of multiple products. Wisconsin manufacturing provides the goods the world needs and the family-supporting jobs that keep our economy healthy.

The Wisconsin MEP Network – WMEP Manufacturing Solutions, the UW-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center, and the Wisconsin Center for Manufacturing & Productivity – focuses on keeping the states' small- and medium-sized manufacturers competitive. We do that through our experts across Wisconsin and the MEP National Network with resources in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. This network ensures that smaller manufacturers have the same help that their bigger counterparts enjoy.

Finally, our sponsors make the Wisconsin Manufacturing Report possible. First Business Bank supported the concept from the beginning and Top Floor Technologies joined them as a sponsor this year. Together, they help us reach more manufacturers, broaden our perspectives, and make each year's production better. Thank you for all that you do.

Enjoy the report!



Buckley Brinkman
Executive Director / CEO

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Wisconsin Manufacturing Overview

Manufacturing contributes more to the Wisconsin economy than any other sector, adding more than \$66 billion to the state’s \$400 billion economy. The intensity of manufacturing in our state ranks second in the nation and manufacturing provides over 470,000 family supporting jobs for our workers. Wisconsin manufacturing provides the critical parts and components necessary for the rest of American manufacturing to succeed.

Manufacturing drives Wisconsin’s economy. We know manufacturing must stay healthy for the state to thrive, so the WCMP produces the Wisconsin Manufacturing Report to understand the issues facing manufacturing and the mindsets of Wisconsin manufacturers. These insights help stakeholders eliminate roadblocks and take advantage of our strengths to create a bright future for our industry.

Through all this complexity, workforce remains the dominant issue for our manufacturers. We recognize our workforce’s talent and know we can’t find enough workers to fuel future growth. That makes productivity essential to keeping our manufacturers competitive and growing. The current study results show this shortage driving business decisions throughout the industry. Leaders invest in retention and engagement initiatives like never before while they push productivity and AI adoption in their operations. We need all our manufacturers to embrace these changes and join in on this journey to a bright future.

Major Wisconsin Industries

Manufacturing	Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	Professional and Business Services	Retail Trade
477,411 Employees	462,376 Employees	373,216 Employees	308,406 Employees
\$66.25B GDP	\$38.95B GDP	\$40.72B GDP	\$25.94B GDP
\$65,080 Average Wage	\$57,471 Average Wage	\$69,148 Average Wage	\$34,513 Average Wage

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau County Business Patterns Survey, 2022
U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2022

Wisconsin Top Manufacturing Sectors: 2017-2022 Comparison

Food Manufacturing

	2017	2022	Change
Establishments	976	1,036	+60
Employment	72,125	77,487	+5,362
Employment per Establishment	74	75	+1

Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing

	2017	2022	Change
Establishments	1,935	1,913	-22
Employment	66,674	71,907	+5,233
Employment per Establishment	34	38	+4

Machinery Manufacturing

	2017	2022	Change
Establishments	1,035	943	-92
Employment	59,947	60,352	+405
Employment per Establishment	58	64	+6

Printing and Related Support Activities

	2017	2022	Change
Establishments	700	592	-108
Employment	27,931	22,949	-4,982
Employment per Establishment	40	39	-1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns Survey



Implications

1 The worker shortage is not going away any time soon

- Employee attraction, retention, and engagement are becoming more important for manufacturers.
- Technology investments are mitigating impacts and improving productivity.
- Demographics make this a long-term challenge.

2 Still a significant number of manufacturers at risk

- They report they are not confident in their own business, their revenues and profits are down, and they will spend less on capital expenditures.
- With manufacturing adopting new technology and business practices, these companies' survival may be at risk.

3 Manufacturers take AI and cybersecurity seriously

- More manufacturers are using AI.
- AI use is bifurcating between production and administration with most manufacturers avoiding operations uses.
- Manufacturers are recognizing cybersecurity threats and acting to protect their companies.

4 It's a good time to be a Wisconsin manufacturer

- The support systems are in place to build new skills and capabilities.
- New resources will make it easier to adopt AI technology.
- Wisconsin's diverse manufacturing base makes the state more resilient.



Takeaways

It's all about workforce

The top three issues involve finding workers and the wage inflation resulting from that shortage.

Softness in the market

Manufacturers have the production capacity to add new customers and are making investments to find those opportunities.

Always Optimistic

Manufacturers are confident in their own operations, but are not so confident about others' ability to deal with change.

Supply chains are quiet

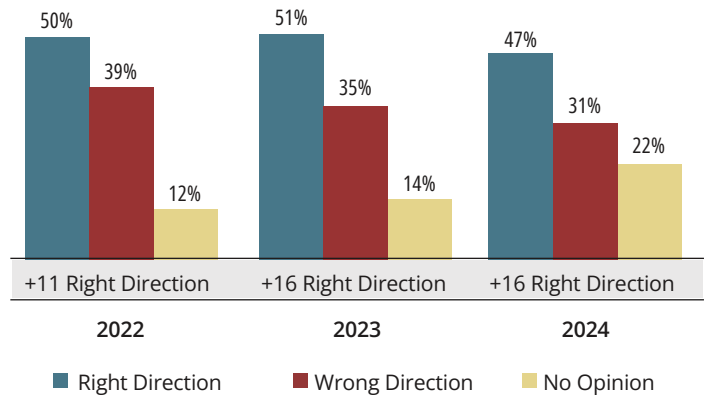
The pandemic emergency in supply chains is over, so oversight is moving from the C-suite back to purchasing.



Study Highlights

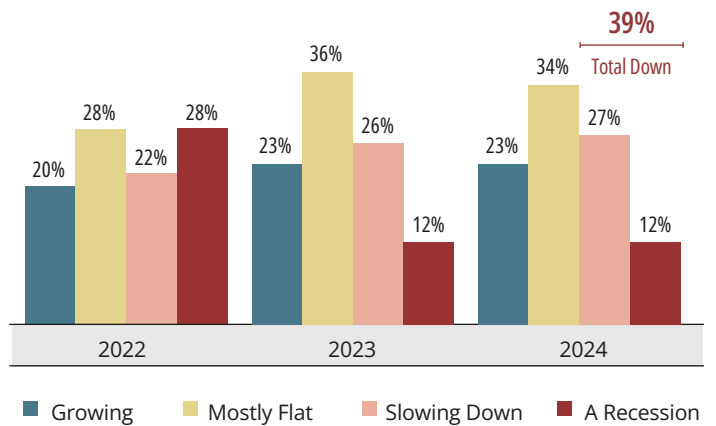
The percentage of manufacturers who say the business climate is heading in the right direction has dipped below 50% for the first time, as uncertainty rises to its highest level yet.

“Would you say the business climate in the state is heading in the right direction, or is the business climate off on the wrong track?”



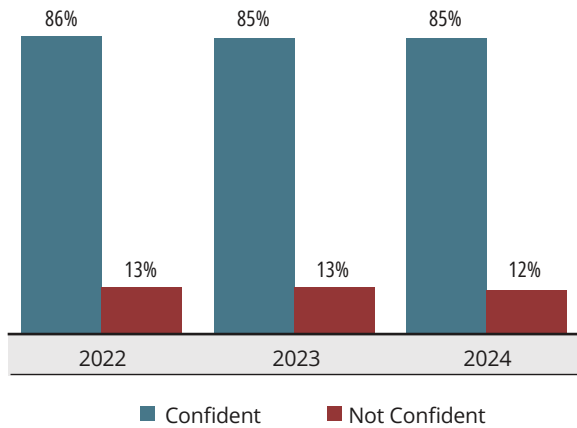
Manufacturers are less pessimistic than they were back in 2022, but still less than a quarter say the economy is growing.

“Overall, right now, do you think Wisconsin’s economy is growing, slowing down, mostly flat, or in a recession?”



Despite concerns about the overall economy, Wisconsin manufacturing executives remain confident about their own companies' financial outlook.

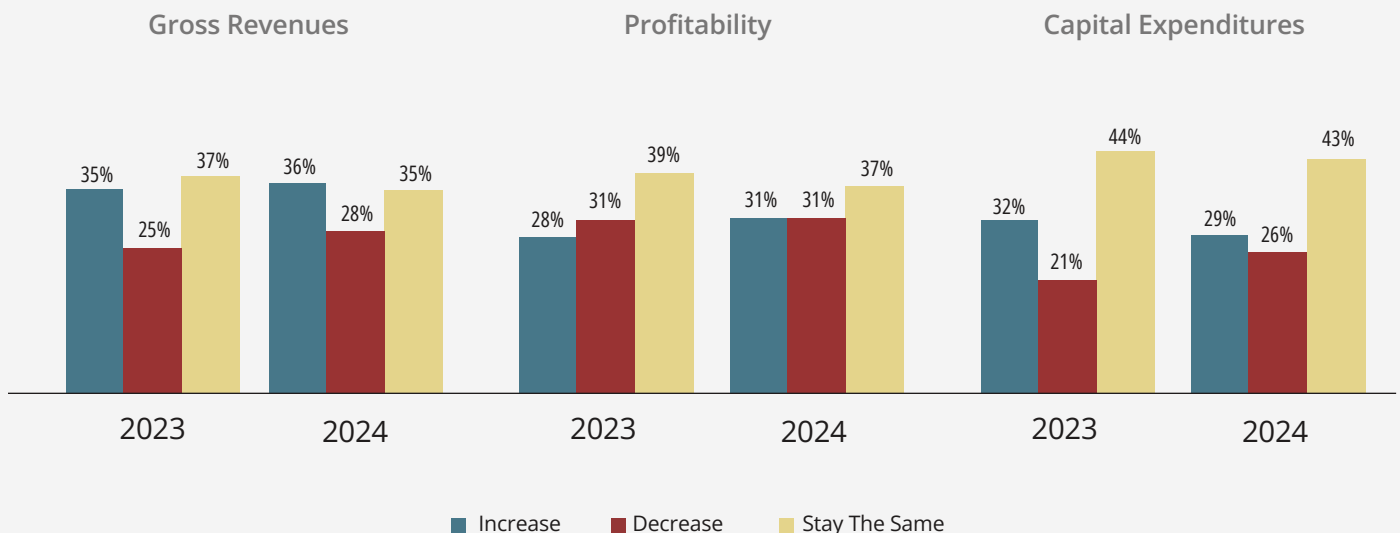
"Let's shift gears for a moment and focus more on your company. From a financial perspective, how do you feel right now about the future for your company?"



	2022	2023	2024	Change
1-49 Employees	35%	40%	33%	-2
50+ Employees	58%	51%	47%	-11
Revenue <\$1M	29%	34%	30%	+1
Revenue \$1 - 5M	40%	46%	34%	-6
Revenue \$5M+	55%	48%	42%	-13

Yet, only about one-in-three expect to see increases in gross revenues and fewer say the same for profitability and capital expenditures.

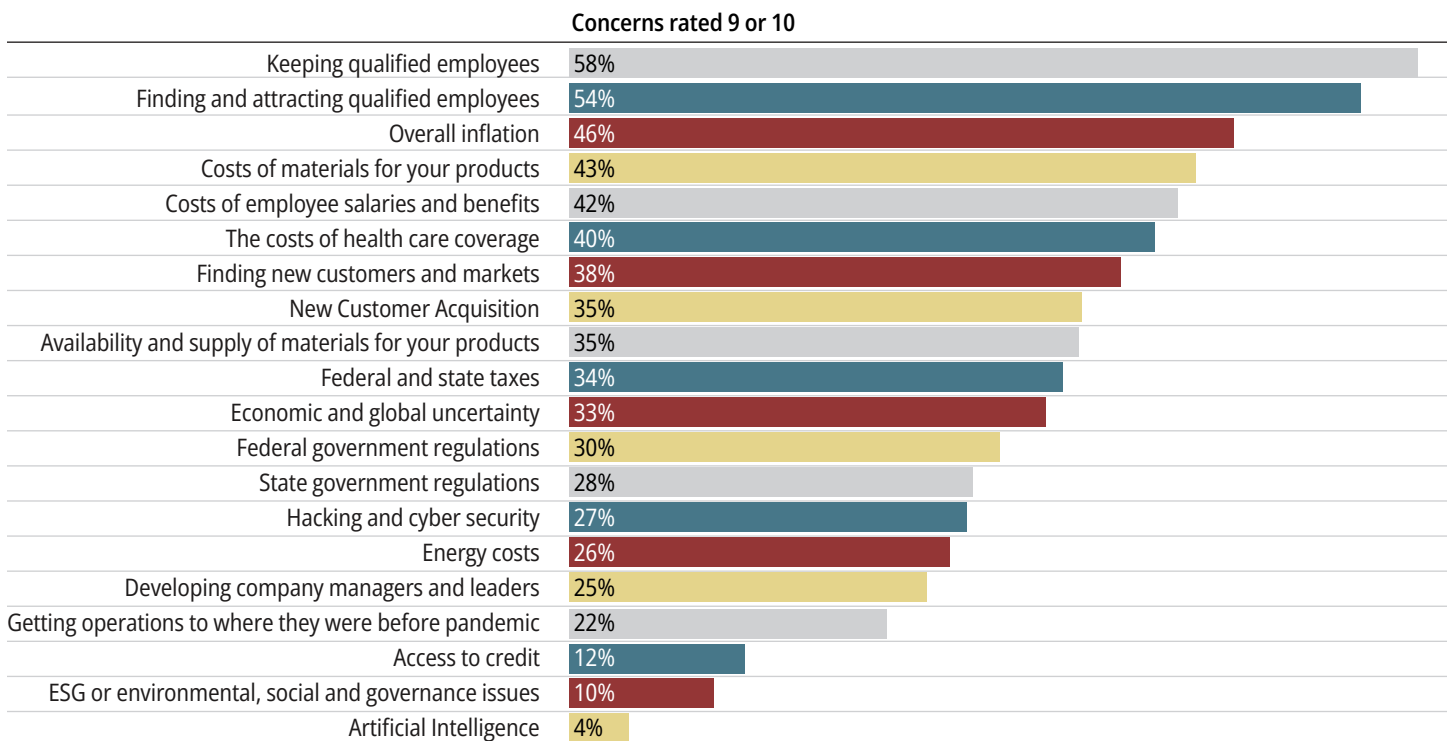
"As you look to the year-end, do you expect your company's ___ for 2023 to increase or decrease compared to 2022, or will they probably stay the same?"



Manufacturing Concerns

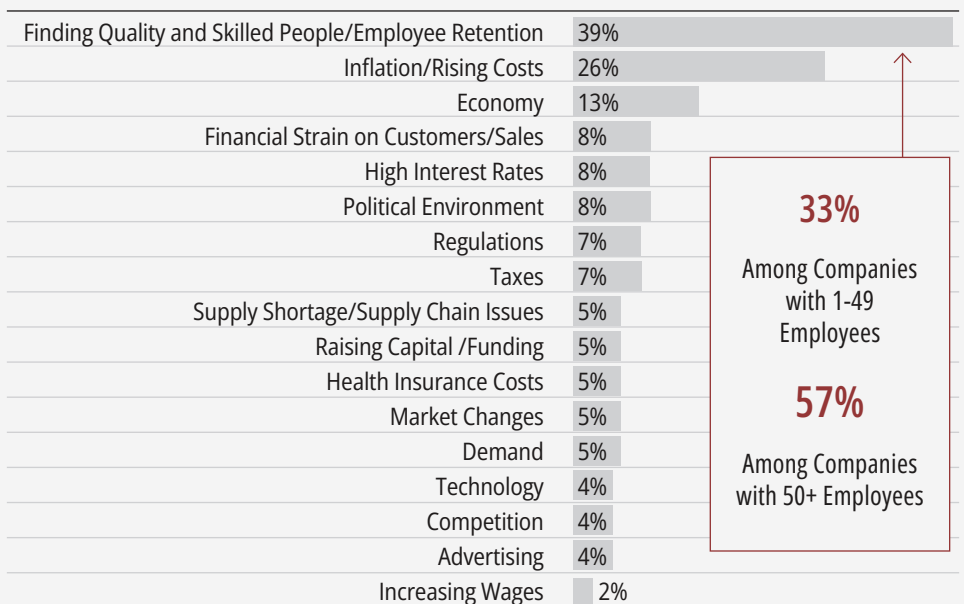
Workforce concerns remain atop the list of manufacturers' concerns.

"Next, we're going to look at a series of different issues that may or may not impact you and your company. For each one, please rate how important that issue is to you and your company's success." (1-to-10 Scale: 1 = Not Important At All / 10 = Extremely Important)



Workforce and inflation concerns account for most of the issues manufacturers see affecting their success.

"Next, thinking about your company, what would you say is the one or two most important issues affecting your business and its future success?"

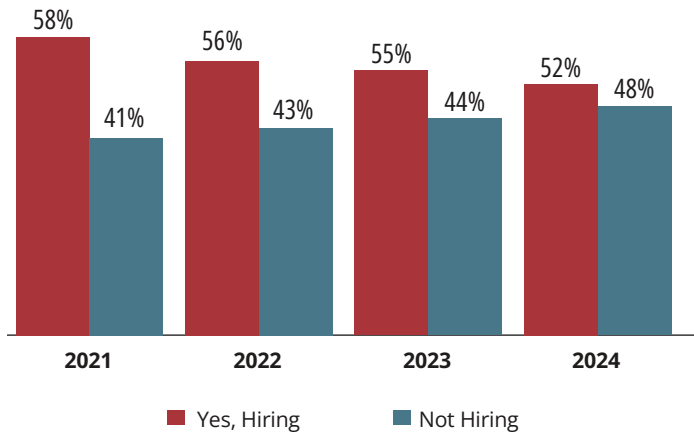


Responses less than 2% not shown

Workforce

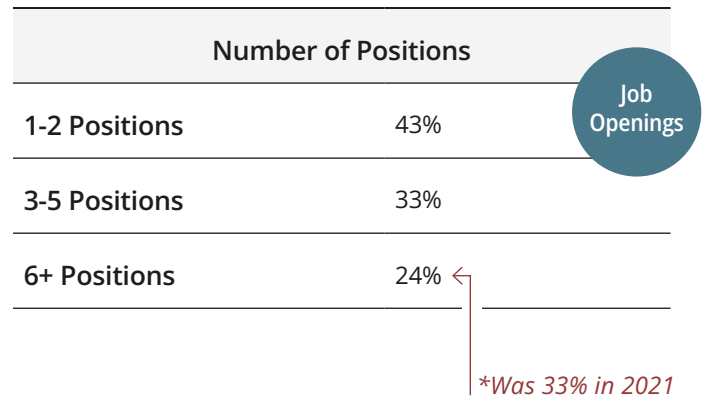
A majority of manufacturers say they are hiring, but that percentage declined to its lowest level yet and those hiring have fewer positions open.

“Does your company currently have positions that are open for hiring?”



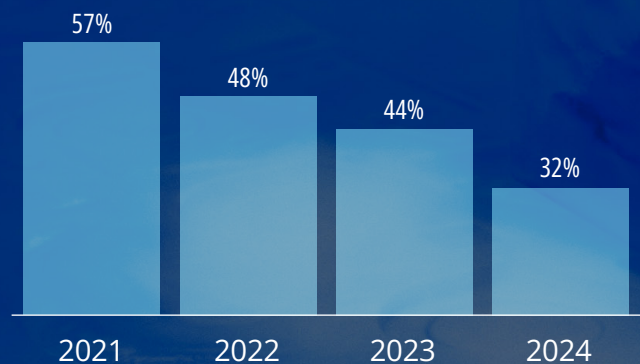
(Asked Among Those Hiring)

“And, based on your best estimate, how many positions would you say your company has open that you are currently hiring for?”



The percentage of manufacturers who say it's very difficult to find the workers they need continues to decline.

% Very Difficult To Find Workers (Overall & By Company Type)



	2021	2022	2023	2024
1-49 Employees	53%	44%	44%	31%
50+ Employees	68%	58%	43%	36%
Revenue <\$1M	46%	35%	36%	26%
Revenue \$1 - 5M	60%	57%	53%	39%
Revenue \$5M+	65%	56%	47%	32%

Workforce (continued)

Increasing wages, offering training, and raising prices are still the top changes companies are considering.

“Is your company considering any of the following changes to address potential long-term workforce challenges?”

		Change since 2023
Increasing wages and salaries	68%	+8
Offering employee training	57%	+13
Raising prices	48%	+1
Offering more competitive employee benefits	44%	+1
Increase Recruitment Efforts	43%	n/a
Automating or implementing new technologies	42%	+4
Offering apprenticeship or internship programming	40%	n/a
Improving onboarding	37%	n/a
Allowing for remote work and flexible schedules	29%	+6
Changing operating hours	18%	+1
Utilizing Artificial Intelligence	18%	+6
Changing Shifts	15%	0
Scaling back production	11%	+2

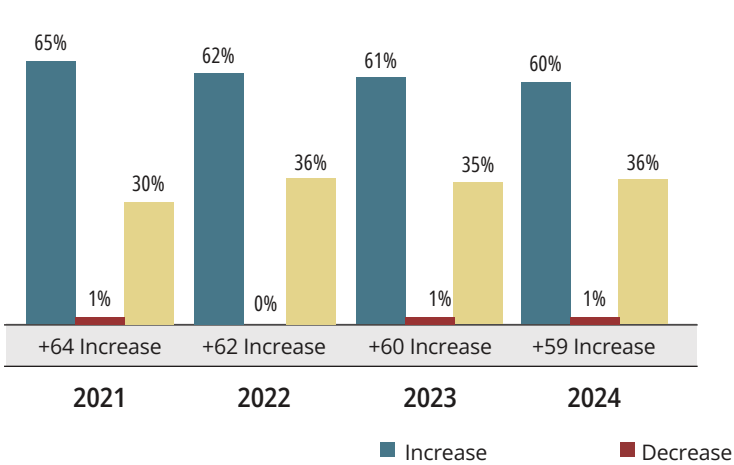
Larger firms are more likely than smaller ones to consider increasing benefits, recruitment efforts, or implementing automation or new technologies.

Considering Changes By Company Type (Results 50%+ Per Type Are Colored)

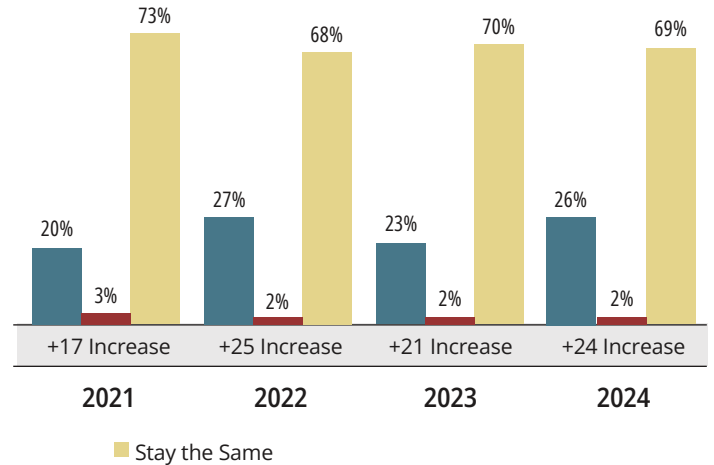
	Company Size		Revenue		
	1-49 Employees	50+ Employees	Under \$1 Million	\$1-5 Million	\$5 Million+
Increasing wages and salaries	70%	64%	57%	75%	74%
Offering employee training	57%	57%	49%	60%	62%
Raising prices	50%	42%	51%	47%	47%
Offering more competitive employee benefits	42%	48%	28%	51%	51%
Increase recruitment efforts	37%	60%	31%	43%	50%
Automating or implementing new technologies	37%	56%	30%	37%	54%
Offering apprenticeship or internship programming	38%	44%	41%	32%	45%
Improving onboarding	31%	56%	15%	42%	48%
Allowing for remote work and flexible schedules	29%	29%	29%	33%	26%
Changing operating hours	17%	22%	19%	17%	21%
Utilizing artificial intelligence	15%	25%	11%	23%	19%
Changing shifts	12%	24%	14%	7%	22%
Scaling back production	12%	7%	15%	8%	9%

Manufacturers expect to increase wages, but most don't plan to make any changes to their benefit offerings.

“Overall, do you expect wages for your employees will increase, decrease, or stay about the same this year?”



“Overall, do you expect the benefits you offer your employees will increase, decrease, or stay about the same this year?”



Compensation continues to be the strongest selling point for businesses, along with work environment, work-life balance, and schedules.

“When thinking about attracting and hiring new employees, what does your company believe is its strongest selling point to prospective employees?”

	2022	2023	2024	Change since 2023
Salary and wages	33%	28%	30%	-2
The work environment	27%	25%	29%	+4
A work-life balance	20%	23%	25%	+2
Flexible shifts and work schedules	24%	24%	23%	-1
The employee benefits	16%	15%	16%	+1
The products you make	14%	13%	14%	+1
Company mission or purpose	n/a	10%	12%	+2
The potential for career growth	16%	13%	11%	-2
The local area	15%	11%	10%	-1
High tech jobs	2%	1%	2%	+1

Growth Focus

Growing revenue and profitability remains atop the list of potential areas for increasing investment, followed by sales and marketing.

“Overall for the year 2025, do you expect to increase investment in any of the following areas?”

	2023	2024	Change since 2023
Growing revenue and profitability	61%	72%	+11
Sales and marketing	n/a	60%	n/a
Maximizing productivity	56%	58%	+2
Employee development	50%	56%	+6
Expanding sales within the United States	56%	55%	-1
Employee training	50%	53%	+3
Workplace and company culture	37%	42%	+5
Systems, technology, and automation	36%	39%	+3
Data and cyber security	27%	35%	+8
Research and development	30%	32%	+1
Ecommerce	n/a	27%	n/a
Expanding sales globally	19%	19%	0
ESG issues and sustainability	14%	17%	-7
Obtain ISO certification	8%	10%	+2

Companies see their main source of growth in finding new customers and markets, followed by finding and retaining employees.

“As you think about your company’s future, what would you say are the two or three most important drivers of your company’s future growth?”

Finding new customers and markets	57%
Keeping qualified employees	47%
Finding/attracting qualified employees	45%
Increasing productivity and eliminating waste	27%
Creating new products	20%
Developing company managers and leaders	18%
Better strategic planning and implementation	16%
Other	5%

New customers come primarily through referrals and word of mouth.

“What is your primary source of new customer acquisition?”

Referral/Word of Mouth	43%
Website/Online	21%
Industry Events/Trade Shows	14%
Traditional Advertising	11%
Direct Sales/Sales Reps/Cold Calls	9%
Something Else	1%

Marketing for Manufacturers

For 25+ years, Top Floor has partnered with hundreds of manufacturers to achieve their growth goals through targeted lead-generation strategies.

CRAFT A STRATEGIC MARKETING ROADMAP

based on your existing marketing footprint, customer personas, and competitive landscape.

GENERATE BRAND AWARENESS

at the top of the funnel by building your industry reputation, thought-leadership, and social media footprint.

BUILD A POWERHOUSE WEBSITE

that turns online users into an engaged audience and interested prospects.

CONNECT YOUR MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

including CRM, your website, and email marketing software to create tailored customer segments and user experiences.

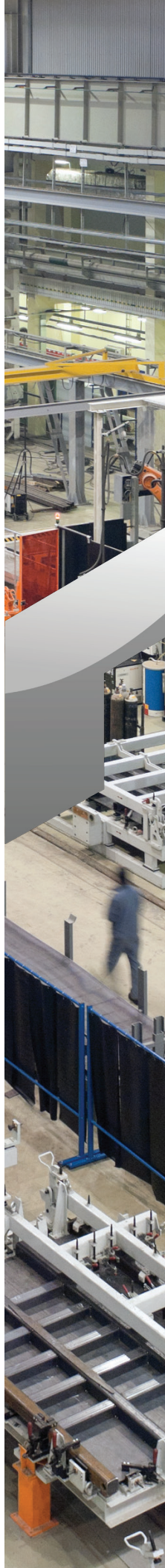
ATTRACT IN-MARKET CUSTOMERS

through paid media, content that resonates, and personalized campaigns across a spectrum of marketing channels.

We build customized marketing campaigns that attract, convert, and retain. Ready to take the next step?

Let's talk.

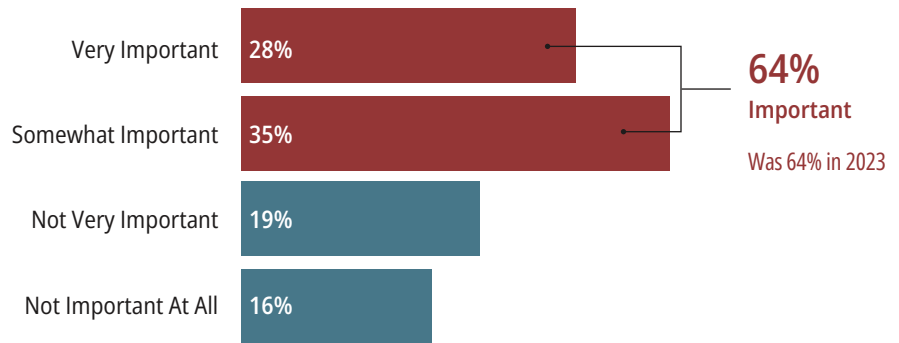
topfloortech.com/report



Automation

A majority of manufacturing executives see automation as important to their company's future, with nearly three-in-ten saying it's very important.

"Generally speaking, how important do you think automation will be to your company's future?"



Automation is clearly more important for larger companies.

Importance of Automation by Type of Company

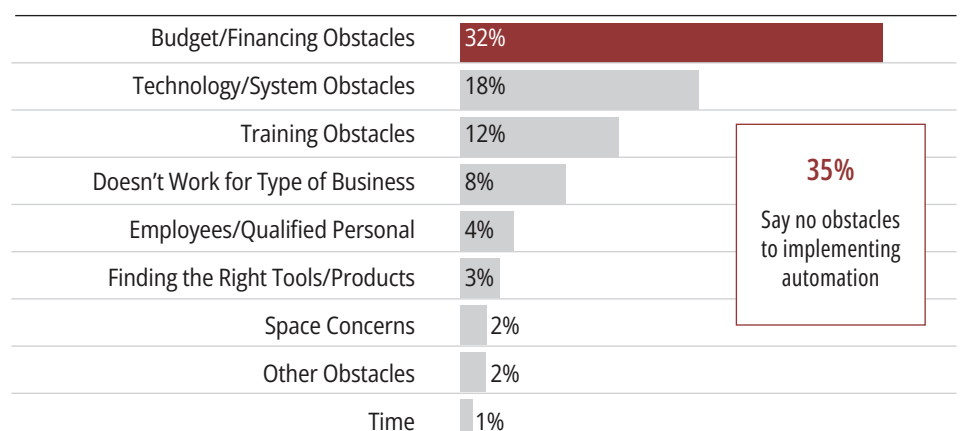
	Very Important	Total Importance
1-49 Employees	21%	56%
50 Employees	51%	87%
Revenue Under \$1M	12%	42%
Revenue \$1 - 5M	19%	59%
Revenue \$5M+	44%	80%





Among those who say there are obstacles to implementing automation, financing is the top concern.

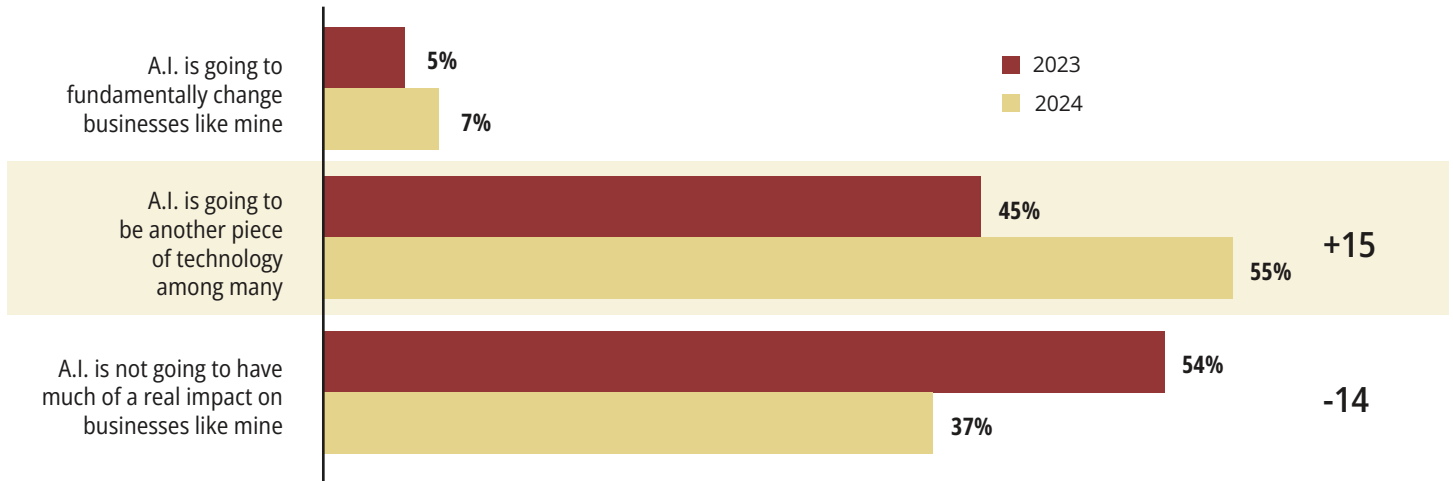
“Are there any obstacles to implementing automation at your company?”



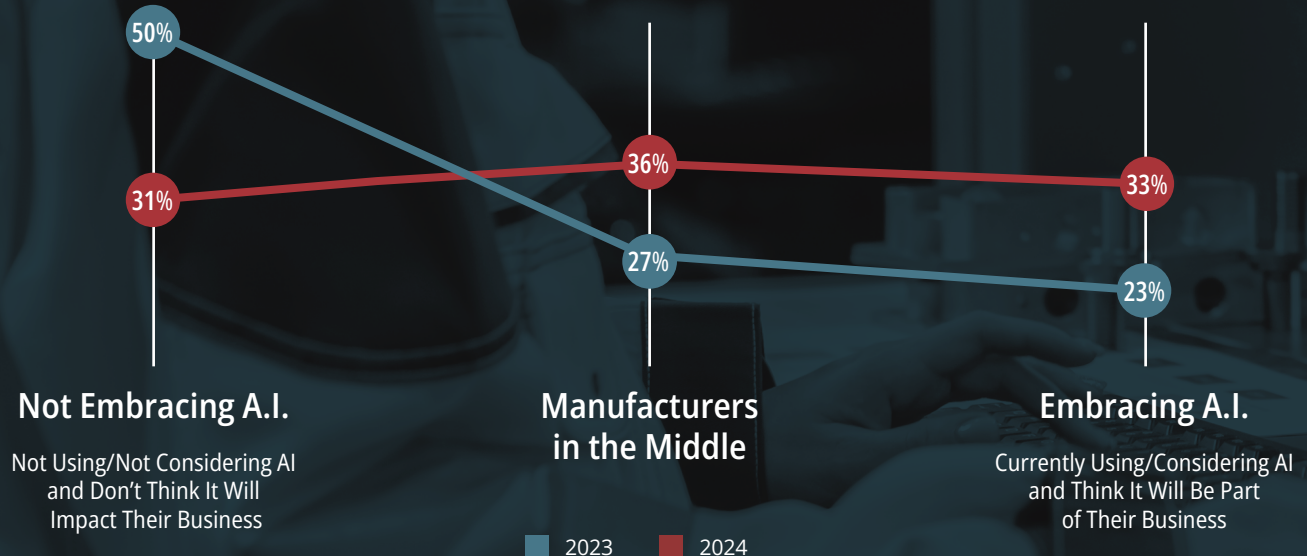
Technology Blind Spots

Most manufacturers now expect A.I. to have at least some impact on businesses like theirs.

“Thinking about the next few years, which ONE of the following viewpoints on the impacts of artificial intelligence, or A.I., on businesses like yours do you agree with more?”



But, quite a bit has changed. Today, we find an equal percentage of manufacturers on both ends of the “A.I. Embracement Curve.”



Nearly two-in-ten Wisconsin manufacturers say they have been hacked or experienced a data breach of some kind.

“On a different topic, has your company been hacked or experienced a data breach of some kind?”



18%
Have been hacked,
22% in 2023
18% in 2022
16% in 2021

79%
Have not been hacked

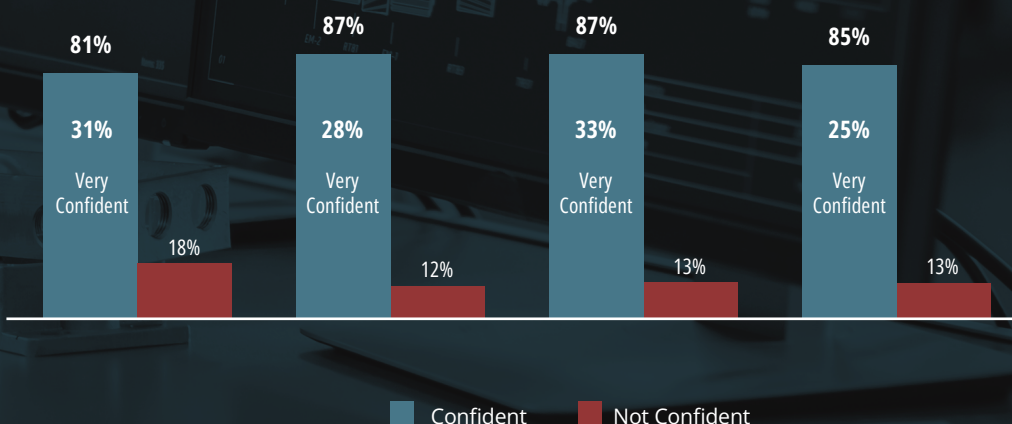
Fewer larger employee-sized and higher revenue manufacturers are reporting being impacted by data breaches this year.

% Hacked or Experienced a Data Breach (by Company Type)

	2021	2022	2023	2024
1-49 Employees	15%	14%	17%	15%
50+ Employees	17%	34%	39%	26%
Revenue <\$1M	15%	9%	13%	18%
Revenue \$1 - 5M	15%	15%	15%	9%
Revenue \$5M+	26%	30%	38%	25%

Manufacturer confidence in their cybersecurity continues to be high.

“How confident are you that your company is secure from hacking, data breaches, and other technological threats?”



78%
Confidence in those who have had a breach

87%
Who have not had a breach lack confidence

The Bottom Line

Manufacturers expect to have a good 2025 even through the uncertainty facing the economy.

They respect and acknowledge the complications in today's economy and still have faith in their ability to meet any changes and challenges. Reduction in pandemic-created inventories will clear the way for more production in the coming year.

Manufacturers have the available production capacity to pursue new customers and find most of those new opportunities through word of mouth.

For the first time in three years, manufacturers can pursue new market opportunities without disrupting incumbent customers. Many of these new opportunities result from direct connections with customers, suppliers, and peers.

Ongoing worker shortages will drive investment and strategic decisions for the next decade.

Workforce aging and fewer people to replace them means that manufacturers will face challenges to fill open positions far into the future. Leading companies will invest more resources to retain and upskill their present workforce while adopting the technologies necessary to grow and remain competitive in their markets.

New technologies will make Wisconsin manufacturers more competitive.

Artificial Intelligence and other Industry 4.0 technologies will enable Wisconsin manufacturers to meet future challenges effectively and creatively. New resources coming on-line will position the state as a leader in improving manufacturing competitiveness and resilience in world markets.

Some manufacturers will be left behind.

We still see a significant number of companies under stress and not ready make the changes necessary to remain competitive. Unfortunately, these operations may not survive future economic shocks.



Manufacturer Takeaways

Companies that lean into change and adopt new technology will see their businesses improve.

Cutting edge technology is becoming cheaper, easier to obtain, and less risky to implement. As a result, more manufacturers will experience transformational improvements to their operations, opening more markets and providing more paths to growth and profitability.

New resources throughout Wisconsin will make technology adoption easier for our manufacturers. New coalitions will form, making it possible for smaller companies to experience the improvements normally only available to the largest organizations. The lower costs and risks involved with many AI implementations will encourage our manufacturers to embrace this new technology and use it to overcome labor shortages.

Finances and available budget remain the top obstacles to implementing new technology.

Many companies find it difficult to make their first investment in new technology because of financial risk. We see a pattern where companies that make their first investment quickly double down on future investments because they see obvious financial returns and resilience improvements.

The workforce market is softening – but it's still tough out there.

Fewer companies find it “Very Difficult” to find employees and fewer companies are hiring. The companies that are hiring have fewer positions open. Still, employers are reluctant to reduce their workforce knowing that any quality employee they release will be quickly hired by another manufacturer. That produces a “sticky” employment environment where companies invest in developing their employees and upskill them to make the most of new implemented technologies.

The tight market also causes most employers to be more realistic about the skills of new hires. They understand that the workers most available in the current market will require more time and training to become fully productive in their operations.



Methodology

- On behalf of Wisconsin Center for Manufacturing & Productivity, Meeting Street Insights conducted a quantitative survey between July 28 – August 23, 2024, among manufacturing executives in Wisconsin.
- This is the fourth annual survey conducted among manufacturers in the state. The first study was completed August 16 – September 12, 2021, the second study was completed July 29 – August 3, 2022, and the third study was conducted July 30 – August 23, 2023.
- In addition to the survey, Catalyst facilitated a series of in-person focus groups among manufacturing executives in Madison, Milwaukee, Green Bay, and Menomonie, along with one virtual group, from September 10 – 12, 2024.

Survey Sample Composition

	This Survey Demographics	Census Statistics (County Business Patterns Survey)
1-49 Employees	75%	75%
50+ Employees	25%	25%
Metal Fabrication	23%	24%
Machinery Manufacturing	20%	12%
Food/Beverage	10%	8%
Paper/Wood Products	9%	14%
Pladtics	7%	13%
Other Type of Manufacturing	31%	20%
Seven Rivers	5%	5%
Centergy	5%	5%
Grow North	4%	4%
Madison Region	14%	14%
Milwaukee (Southeast)	35%	35%
Momentum West	9%	9%
Prosperity	3%	3%
The New North	22%	22%
Visions Northwest	3%	3%

Market Insights – Four Critical Perspectives

The Wisconsin MEP Network connects with the best manufacturing resources and expertise. We invited four of our partners to provide their insights on critical manufacturing issues.



WMEP Manufacturing Solutions outlines how a holistic approach to productivity and workforce issues can help manufacturers grow faster.



The Manufacturing Outreach Center at UW-Stout describes how their new Center for Advanced Manufacturing & AI can help manufacturers understand and use advanced technology to improve their organizations.



Kevin Kane from First Business Bank describes manufacturers' importance to Wisconsin and the opportunities they create in our economy.



Top Floor's Justin Kerley outlines places where manufacturers can see the biggest impacts with their marketing investments.



Unlocking Wisconsin's Manufacturing Potential: How to Overcome Challenges Related to Workforce, Operations & Growth

One of the most pressing issues facing our state's manufacturers is the persistent workforce shortage, a problem that directly impacts productivity and competitiveness. But how can manufacturers begin to solve the problem? The Transformational Productivity Initiative (TPI), offered by WMEP Manufacturing Solutions, provides a structured, data-driven approach to address these challenges while enabling manufacturers to profitably grow and thrive in a competitive global market.

Addressing Workforce Challenges

One of the primary goals of TPI is to help manufacturers mitigate workforce shortages by maximizing the productivity of their existing teams. By implementing best practices, streamlining operations, and introducing automation where appropriate, companies can achieve more with less. For example, TPI emphasizes:

- **Leadership Development:** Building strong leadership teams to enhance organizational alignment and employee engagement.
- **Lean Practices:** Streamlining workflows to reduce waste and improve efficiency.
- **Strategic Automation:** Identifying opportunities for automation that complement existing workforce capabilities without displacing employees.

These strategies not only enhance productivity but also create a more attractive workplace, helping manufacturers retain top talent and improve overall employee satisfaction.

Improved Productivity Through a Holistic Approach

TPI addresses three performance areas – growth, operations, and people – the pillars of any successful manufacturing business. Through comprehensive assessments, strategic planning, and targeted project execution, the most critical pain points in an organization are identified, prioritized, and improved.

These TPI participants have achieved remarkable results:

- Dairyland Electrical: Increased productivity by 40%, boosted sales by \$2.5 million, and reduced lead times by 68%.
- Wiscon Products: Increased sales per employee by 93%, reduced monthly break-even costs by 30%, and halved set-up hours.
- Palmer Hamilton: Improved workforce retention, added 80 new positions, and grew sales by \$35 million.

Take Charge with Tools and Expertise Dedicated to Wisconsin Manufacturing

We encourage manufacturers to explore how TPI can help address their unique challenges. Increased output, reduced costs, and enhanced agility in responding to market demands are just some of the meaningful improvements reported by past participants. With an average productivity improvement of 40%, TPI participants are better equipped to meet customer expectations and profitability grow.

Visit wmep.org to learn more. The WMEP is a mission-driven nonprofit dedicated to the success of Wisconsin manufacturers. We solve real business problems and create real business results. Our comprehensive services focus on Growth, Operations, and People that empower manufacturers to overcome challenges and navigate their unique paths to success – always with the goal to create measurable, lasting impact.



Author: Roxanne Baumann
WMEP Manufacturing Solutions



UW-Stout's CAM-AI Aims to Enhance Industry Capabilities & Drive Technological Advancements

CAM-AI leverages the broad array of UW-Stout's expertise for solving technical issues, conducting research, and providing access to equipment that is generally not available to small- and medium-sized businesses. By leveraging UW-Stout's extensive faculty expertise and state-of-the-art labs, CAM-AI ensures timely responses and project completions. The center excels in areas such as additive manufacturing, machine vision systems, automation, and plastics engineering. Through the integration of advanced technologies and innovative solutions, CAM-AI aims to enhance industry capabilities and drive technological advancements, underscoring UW-Stout's commitment to applied learning and industry collaboration.

CAM-AI offers specialized programs and services, including consultation and operational expertise in additive manufacturing, machine vision systems, automation, plastics engineering injection molding, and packaging. Businesses can collaborate with CAM-AI through applied research projects, technical services, consulting, and training programs. These collaborations are intended to enhance industry capabilities and drive technological advancements.

To kickstart a collaboration with CAM-AI, businesses can connect through the UW-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center (MOC). Reach out to explore how this partnership can drive innovation and efficiency in your organization.



UW-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center



Manufacturing Strength Defines Wisconsin

As a Wisconsinite and banker serving our state's businesses for the past 40 years, I've witnessed firsthand how manufacturing shapes our economy and defines who we are. It's more than an industry — it's woven into the fabric of our communities and our way of life.

While large companies make headlines, and sometimes leave the state, the heart of Wisconsin manufacturing beats in thousands of smaller shops and factories. The \$10 million machine shops and \$50 million fabricators truly form the backbone of our manufacturing sector. They may not grab the spotlight, but their impact is profound.

At First Business Bank, we proudly support these unsung heroes of manufacturing. They are the innovative problem-solvers delivering quality products and driving our economy forward. Our sponsorship of the Wisconsin Manufacturing Report aims to amplify their voices and shine a light on their contributions.

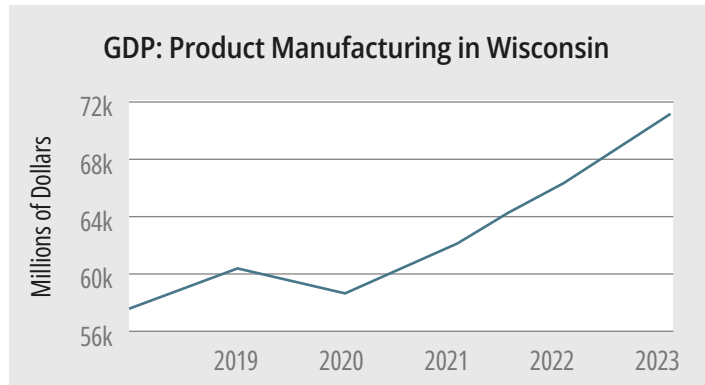
The Economic Impact of Manufacturing in Wisconsin

Manufacturing is a cornerstone of Wisconsin's economy — with over 9,000 manufacturing companies employing more than 480,000 workers across the state, manufacturing plays a crucial role in sustaining our local economies and families.

The data in this report offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Wisconsin manufacturers. Behind every statistic is a story — of family-owned businesses spanning generations, of skilled workers taking pride in their craft, of companies adapting to change and pushing the boundaries of what's possible.

A New Chapter for American Manufacturing

We may be entering an exciting new chapter for Wisconsin manufacturing. The push for reshoring, combined with a growing recognition of manufacturing's importance to a strong economy, could spark a renaissance in our state. Despite headwinds in the past, there's renewed energy and optimism about the future of making things in America — and in Wisconsin.



The manufacturing sector in Wisconsin has demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth, with the Gross Domestic Product from manufacturing rising steadily from about \$58 billion in 2020 to over \$70 billion in 2023, showcasing a strong recovery and expansion. This resurgence builds on Wisconsin's deep manufacturing roots, long known for its strong work ethic, engineering expertise, and culture of innovation.

As we look to the future, First Business Bank remains committed to fueling growth and innovation in Wisconsin manufacturing. We understand the unique needs of manufacturers and provide the resources manufacturers need to invest in technology, expand operations, and seize new opportunities.

The Wisconsin Manufacturing Report is a window into the strengths, challenges, and aspirations of our state's manufacturing community. It informs our work at First Business Bank and helps us better serve the companies driving Wisconsin's economy forward.

Manufacturing isn't just what Wisconsin does — it's who we are. As we navigate the opportunities and challenges ahead, First Business Bank stands ready to support the next generation of Wisconsin manufacturers as they write the next chapter in our state's proud manufacturing legacy.

For a comprehensive analysis of how current market forces and economic factors are impacting businesses and individuals, please read First Business Bank's latest Quarterly Market Review at firstbusiness.bank/gmr.



Author: Kevin Kane
President – Southeast Wisconsin Market First Business Bank



Take the following steps:

1. Audit the market - review your website and how it currently performs. A competitor audit can also provide insight into what it takes to succeed
2. Generate awareness - pairing a thought leadership campaign with awareness channels like social media, organic and paid search, helps get your company in front of a new audience
3. User experience - once you get the prospects to your site, their engagement there is crucial to moving them down the funnel. Blend functionality with content to create a seamless experience for your customers
4. Convert - you've generated interest in your company, make it easy for them to reach out and become a lead

Use A CRM Tool: Manage Pipeline and Support Marketing

With any investment in marketing, you want to know the ROI of those efforts. The most effective tool to do that is a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool. While there is a ton of functionality with these tools, as it relates to sales and marketing, the primary benefits are:

1. Monitor and analyze sales pipelines - see how much you have in the pipeline and identify bottlenecks and opportunities
2. Automate workflows - lead management, follow-ups, and quotes can all be automated to keep the sales process moving
3. Support marketing campaigns - segment customers based on specific criteria to create targeted campaigns
4. Track marketing ROI - assign signed contracts to the marketing efforts that generated the lead to see the return on your marketing investment

Where to Start

Manufacturers that strategically allocate their marketing budgets in 2025 will be better positioned to address workforce challenges and grow their customer base. However, every company's needs are unique. That's why starting with an audit of your current online presence is essential.

Top Floor is ready to dive deep into your digital footprint and build you a strategic marketing roadmap that capitalizes on content that resonates, targeted channel distribution, and a website that attracts and converts.



Author: Justin Kerley, Owner, Top Floor

Where Should Manufacturers Invest Their Marketing Budget in 2025?

According to the 2024 Wisconsin Manufacturing Report, 60% of manufacturers surveyed plan to increase their investment in sales and marketing efforts in 2025. But where should that time and money go? Diving deeper into the report, there were a couple of things that stood out to me that a focused marketing strategy could help address.

Recruiting: Building a Strong Workforce

Manufacturers are grappling with a talent gap, as experienced workers retire and younger generations are often unaware of the exciting career opportunities available. 79% of manufacturers have difficulty finding qualified workers for their open positions. Utilizing your marketing efforts to recruit can help ease some of this load. This includes:

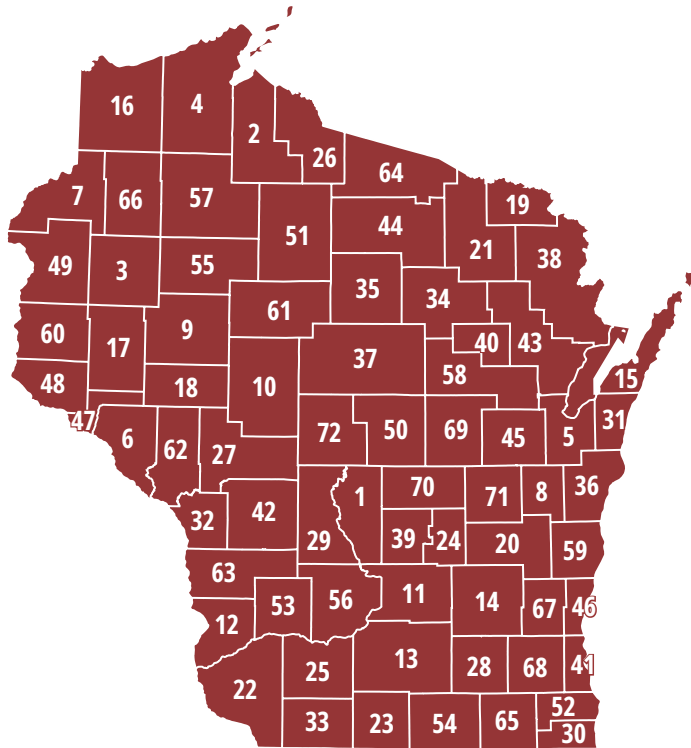
1. Leverage social media - promote your company culture through posts covering events, anniversaries, and promotions
2. Targeted job advertisements - utilize online job boards and paid social media posts. Be sure to include information on benefits and potential pay rates
3. Video testimonials - hearing from current employees can provide a more personal perspective to the benefits of working at your company

Online Lead Generation: Driving Revenue Growth

Think of your website as a sales rep that works for you 24/7. 75% of B2B buyers make their purchasing decisions based on online research. It's important to make sure that your site does an effective job of communicating your value to prospective customers. It pays to have a cohesive strategy for attracting and converting leads.

Wisconsin Manufacturing Data





Wisconsin Manufacturers by County

Manufacturing impacts every one of Wisconsin's 72 counties, employing more people than any other industry and generating \$62 billion of GSP. Our state depends on manufacturing for a vibrant future. These pages show the distribution of manufacturing establishments and employment across the state.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau County Business Patterns Survey, 2022; YourEconomy.org, Business Dynamics Research Consortium of the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Business and Entrepreneurship

County	Manufacturers	Employees
1 Adams	23	376
2 Ashland	21	1,060
3 Barron	96	5,252
4 Bayfield	30	186
5 Brown	512	29,333
6 Buffalo	16	341
7 Burnett	27	972
8 Calumet	67	4,381
9 Chippewa	169	6,070
10 Clark	81	4,080
11 Columbia	105	5,068
12 Crawford	26	1,899
13 Dane	770	28,385
14 Dodge	154	11,593
15 Door	79	2,094
16 Douglas	58	2,057
17 Dunn	81	3,975
18 Eau Claire	168	5,300
19 Florence	7	188
20 Fond Du Lac	184	9,933
21 Forest	14	255
22 Grant	64	2,421
23 Green	67	3,712
24 Green Lake	34	984

County	Manufacturers	Employees
25 Iowa	42	1,566
26 Iron	16	157
27 Jackson	34	500
28 Jefferson	166	9,164
29 Juneau	46	2,236
30 Kenosha	222	8,781
31 Kewaunee	38	1,936
32 La Crosse	164	7,426
33 Lafayette	23	1,207
34 Langlade	55	1,372
35 Lincoln	50	2,506
36 Manitowoc	184	10,765
37 Marathon	256	18,892
38 Marinette	88	5,290
39 Marquette	23	1,192
40 Menominee	2	2
41 Milwaukee	1,334	45,777
42 Monroe	74	3,776
43 Onconto	54	2,282
44 Oneida	77	1,621
45 Outagamie	370	19,108
46 Ozaukee	223	8,393
47 Pepin	15	197
48 Pierce	54	1,714
49 Polk	99	4,490

County	Manufacturers	Employees
50 Portage	110	4,768
51 Price	39	1,496
52 Racine	348	16,801
53 Richland	30	1,351
54 Rock	255	12,568
55 Rusk	23	1,369
56 Sauk	119	7,502
57 Sawyer	29	5,788
58 Shawano	59	735
59 Sheboygan	220	2,183
60 St. Croix	191	18,557
61 Taylor	36	2,502
62 Trempealeau	54	9,297
63 Vernon	54	1,117
64 Vilas	52	317
65 Walworth	240	8,136
66 Washburn	23	1,080
67 Washington	337	15,218
68 Waukesha	1,085	38,649
69 Waupaca	90	5,904
70 Waushara	38	1,408
71 Winnebago	322	24,985
72 Wood	126	5,415
Total:	10,442	477,411

Wisconsin Manufacturers by Federal District

District	Member	Manufacturers	Employees
State	Sen. Ron Johnson, Sen. Tammy Baldwin	10,442	477,411
1	Rep. Bryan Steil	1,248	59,262
2	Rep. Mark Pocan	1,142	41,558
3	Rep. Derrick Van Orden	1,191	53,249
4	Rep. Gwen Moore	969	30,027
5	Rep. Scott Fitzgerald	1,704	68,512
6	Rep. Glenn Grothman	1,429	89,777
7	Rep. Tom Tiffany	1,393	63,116
8	Rep. Tony Wied	1,366	71,910

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau County Business Patterns Survey, 2022; YourEconomy.org, Business Dynamics Research Consortium of the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Business and Entrepreneurship



Wisconsin Manufacturers by State District

District	Senate	Assembly	Assembly	Assembly	Manufacturers
1	Andre Jacqué	Joel Kitchens	Shae Sortwell	Ron Tusler	300
2	Eric Wimberger	David Steffen	Joy Goeben	Elijah Behnke	303
3	Tim Carpenter	Karen Kirsch	Sylvia Ortiz-Velez	Priscilla Prado	234
4	Dora Drake	Darrin Madison	Sequanna Taylor	Russell Goodwin	342
5	Rob Hutton	Robyn Vining	Angelito Tenorio	Adam Neylon	436
6	LaTonya Johnson	Kalan Haywood	Supreme Moore Omokunde	Margaret Arney	153
7	Chris Larson	Ryan Clancy	Christine Sinicki	Jessie Rodriguez	287
8	Jodi Habush Sinykin	Paul Melotik	Deb Andraca	Daniel Knodl	530
9	Devin LeMahieu	Paul Tittl	Joe Sheehan	Lindee Brill	374
10	Rob Stafsholt	Rob Kreibich	Treig Pronschinske	Shannon Zimmerman	314
11	Steve Nass	Tyler August	Amanda Nedweski	Robin Vos	404
12	Mary Felzkowski	Rob Swearingen	Calvin Callahan	Jeffrey Mursau	372
13	John Jagler	Mark Born	William Penterman	Alex Dallman	305
14	Sarah Keyeski	Karen DeSanto	Tony Kurtz	Maureen McCarville	321
15	Mark Spreitzer	Brienne Brown	Ann Roe	Clinton Anderson	273
16	Melissa Ratcliff	Joan Fitzgerald	Randy Udell	Andrew Hysell	251
17	Howard Marklein	Travis Tranel	Jenna Jacobson	Todd Novak	265
18	Kristin Dassler-Alfheim	Lee Snodgrass	Dean Kaufert	Lori Palmeri	335
19	Rachael Cabral-Guevara	Nate Gustafson	David Murphy	Kevin Petersen	336
20	Dan Feyen	Rick Gundrum	Robert Brooks	Jerry O'Connor	379
21	Van Wanggaard	Bob Donovan	Angelina Cruz	Robert Wittke	241
22	Robert Wirch	Tip McGuire	Ben DeSmidt	Greta Neubauer	255
23	Jesse James	David Armstrong	Rob Summerfield	Karen Hurd	377
24	Patrick Testin	Nancy VanderMeer	Vincent Miresse	Scott Krug	279
25	Romaine Quinn	Angela Stroud	Chanz Green	Duke Tucker	304
26	Kelda Roys	Francesca Hong	Renuka Mayadev	Sheila Stubbs	258
27	Dianne Hesselbein	Lisa Subeck	Mike Bare	Alex Joers	231
28	Julian Bradley	Scott Allen	Dave Maxey	Chuck Wichgers	367
29	Cory Tomczyk	Patrick Snyder	John Spiros	Brent Jacobson	316
30	Jamie Wall	Benjamin Franklin	Ryan Spaude	Amaad Rivera-Wagner	344
31	Jeff Smith	Jodi Emerson	Clint Moses	Christian Phelps	342
32	Brad Pfaff	Steve Doyle	Jill Billings	Tara Johnson	267
33	Chris Kapenga	Cindi Duchow	Jim Piwowarczyk	Barbara Dittrich	347
					10,442

Source: YourEconomy.org, Business Dynamics Research Consortium of the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Business and Entrepreneurship



The Wisconsin Manufacturing Report

We love to discuss Wisconsin manufacturing.

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