

tmta talk

A publication of the
Tooling, Manufacturing &
Technologies Association

**FROM Rob's
Roost**
By Rob Dumont
PRESIDENT & CEO

For Your Consideration

In the year 2010 the U.S. set what was an all-time record deficit with China: \$273,063,200,000 (that's 273 billion plus). In the first 11 months of last year we managed to accumulate a deficit with China in the amount of \$272,321,300,000. From October to November of 2011 the trade deficit worsened from \$43.3 billion to \$47.8 billion representing an increase in excess of 10% in just one month. More

than 42% of our goods deficit (including oil) was with China. See for yourself: www.census.gov/foreign-trade/press/current_press_release/ft900.pdf and www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html.

It has oft been said but it bears repetition, "dollars spent on foreign goods and services cannot be spent domestically".

This being an election year, you are uniquely positioned to have an impact on the policy and law makers in Washington. Currency manipulation and a continuing refusal to permit greater domestic exploration for and production of oil are matters that should be at the top

of your list of concerns. And, your concerns should be made known to those seeking office. The current batch of representative in both the House and Senate, simply put, are not getting the job done.

True unemployment is much higher than that which is touted—taking into account those who have given up efforts at finding work in the face of very long term inability to land a job. That group remains unemployed regardless

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tmta Calendar of Events January 2012

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 16 | Martin Luther King Day Federal Holiday TMTA Offices Open |
| 18 | TMTA Board of Directors meets at TMTA Offices |

Visit www.thetmta.com for detailed, up-to-date information on all events.



Why is it So Hard to Break Bad Habits?

by: the National Institute of Health, News in Health

If you know something's bad for you, why can't you just stop? About 70% of smokers say they would like to quit. Drug and alcohol abusers struggle to give up addictions that hurt their bodies and tear apart families and friendships. And many of us have unhealthy excess weight that we could lose if only we would eat right and exercise more. So why don't we do it?

NIH-funded scientists have been searching for answers. They've studied what happens in our brains as habits form. They've found clues to why bad habits, once established, are so difficult to kick. And they're developing strategies to help us make the changes we'd like to make.

"Habits play an important role in our health," says Dr. Nora Volkow, director of NIH's National Institute on Drug Abuse. "Understanding the biology of how we develop routines that may be harmful to us, and how to break those routines and embrace new ones, could help us change our lifestyles and adopt healthier behaviors."

Habits can arise through repetition. They are a normal part of life, and are often helpful. "We wake up every morning, shower, comb our hair or brush our teeth without being aware of it," Volkow says. "When behaviors become automatic, it gives us an advantage, because the brain does not have to use conscious thought to perform the activity." This frees up our brains to focus on different things.

Habits can also develop when good or enjoyable events trigger the brain's "reward" centers. This can set up potentially harmful routines, such as overeating, smoking, drug or alcohol abuse, gambling and even compulsive use of computers and social media.

"The general machinery by which we build both kinds of habits are the same, whether it's a habit for overeating or a habit for getting to work without really thinking about the details," says Dr. Russell Poldrack, a neurobiologist at the University of Texas at Austin. Both types of habits are based on the same types of brain mechanisms.

"But there's one important difference," Poldrack says. And this difference makes the pleasure-based habits so much harder to break. Enjoyable behaviors can prompt

your brain to release a chemical called dopamine. "If you do something over and over, and dopamine is there when you're doing it, that strengthens the habit even more. When you're not doing those things, dopamine creates the craving to do it again," Poldrack says. "This explains why some people crave drugs, even if the drug no longer makes them feel particularly good once they take it."

In a sense, then, parts of our brains are working against us when we try to overcome bad habits. "These routines can become hardwired in our brains," Volkow says. And the brain's reward centers keep us craving the things we're trying so hard to resist.

The good news is, humans are not simply creatures of habit. We have many more brain regions to help us do what's best for our health. "Humans are much better than any other animal at changing and orienting our behavior toward long-term goals, or long-term benefits," says Dr. Roy Baumeister, a psychologist at Florida State University. His studies on decision-making and willpower have led him to conclude that "self-control is like a muscle. Once you've exerted some self-control, like a muscle it gets tired."

After successfully resisting a temptation, Baumeister's research shows, willpower can be temporarily drained, which can make it harder to stand firm the next time around. In recent years, though, he's found evidence that regularly practicing different types of self-control—such as sitting up straight or keeping a food diary—can strengthen your resolve.

"We've found that you can improve your self-control by doing exercises over time," Baumeister says. "Any regular act of self-control will gradually exercise your 'muscle' and make you stronger." Volkow notes that there's no single effective way to break bad habits. "It's not one size fits all."

One approach is to focus on becoming more aware of your unhealthy habits. Then develop strategies to counteract them. For example, habits can be linked in our minds to certain places and activities. You could develop a plan, say, to avoid walking down the hall where there's a candy machine. Resolve to avoid going places where you've usually smoked. Stay away from friends and situations linked to problem drinking or drug use.

One way to kick bad habits is to actively replace unhealthy routines with new, healthy ones. Some people find they can replace a bad habit, even drug addiction, with another behavior, like exercising. "It doesn't work for everyone," Volkow says. "But certain groups of patients who have a history of serious addictions can engage in certain behaviors that are ritualistic and in a way compulsive and it helps them stay away from drugs. These

alternative behaviors can counteract the urges to repeat a behavior to take a drug.”

Another thing that makes habits especially hard to break is that replacing a first-learned habit with a new one doesn't erase the original behavior. Rather, both remain in your brain. But you can take steps to strengthen the new one and suppress the original one. In ongoing research, Poldrack is using brain imaging to study the differences between first-learned and later-learned behaviors. “We'd like to find a way to train people to improve their ability to maintain these behavioral changes,” Poldrack says.

Some NIH-funded research is exploring whether certain medications can help to disrupt hard-wired automatic behaviors in the brain and make it easier to form new memories and behaviors. Other scientific teams are searching for genes that might allow some people to easily form and others to readily suppress habits.

Bad habits may be hard to change, but it can be done. Tips for breaking bad habits:

- Avoid tempting situations. If you always stop for a donut on your way to work, try a different route. Keep fatty foods, cigarettes, alcohol and other tempting items out of your home.
- Replace unhealthy behaviors with healthy ones. Try exercise, a hobby or spending time with family.
- Prepare mentally. If you can't avoid a tempting situation, prepare yourself in advance. Think about how you want to handle it and mentally practice what you plan.
- Enlist support. Ask friends, family and co-workers to support your efforts to change.
- Reward yourself for small steps. Give yourself a healthy treat when you've achieved a small goal or milestone.

Wear Red to Support Women's Heart Health

Friday, February 3, 2012 is National Wear Red Day®, a day Americans wear red to show their support for women's heart health.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women. The American Heart Association says one in three women's deaths each year is caused by heart disease. This means our mothers, sisters and friends are dying at the rate of one per minute. The time it takes to read this, another woman will die from heart disease.

Each year on the first Friday in February, thousands wear red to help raise crucial awareness and significant funds in the fight against heart disease in women. Dona-

tions to the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women movement help support efforts to educate women and to fund breakthrough research.



As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are more likely to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain. Signs of a heart attack include:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

If you have any of these signs, don't wait, dial 9-1-1 for help immediately. Calling 911 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment.

Free Benchmarking Report for TMTA Members

TMTA members once again have an opportunity to receive a free benchmarking report from the Performance Benchmarking Service (PBS) group. PBS is a part of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, a leading source of benchmarking data for manufacturing.

By completing one of the sector-specific questionnaires, a company can receive a customized, detailed and comprehensive report comparing its performance to that of others in its selected comparison group. This report is free to TMTA members—a \$595 value.

To take advantage of this free report offer, go to the TMTA website at www.thetmta.com and complete the questionnaire (does not require sensitive financial disclosure) most appropriate to your company by Friday, March 23, 2012. You will receive your free report in May 2012.

Members may complete one questionnaire per facility. For more information or if you have any questions, contact Rebekah McCarter or Dan Luria at pbs@mmtc.org or call toll-free at 888-414-6682.

Changes to the Michigan Workers' Disability Compensation Act

On December 19, 2011, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed into law Public Act 266 of 2011 (PA 266). PA 266 was effective immediately and it applies to injuries incurred on or after its effective date, 12/19/11. PA 266 was supported by pro-employer groups and is designed to improve Michigan's workers' compensation system by codifying several favorable decisions from the Michigan Supreme Court and by closing certain loopholes in the system which has increased costs to employers.

PA 266 makes the following notable changes to the current workers' compensation law:

Employees must show that their injuries are "medically distinguishable" from their pre-existing conditions to qualify for workers' compensation benefits, namely, that work caused a pathology (and not a change in symptoms alone) that is medically distinguishable from a pathology that existed prior to the injury.

Employees claiming a mental disability must prove that the mental disability arose out of actual events of employment, and that the employee's perception of the actual events is reasonably grounded in fact or reality.

To establish disability and wage loss, employees must disclose their qualifications and training; provide evidence of jobs they are qualified and trained to perform in the same salary range as their prior job's maximum wage earning capacity; and demonstrate the workplace injury or disease either caused them to be unable to perform these other jobs, or, if able to perform these jobs, prove such jobs are unobtainable.

There are now offsets for pension and retirement benefits where the employee is eligible for such benefits, not only when the employee elects to receive those benefits.

The initial period during which the employer may direct the injured employee's medical care is increased from 10 days to 28 days.

If the employee is partially disabled—meaning that the employee is able to work but only at a lower wage than before the injury—then the employee's wage loss benefits will be reduced based on the wage the employee is capable of earning.

Degenerative arthritis is now considered a "condition of

the aging process," along with cardiovascular and heart conditions, and only is compensable if tied to a workplace injury or disease that causes, contributes or aggravates this condition in a "significant manner."

Employees have an "affirmative duty" to seek reasonably available work.

If the employee is terminated from reasonable employment due to the fault of the employee, the employee is considered to have voluntarily removed himself or herself from the workforce and is not entitled to any wage loss benefits.

The presumption that a wife is "wholly dependent" on a disabled employee-husband is eliminated.

The parties to a redemption agreement may stipulate to certain determinations in writing, eliminating the need for redemption hearings in certain situations.

If your company has any questions in regards to the new amendments to the Michigan Workers' Disability Compensation Act, contact your company's workers' compensation agent or labor law attorney.

TMTA's endorsed provider for workers' compensation is Harleysville Insurance. For information or a free, no obligation quote, contact Jay Poplawski at 1-800-638-1174.

MANUFACTURING & TECHNOLOGY NEWS

In The Simplest Terms: Why U.S. Debt Was Downgraded

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| • U.S. tax revenue: | \$2,170,000,000,000 |
| • Federal budget: | \$3,820,000,000,000 |
| • New debt: | \$1,650,000,000,000 |
| • National debt: | \$14,271,000,000,000 |
| • Recent budget cut: | \$38,500,000,000 |

Remove eight zeros and pretend it's a household budget:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| • Annual family income: | \$21,700 |
| • Money the family spent: | \$38,200 |
| • New debt on the credit card: | \$16,500 |
| • Outstanding balance on the credit card: | \$142,710 |
| • Total budget cuts: | \$385 |

Changes to the Michigan Employment Security Act

Governor Rick Snyder signed an amendment to the Michigan Employment Security Act into law on December 19, 2011. It became effective at the time of signing (12/19/11) and has a little bit of something for everyone.

The most significant aspect of the law calls for a State Bond Issue to raise monies sufficient to repay Michigan's huge, \$3.2 billion unemployment insurance debt to the federal government (UITF). Michigan has the highest per capita unemployment insurance debt in the nation because it has paid more in benefits than it has collected from job providers who finance the system. The bond proceeds extinguish the federal liability and allow for repayment of money borrowed from the General Fund. This will eliminate Michigan's debt to the federal UITF and ensure that the trust fund is solvent moving forward.

The most notable changes for employers are:

The taxable wage base will be increased from \$9,000 to \$9,500 annually. There is a provision allowing this standard's return to \$9,000 in the event the UITF regains a sufficient positive balance in the future.

A decrease to the experience rating period from five years to three years will be phased in (4 years in 2012 and 3 years in 2013) allowing employers to get beyond bad jobless claim years more quickly.

Employers will now be able to correct errors on timely-filed Quarterly Reporting forms without penalty if they do so within 14 days of Agency notification. Small employers, those with 25 or fewer employees, will be required to file all quarterly reports electronically beginning 1/1/13. Some small employers will be allowed to spread their unemployment tax payments out over all four calendar quarters.

When an employee who voluntarily terminated employment requalifies for benefits because he had an established benefit year in effect, obtained a new job and left that job within 60 days, benefits paid will no longer be charged against the original employer's experience rating and will now be charged against the "nonchargeable benefits account."

Also, charged to the "nonchargeable benefits account" rather than the employer are benefits paid to a claimant solely on the basis of combining Michigan and out-of-state employment; benefits paid on part-time claimants when an individual working 2 jobs quits the part-time job and later loses the full-time job; and benefits paid due to a

termination arising from a spouse's military relocation.

The most notable changes for employees are:

Claimants will be required to actively engage in a "systemic and sustained search for work" and will be required to file progress reports detailing their search in order to qualify for benefits.

After half of a claimant's benefit weeks have been paid (10 weeks) the claimant will be required to accept employment, even if outside the claimant's training or experience as long as the position pays at least 120% of the claimant's weekly benefit amount or the area prevailing wage. (Claimants had their maximum benefits period cut from 26 weeks to 20 weeks beginning January 1, 2012 under an earlier law.)

Claimants may be disqualified from receiving benefits for theft, absenteeism (missing more than 3 consecutive days without informing their supervisor) and the negligent loss of a job requirement (such as the loss of one's driver's license where it is required as a condition of employment). The employer must communicate these policies to the employee "at the time of hire" (to be defined at a later date).

Claimants who terminate employment because their spouse is a full-time member of the U.S. armed forces can receive benefits provided the claimant is leaving due to the spouse's reassignment to a different location.

Claimants may be allowed to collect benefits when certain terminations due to medical reasons are considered terminations attributable to the employer. To obtain benefits in this situation, prior to resigning or being terminated for medical reasons, the employee would need to:

- secure a medical professional's statement that continuing in the current job would be harmful to the individual's physical or mental health;
- unsuccessfully attempt to secure alternative work with the employer; and
- unsuccessfully attempt to be placed on a leave of absence with the employer which would last until the individual's mental or physical health would no longer be harmed by the current job.

For over 20 years Packer & Associates has been TMTA's endorsed provider of unemployment cost control services at a discount to TMTA members. For information on how Packer can save your company money and handle all of your unemployment insurance complexities, contact Nathan Wiest at 1-800-482-2971.



NLRB Delays Posting Deadline AGAIN!

On December 23, 2011, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced it would postpone the effective date of its employee rights notice posting rule from January 31, 2012 to April 30, 2012.

This postponement comes at the request of the federal court in Washington, DC hearing a legal challenge to the NLRB's authority to require the posting and create sanctions for noncompliance. In pushing back the date, the NLRB stated it felt "postponing the effective date of the rule would facilitate the resolution of the legal challenges that have been filed with respect to the rule."

2012 Standard Mileage Rates

The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2012 optimal standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

The rates effective January 1, 2012 are as follows:

- Business purposes – 55.5 cents per mile
- Medical or moving purposes – 23 cents per mile
- Service of charitable organizations – 14 cents per mile

The standard mileage rate for business is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates.

The IRS says a taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle after using any depreciation method under the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) or after claiming a Section 179 deduction for that vehicle. In addition, the business standard mileage rate cannot be used for more than 4 vehicles used simultaneously.

Payroll Tax Reduction Extension

On December 23, 2011, President Obama signed into law HR 3765 which provides a 2 month extension of the

payroll tax reduction that has been effect for 2011.

Specifically, the employee share of the Social Security tax will remain at 4.2% of wages through February 29, 2012. Without the law, this tax would have reverted to 6.2% as of January 1, 2012. In January, Congress and the President are expected to pass another law that will extend the payroll tax reduction through 2012.

INFLATION TALK

CPI-W Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers

| Month | 82-84 | 1967 | 57-59 |
|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Nov | 222.813 | 663.692 | 771.87* |
| Oct | 223.043 | 664.376 | 772.66* |
| Sept | 223.688 | 666.299 | 774.90* |
| Aug | 223.326 | 665.221 | 773.64* |
| July | 222.686 | 663.314 | 771.43* |
| June | 222.522 | 662.826 | 770.86* |
| May | 222.954 | 664.113 | 772.36* |
| Apr 2011 | 221.743 | 660.503 | 768.16* |

CPI-U All Urban Consumers

| Month | 82-84 | 1967 | 57-59 |
|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Nov | 226.230 | 677.684 | 788.14* |
| Oct | 226.421 | 678.258 | 788.80* |
| Sept | 226.889 | 679.658 | 790.43* |
| Aug | 226.545 | 678.628 | 789.23* |
| July | 225.922 | 676.762 | 787.06* |
| June | 225.722 | 676.162 | 786.37* |
| May | 225.964 | 676.887 | 787.21* |
| Apr 2011 | 224.906 | 673.717 | 783.52* |

Note: November 2011 CPI-W represents a 3.8% increase from one year ago; CPI-U a 3.4% increase.

* Base Year 1957-59 is no longer released. BLS has issued the following conversion factors from the 82-84 year:

CPI-W—.2886674 CPI-U—.2870447

(Rob's Roost continued from Page 1)

of how the statistics are compiled and their pain is none the less.

Manufacturing, once seen by the young as a promising place to seek a career, is no longer viewed in that light. Young people today are much better informed than any previous generation and have access to information virtually instantaneously. The decline in American manufacturing enterprise does not go unnoticed by our youth and they are much less inclined to consider jobs in the manufacturing sector as career choices. Hence the obvious and well known problems our members have in finding capable and skilled workers when jobs are available. We are progressing from "We **don't** produce that here" to "We **can't** produce that here"!

Together with a number of other organizations, the TMTA continues its efforts to address these and other issues with policy and law makers. You, on the other hand, will in November be able to truly make a difference—if you believe that the current group is not getting it done—you can drop the hammer and change the group.

The reality is that when one chooses to buy something there is a price point that you simply will not exceed. "If it costs more than \$X, I am not buying it or I will look elsewhere." The same should be true with your representatives—just how much are you willing to tolerate in terms of inactivity or activity for that matter? If you assess that reality it might just be that your conclusion is that it is time for a change in representation. Change, at the least, makes the consequences of not getting the job done quite clear to those selected to do the job. They must be held accountable lest they proceed with reckless abandon to your and the country's serious detriment.

...just something to think about while you sift through the coming waves of rhetoric and promises by those in and hoping to continue to be in office and those who would like to replace them.

**For more information about the TMTA,
our advocacy, events, benefits
and up-to-date news and information,
visit us at www.thetmta.com**

**TMTA ENDORSED
SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Blue Cross Blue Shield/BCN

(Health insurance program)

TMTA contacts:

Bill Percha 586-904-9700 (cell)

Elaine Burger-Laskosky 248-488-0300, ext. 1309

Freedom One Financial Group

(401(k) Retirement program)

Provider contact:

John Young 248-620-8100

GlobalTranz — CarrierRate.com

(Freight discount program)

Provider contact:

Chad Hill 866-275-1407, ext. 130

John M. Packer & Associates

(Unemployment cost control program)

Provider contact:

Nathan Wiest 800-482-2971

Practical Power LLC

(Electrical savings program)

Provider contact:

Mark Bunting 248-726-7598

Ralph C. Wilson Agency, Inc.

(Insurance management)

Provider contact for Benefits coverages:

Robert Farris 248-355-1414, ext. 109

Provider contact for P&C and WC coverages:

Jay Poplawski, 248-355-1414, ext. 158

Reliance Standard/Ameritas

(Life/Dental insurance programs)

TMTA contacts:

Bill Percha 586-904-9700

Stella Krupansky 248-488-0300, ext. 1310

SVS Vision

(Safety & Vision programs)

Provider contact:

Monica Dyja 800-611-3683 or www.svsvision.com

Schena Roofing & Sheet Metal Co., Inc.

(Commercial/industrial roofing contractor)

Provider contact:

586-949-4777

Staffworks Group

(Staffing needs)

Provider contact:

Bill Brann 877-304-9690

TMTA receives a benefit from some of its Endorsed Providers when you, as a member, patronize them. This is one way we are able to maintain the level of dues.

In Memoriam



It is with deep sadness and regret that we note the passing of **Jean Rankine**, former employee of the **TMTA** (through the MTA Service Company), on December 17, 2011 at the age of 65. She is survived by her husband of 43 years, Jim; children Lisa (Chris) Canning, Todd (Natalie) and Scott Rankine; and 4 grandchildren.

Jean loved gardening and being outdoors, especially in her pool; the Detroit Tigers; and time spent with her grandchildren. She had a magnetic personality and was admired by all she met throughout her life.

Jean will be greatly missed by her family and friends who enjoyed her smile; bubbly spirit and energetic personality.

Our sincere condolences to her family and friends.

In Memoriam



It is with deep sadness and regret that we note the passing of **Dean Gerald LaJeunesse**, Vice President of Manufacturing for **L & L Machine Tool**, on December 18, 2011 at the age of 53. He is survived by his wife Michelle; sons Eric and Joseph; and siblings Renee Kramer and TMTA Board Director Leroy LaJeunesse.

Mr. LaJeunesse was an avid hunter and sportsman. He worked at L & L Machine for 35 years.

Mr. LaJeunesse will be deeply missed by his countless family, friends and co-workers who enjoyed his sense of fairness, humor and good times.

Our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

TMTA Board of Directors

The TMTA is governed by a Board of Directors elected from the membership, by the membership, for the membership. The TMTA Board of Directors makes decisions that effect the Association and its member companies.

Directors serve 3-year terms. It is a voluntary position, but an extremely important one. Please consider submitting your name for this year's election.

If you are interested in being on the ballot for the term beginning in 2012, please submit your name by fax to 248-488-0500 or an e-mail to ron@thetmta.com asap.

We look forward to putting your name on the ballot this year!

tmta talk

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P.O. Box 2204 Phone (248) 488-0300
Farmington Hills, MI 48333 Fax (248) 488-0500
www.thetmta.com

President and CEO — Robert J. Dumont
Editor, Layout/Design — Elaine F. Burger-Laskosky

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