



Welcome,

This issue of *Focus Forward* has a distinctly positive slant. Even with our economy and our manufacturing sector under significant stress, positive and forward-looking activities are taking place. Companies are finding ways to succeed through innovation and increased customer focus.

We would welcome the chance to work with you and your firm for increased profitability and the mutual benefit of Georgia's economy. Please call or e-mail me directly to discuss how we can help you "Focus Forward."

Regards,

*Chris*

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## Manufacturer Increases Sales via New Georgia Tech Program

A 50-year-old Glenville, Ga. manufacturer of lawn mower blades realized \$1.5 million in increased sales, \$2 million in retained sales, and \$262,000 in avoided unnecessary investments from participating in a growth strategies program called Eureka! Winning Ways® offered by Georgia Tech via the national Manufacturing Extension Partnership.



The three-step process includes idea generation, success screening, and action-plan coaching, with a long-term goal of establishing a continuous "idea pipeline" with selected ideas in different stages of incubation and development. Not only did Rotary Corp. come up with a more accessible ordering system, it also is devising a unique mower blade. The company feels perhaps 50 good ideas came from the 150 identified during the Eureka process.

Rotary has a long history of tapping into industrial assistance services provided by Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute, ranging from noise monitoring and environmental audits to energy management and new-product feasibility. For the full story on Rotary's successful growth, go to <http://www.innovate.gatech.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=32&NewsID=207>. To learn more about Eureka! Winning Ways®, contact Don Pital (404/894-6117, [don.pital@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:don.pital@innovate.gatech.edu)).

## Turning 6 and Going Strong

The Georgia Minority Business Enterprise Center (GMBEC) at Georgia Tech finished its fifth year in 2008, and it had reason to celebrate.

- Over that span, it helped clients secure more than \$180 million in procurement contracts, financing, and sales.



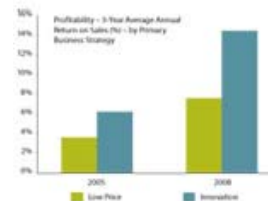
- It assisted minority companies with creating more than 1,450 jobs.
- It provided one-on-one technical assistance to some 400 firms and advice, guidance, and resources to thousands of others.
- Also, GMBEC received the 2006 Institution Award from the Greater Atlanta Economic Alliance and was recognized by its federal sponsor as an outstanding-performance center for 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Funded by the U.S. Commerce Department's Minority Business Development Agency and part of a national network, GMBEC works with existing high-impact firms in manufacturing, construction, warehousing, transportation, technology, and professional services. The goal is to foster long-term growth and sustainability through creation of jobs and revenue. Assistance ranges from identification of funding sources to process and infrastructure improvement to securing new business. To qualify for GMBEC assistance, companies must have 51 percent minority ownership and minimum annual revenues of \$500,000.

To learn more about GMBEC, contact Donna Ennis (404/894-2096, [donna.ennis@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:donna.ennis@innovate.gatech.edu)) or visit [www.georgiambec.org](http://www.georgiambec.org).

## Recent Survey Reflects the Profitability of Innovation

Georgia manufacturers that compete via innovation instead of low price experience higher returns on sales and higher employee wages, according to the 2008 Georgia Manufacturing Survey (GMS) of 738 companies statewide. However, far more rely on low price and quality of service as primary strategies.



Other findings include:

- 75 percent of state manufacturers strive to improve the sustainability of their processes, mostly in front-end production areas.
- In 2008, 15 percent of firms were impacted by outsourcing.
- Nearly 30 percent conducted R&D in-house, but only 5 percent reported using tax credits, loans/grants or other financial support for innovation even though they may have been eligible for state R&D tax credits.
- 23 percent of respondents identified energy efficiency as a top concern, 4 percentage points higher than in the previous (2005) survey.
- 24 percent noted technical skills as another top concern, but some 20 percent reported not spending any funds on employee training, whether it involved routine tasks or new capabilities.

The GMS, conducted by Georgia Tech since 1994, benchmarks the use of modern manufacturing practices by industry statewide. Information gleaned from it is used to enhance manufacturing assistance programs that help Georgia firms compete, improve profitability, and create jobs. Themes of the 2008 GMS were innovation and sustainability, factors that play crucial roles in helping manufacturers achieve and maintain competitiveness.

For more information on the GMS or to download the 2008 report, visit [www.cherry.gatech.edu/survey](http://www.cherry.gatech.edu/survey).

## Minor Changes Come to ISO 9001

Many manufacturers have heard about the "new" ISO 9001 and perhaps feel it means big changes for them. Well, they can relax, especially if they've implemented the 2000 version of this international standard for quality management as it was intended.

ISO's process requires a review every five years to ensure its standards remain relevant. Regarding ISO 9001:2000, 80 percent of respondents to a global user survey in 2004 were still satisfied. At that time, "new" referred to the significant changes that had occurred in the standard from 1994 to 2000--major shifts to a process-oriented approach, putting customer



satisfaction first, emphasizing continual improvement, and most important, keeping top management responsible.

There are some changes in ISO 9001:2008, but no major modifications. Changes were approved for the following: clarification, consistency, compatibility with ISO 14001, ambiguities to resolve, and user comprehension and applicability. Some words have been changed (such as "determine" for "identify"), some phrases have been reworded to match other clauses of ISO 9001 and 14001, and new notes have been added. A list of recent changes appears in the back of ANSI/ISO/ASQ Q9001-2009 in an easy-to-read table.

For more information on ISO-related training courses and coaching offered by Georgia Tech, contact Tim Israel, manager of Lean and Quality (404/894-2272, [tim.israel@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:tim.israel@innovate.gatech.edu)).

**In an upcoming issue:** Guidance documents for users of ISO 9001 are in the approval process now. What can these tell you that will assist your business?

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## Top Tip

Craig Cochran, north metro regional manager with Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute, believes problem-solving begins by understanding the big picture. Learn more in his recently published *Quality Digest* article, "[Don't Fail Your Customers with the 5 Whys](#)".

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## 3 Essentials for Encouraging Innovative Thinking in Your Firm

1. **A robust process that removes fear** - Rejection is brutal. Foster a corporate culture that promotes new-idea generation with an open mind.
2. **A management team that supports change** - Encourage managed risk-taking without punishment.
3. **A diverse staff that communicates ideas** - Different job functions sharing across "silos" departments enhances innovative thinking.

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## Expanding on Excellence

Check out Georgia Tech's popular Business Excellence Network Meetings. These no-cost, half-day sessions, formerly called Quality Network Meetings, are aimed at manufacturing professionals and general management, yet typically draw a wider audience because of their scope and value. Held bimonthly in Atlanta and annually seeing increased attendance, they involve guest speakers, attendee participation, and considerable networking. Past topics have included customer focus, high-impact auditing, continual improvement, effective problem-solving, training, and ISO 9001, among others. See schedule below. For more information, contact Craig Cochran (678/699-1690, [craig.cochran@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:craig.cochran@innovate.gatech.edu)) or Larry Alford (404/895-5237, [larry.alford@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:larry.alford@innovate.gatech.edu)).



Business Excellence Network Meetings from Georgia Tech - Sessions are usually held in Midtown Atlanta's Technology Square. The remaining 2009 schedule follows; some topics to be decided.

March 24 -- Lean enterprise  
May 19 -- Energy management  
July 21 -- TBD  
Sept. 22 -- TBD  
Nov. 17 -- TBD

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## Courses and Resources

Georgia Tech offers many courses for professionals, including classes that help manufacturers make successful business decisions. Visit our [Web site](#) to see a detailed listing of our upcoming class offerings.

[Lean/Process Improvement: 5S Workplace Organization](#) NEW/IMPROVED -  
March 4, 2009

**Why, who and how will your company benefit?**

- Georgia Tech's experts will help demonstrate how effective organization of the workplace promotes safety, employee involvement, quality, and efficiency.
- Operations-oriented personnel at all levels will gain both strategic and practical knowledge - engineering, operations, HR, quality, logistics - virtually any area of the business will benefit by taking this class.
- By implementing a 5S vision and expanding your knowledge, you will acquire tools to help your organization reduce costs, maximize floor space, and lay the foundation for continuous improvement.

[Lean Office and Administration](#) - March 3, 2009

**Why, who and how will your company benefit?**

- Georgia Tech's experts will help your office operate more efficiently by eliminating waste, get more done with less effort, and gain more capacity from existing operations.
- Accountants, office managers, purchasing and shipping agents, supervisors, and support staff will benefit from this class.
- By day's end, you will gain an understanding of how lean's continuous improvement techniques can enhance your company's ability to compete in the global marketplace.

[Lean Boot Camp: Training a Lean Champion](#) - March 17-20, 2009

**Why, who and how will your company benefit?**

- Georgia Tech's experts will help you understand and develop a strategy for successfully applying lean across the enterprise and learn the most common lean tools and techniques (VSM, 5S, Set-Up Reduction, Pull Systems and more).
- New hires and those recently promoted will quickly be brought up to speed on lean topics. For experienced practitioners this course will demonstrate how the tools and culture of lean work as a management system.
- Discovering how lean impacts profit, lead time, inventory, quality, and customer service will boost your facility's capabilities.

Pertinent Programs, Publications, and Web Sites

- \* Georgia Save Energy Now (GSEN) State Assessment Program - a no-cost program for manufacturers to help cut energy consumption and cost; firms must be located in Georgia and use an annual minimum of \$2 million in energy. Contact Ed Hardison (229/430-4210, [ed.hardison@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:ed.hardison@innovate.gatech.edu)).
- \* *GreenBuzz* newsletter - a free e-publication from GreenBiz.com that reports on sustainable business practices, provides access to blogs, and identifies diverse "green" resources.

**Share and Share Alike**

In a recent *Focus Forward* survey, a majority of readers expressed willingness to recommend the newsletter or pass it along. Indeed, we'd appreciate it if you would share the publication or parts of it with colleagues and peers. In these tough times, almost everyone, to borrow from the Beatles, could use a little help from their friends



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