

Manufacturing Solutions Center

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For most of its history, the Hickory Metro area has been known world-wide as a manufacturing center. In the past, the area has produced mainly furniture and hosiery. In recent years, our manufacturing has diversified, and the area now produces a myriad of products.

For some 20 years, the **Manufacturing Solutions Center** has been working to help manufacturers solve problems and test their products. It grew from a hosiery manufacturing center in the 90's, because its

leaders saw a great need in the community. The main goal of the Center is to help area businesses create jobs and make money. It tests, trains, researches, markets, engineers and helps to develop products. Its mission is "to help US manufacturers increase sales, improve quality and improve efficiency to create or retain jobs."

Many people have great ideas, but unfortunately, ideas in and of themselves don't tend to make money. The ideas must be implemented. The **Manufacturing Solution Center** is skilled at helping turn ideas into realities. It helps to answer such questions as:

- **How will you make the item?** MSC offers advice on manufacturing, and it has many helpful contacts. It also has the technology to help build a prototype.
- **How will you market the item?** MSC has marketing experts who offer exceptional advice.
- **How will you sell the item?** MSC helps you walk through the process of how you will sell your item. Will you sell it to big-box stores, or on a website, or in smaller, locally owned shops?
- **How much should it cost?** MSC helps create a cost analysis to ensure that a business will be able to profit.



MSC exists solely to be a problem-solver for the manufacturing industry. It is mainly job-driven: its goal isn't to think, but to do. While MSC is based in Hickory, the **Manufacturing Solutions Center** has worked with businesses in 46 states, and on 6 continents. It has 4 staff members dedicated to working with entrepreneurs, and a large staff to assist in all other areas. MSC works with such companies as Nike, Land's End, Target and New Balance, but it is still dedicated to helping small business owners.

MSC understands that our area is unique because of our tremendous ability to manufacture goods. We have a large and hungry work force, who have spent years manufacturing different items. We have the necessary support businesses to make manufacturing possible, and decades of valuable experience. Many of the businesses that the **MSC** works with are out-of-state, but most use companies in our region to manufacture their goods.

The **Manufacturing Resource Center** is approximately 60% self funded, but does use government grants and resources to operate. The group is a great benefit to our local industries. Recently, the government began to require extensive lead testing for many types of fabrics. The cost was quite prohibitive, and it would have put several local companies out of business. The **Manufacturing Solutions Center** purchased lead testing equipment and tested thousands of fabrics. When not a single one had lead in it, they questioned why. Then, they set out to create a fabric that did contain lead. This proved to be very difficult, and in the end, they used a centuries old recipe that used crushed insects, and provided a bold red color. However, after one washing, the color immediately faded to pink. After repeating this several times, they were able to prove that lead is an ineffective dye, and that no one in the industry would have any use for it. They took this information to the government, and testified in court. As a result, the testing standards were considerably lightened, and our local companies, along with many others in the country, saved vast amounts of money.

Jill McCann (pictured at top) has one of the most interesting jobs at the **Manufacturing Solutions Center**. She compares what she does to the television show C.S.I. She works with reverse engineering, defect analysis, and general problem solving. If a manufacturing company has a problem they can't solve, she is on the job. She works backwards, using high-tech equipment, to find the source of the problem, and often, who is to blame. This is helpful when a product fails. She can figure out exactly what part of the product failed, and why. She is able to detect if a particular vendor has changed a small detail that ends up compromising the product. Sometimes, people want to know how an item was constructed. In this case, she works backwards, deconstructs the item, and then puts it back together. This enables groups to continue to make a product, even if the original plans were lost.

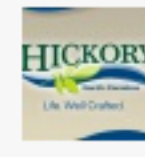
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There are many other employees at the **Manufacturing Solutions Center** who work to test items. They test for flammability, durability, chemical content, and many other markers. The testing is not limited to a particular field, and they test everything from textiles, to furniture, to socks and computer equipment.

Although manufacturing has declined in recent years, no one at the **Manufacturing Solutions Center** is worried. In fact, they insist that we are in an upswing. They have recently received several inquiries into how to move Chinese furniture production back to our area. This is very promising news, and speaks well to how far and wide our region's manufacturing expertise is known.



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News

Hickory Mayor thanks Fiserv for surpassing its employee and financial investment goal

12/7/2012 HICKORY – On December 7, Hickory Mayor Rudy Wright, along with local officials, thanked the Fiserv executive team for surpassing its employee and financial

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Carolina Glove & Safety Featured on Manufacturing Marvels

11/6/2012 Manufacturing Marvels, an award-winning production narrated by John Criswell, selected Carolina Glove Company of Conover to be featured in an episode aired on Oct.

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Sweet Baby



When Hickory resident Brad Rhoney and his wife had their first baby, he immediately realized how much his life had changed. Seeing how quickly the little one grew, he knew that he wanted to help document the milestones in his baby's life. His wife, while thrilled that he was so involved, thought his handwriting was too messy, and she didn't want him writing in the baby book. This gave him an idea. He wanted to create a way to preserve these memories himself.

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