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Maybe they like Mr. Green Jeans instead?

We are planning editorial for 2010 already around the offices of The FABRICATOR. We end up talking about trends, economic prospects, and requests from readers. Some of the ideas will emerge as features next year, and others will remain on the back burner.

One trend that we have been following for a couple of years has been the "green" movement. Obviously, many people see environmental consciousness as a simple marketing push, but ample evidence exists nowadays that this is becoming a bonafide movement in manufacturing.

Machine tool manufacturers are marketing their servo-electric equipment as energy savers because they don't use as much power as older models. Metal formers are looking at lubricants that contain more natural ingredients rather than simply oil-based compounds. Metal fabricators are following up on green certification efforts, such as ISO 14001, to prove that they want to minimize their impact on the earth and that they are worthy to be suppliers to environmentally conscious OEMs.

With these trends in mind, we surveyed our "Fabricating Update" e-newsletter recipients to find out their views on the subject. Most of the responses were similar: They pretty much wanted information on how to run equipment more efficiently; to improve the actual facilities to reduce energy consumption; and to serve OEMs in the alternative-energy field, such as wind tower and turbine manufacturers. Not all were pleased that they were in this spot, however.

Some metal fabricators don't believe they'll ever see a return on investment when it comes to green manufacturing practices mandated by governmental bodies. In their eyes, cost-versus-benefit analyses are being shoved aside to appease environmental special-interest groups and companies poised to prosper with the move away from traditional means of energy production and usage.

"I think we are fast heading into a manufacturing environment where you, as a company, will be disqualified if you are not implementing green practices. America is quickly losing its manufacturing identity and initiative because of mandated compliance with issues like green. As you can probably tell, I am sick of green," one fabricator replied in the survey.

That fabricator may not be the only one sick of the green movement. A **survey of 2,500 manufacturing firms conducted by the American Small Manufacturers Coalition and several Manufacturing Extension Partnership centers** revealed that "green/sustainability" ranks low among the strategic priorities of U.S. companies. Only 16 percent of those surveyed ranked the issue as highly important to their success in the next five years. A similar percentage reported that it wasn't important.

Given the way the marketing and political winds are blowing in the U.S., manufacturers may not have the luxury of ignoring the green movement. They may not like it, but they will have to learn to live with it.

Posted At : 8:37 AM. | Posted By : Dan Davis