Making It in America, Part 2

RACHEL LEISEMANN IMMEL, Associate Editor, IMPO

This is part two of a two-part piece. Part one can be found here. *[1]*

Make it in America

“When you’re an American manufacturer, there are so many challenges that you’re up against,” says Swayze. In addition to higher wages and benefits than their offshore competitors, and additional taxes and regulations that Swayze says Thailand and China competitors don’t need to endure, Alliance also uses a higher quality (and more expensive) rubber in its products. “Quality is one of the reasons that our customers love us and keep coming back to us,” she says. “We don’t always have the cheapest price per pound of rubber bands, but 99 percent of the time, we have the cheapest price per band.” Explaining that customers buy the band by the pound but use them by the piece, Swayze stresses the quality aspect of a superiorly manufactured rubber band: ergonomic soft stretch bands, reusable and long lasting quality bands, and green bands (where rubber is organic and much more biodegradable than rubber band’s biggest competitors, Poly Bags, and twist ties), Swayze says. Quality over quantity, and price, matters.

“It’s very important that American retailers realize that every time they say no to an American manufacturer, they’re truly being short-sighted,” says Swayze. In the United States, this has had very real consequences: 42,000 factories have closed in the last 11 years. “For every U.S. manufacturing job, one of them supports 4 to 5 additional jobs — real estate, R & D, sales, finance — all these service jobs. Here in

America we've got 14 million, officially, unemployed. We've got 20 million underemployed. So that's 34 million people looking for a good job in America — 22 percent.

"So when American retailers don't want to look at American goods, don't want to see value-added propositions and better quality products, with more features and benefits that have great sell-through, they're being short-sighted," Swayze explains, "because those are their customers."

The National Association of Manufacturers says that, taken alone, U.S. manufacturing would be the ninth largest economy in the world. And the United States is currently the world's largest manufacturing economy, producing 21 percent of global manufactured products. "We've always been extremely pro-American manufacturing," Swayze says. And in addition to keeping Americans employed, she lists the tremendous advantages Alliance Rubber sees by keeping manufacturing in America: top quality product, consistent quality product, fast service, consistent availability, fast turnaround times, and high fill rates.

The economy, and increasing pressures from global competitors, has forced American manufacturers to become Leaner than ever before — and to look to resources outside their own walls to stay competitive. Swayze says, "There are so many great resources in America to investigate to help keep us competitive." And to other manufacturers who may be struggling with global competition, "Do not throw in the towel before you exhaust all avenues."

"It's a very real thing in America when manufacturing is the heart and soul of America, and it doesn't matter whether you're republican or democrat or independent," says Swayze. "This is all about keeping the America economy, making it stronger than ever."

Swayze stresses, "Americans cannot continue to put their heads in the sand and think that if they simply buy offshore goods that it won't affect them in the long run — it does affect them in the long run. It affects all of us."

In the spirit of American-made innovation, Alliance Rubber launched the "We Can Make It In America Challenge"— a campaign for consumers to pledge to spend a dollar a day on American-made goods. Offered on its website and launched in November 2011, the pledge has already garnered over $1.5 million dollars in support — promised to be spent over the next year on American-manufactured products. According to the National Association of Manufacturing, U.S. manufacturing supports an estimated 18.6 million jobs in the U.S. — about one in six private sector jobs, including in service, real estate, R & D, sales, and finance, "So we came up with our 'We Can Make It In America' challenge," explains Swayze. "We hope to create one million American jobs by encouraging everyone to just spend a dollar a day on American goods."Take the pledge at www.rubberband.com [2].

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