

NIMA

North Idaho Manufacturers' Association

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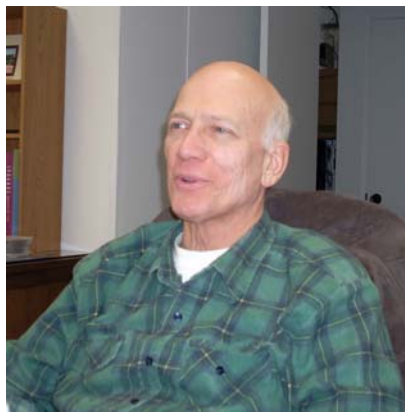
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Ro-Tool Vacuum Systems, Clarkston Washington

Do you end up choking every time you use your electric woodworking equipment? Imagine if you worked somewhere that sanded or sawed several hours a day and generated so much sawdust and chips that it filled the room's air within minutes and there was no relief! That situation has inspired a business owner in Clarkston to manufacture and sell dustless sanding and vacuum systems. Warren Arnold of RoTool has been building and marketing these systems in Clarkston since he moved here in 1992 to be closer to his aging parents.



Warren, who holds a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Idaho and a MBA from the University of Washington, did business out of his garage until a year and a half ago when he constructed a 5,000 square foot building in the Clarkston heights. He and one other full-time employee order in parts, weld steel, assemble the units, and ship them to destinations all over the United States and to places as far away as Canada, Mexico, and Japan. He prefers to sell through distributors who then assume the task of selling and installing the systems themselves. Warren states, "That allows me to be here in my office more, which helps me stay on top of the paperwork."

His unique dustless vacuum systems have a built-in centrifugal separator, which keeps 99% of the dust out of the filters, allowing the filters (which are located in the center) to last years longer. For the heavy-duty user, he manufactures paddle wheel unloaders, which remove the sawdust and chips from the filter unit up to thousands of cubic feet per hour. In smaller facilities, they can connect the filter unit to barrels or dumpsters for easy disposal. The self-cleaning filters

are automatically cleaned each night when the system is not in use.

Warren has sold systems for use in car washes, machine shops, cabinet companies, and even bakeries (since they can't sweep without getting particles in the air and on the food). Other users of his system are fiberglass, dental, plastic, concrete, food, boat, hotel, and many other industries. He even has a portable system available.

What's standing in the way of expanding the business? In a word, marketing. "I'm planning to add a marketing person soon", Warren says, "which should at least double my business." Then he will hire more workers as the demand for his dustless vacuum systems grows.

Warren even manufactures the multistage turbines used in their dustless vacuum systems. The turbines are designed using totally enclosed, cast housing, fan cooled American motors and can be operated 24 hours per day. Sandpaper costs can be cut by as much as half because as the dust is sucked out of the sandpaper, the job surface stays cooler. "The savings on sandpaper alone,

depending on the size of the shop, could pay for the entire system in a few months," Warren says.

For more information about Warren Arnold's RoTOOL systems, check out his website at rotoolvacuumsystems.com.

Ram Products, Moscow Idaho

RAM PRODUCTS has been in business for approximately 30 years. Owner, Jerry Johnson, says for the last seven years RAM PRODUCTS has been located in Moscow.



RAM PRODUCTS primarily manufactures outdoor archery sporting goods products. Their primary and specialty product is a portable archery "ratchet-loc Bow Press." This product is designed to improve access to string and cams on archery bows. RAM Products also manufactures a "Pro Bow Vise" which is a heavy duty pro shop quality bow vise. The vise mounts easily to any table or work bench. This vise will hold the bow firmly for setup or repair work.

In addition to the archery products, RAM PRODUCTS also manufactures a "Dual-Vac" system for removing water left in piping systems after draining. This handy product can be used to remove water from systems in order to replace sprinkler heads or make other repairs.

The company also manufactures an "on-center" center punch and level combination to accurately locate positions of holes to be drilled into pipes.

They also manufacture a self-centering drill press that is both lightweight and portable. The clamp specifically secures the power drill for accurate hole drilling in pipes. The non-archery products that RAM Products manufactures can be viewed at www.haroldallencompany.com.

Jerry has five employees that are enthusiastic about their work, even if their work is in cramped quarters. His daughter works in the office. RAM PRODUCTS has

outgrown the present shop and needs more space. He is trying to secure a larger building and hopes to move in the near future. His workforce is stable; even though, he recently lost a long-term employee whose spouse completed college and they moved. Even when he offers good pay and other incentives he recognizes that employee turnover is a challenge of doing business in a university town.

Jerry looks for employees who have good mechanical abilities and are good problem solvers, as they may be working on a variety of products and using various tools. It helps if they are interested in hunting sports. He is willing to help employees purchase necessary tools over time.

RAM PRODUCTS is experiencing success and will continue to do so by being creative and open to developing new products and taking on new challenges.

Use the Idaho Department of Labor for Staffing Assistance

The tight labor market in northern Idaho is creating shortages of some skills for manufacturers. But the Idaho Department of Labor can help provide the manpower needed on shop floors throughout the region.

Timber industry curtailments and closures have created a large, diverse pool of capable workers who can be trained to meet the needs of manufacturers and other sectors of the Panhandle economy.

The Labor Department and its nine local offices in northern and north central Idaho have the experts and resources to match qualified workers with employers who have been hard pressed to find the skills they need to remain profitable on an increasingly tough economic landscape.

Work force consultants in Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, Coeur d'Alene, Kellogg, St. Maries, Moscow, Lewiston, Orofino and Grangeville will

help qualified ex-timber industry workers secure the training needed on the payrolls of northern Idaho manufacturers. Job training resources are available to the ex-timber industry workers to train for openings you may currently have available.

The department's dedicated Business Services staff provides streamlined point-of-contact coordination of customized solutions for work force development needs. Their access to this labor pool can provide employers highly qualified job candidates from the management level to skilled crafts.

More information on the wide array of services and programs available from the Idaho Department of Labor is on the Internet at <http://labor.idaho.gov>. A link to your closest local office is also available from this site.

NIMA Committee Updates, Dave Bonfield

It's been some time since the general meeting so I'm going to try and catch everyone up on the organization's efforts.

Let's start by talking about manufacturing and what it means to the U.S. economy. Do you know that 70% of all research and development comes from manufacturers? Manufacturers have the largest impact on our economy, for every \$1 they generate \$1.37 is turned into economic activity and if the U.S. manufacturers were an economy of themselves they would be the 8th largest economy in the world. In the State of Washington over 50% of the manufacturers have less than 20 employees and this includes western Washington

The NIMA Manufacturing survey has been completed. Several areas of concern were brought to our attention. The following are a few of the areas we are working to reduce the level of concern.

The biggest concern for local manufacturers is an available work force. Those of you that were able to attend the general meeting know the board formed 4-committees: the Work Force, Communications, Benefits, and Sustainable Committees.

The Work Force Committee is working on the following:

- Educating the community about the manufacturing jobs that are available.
- Developing an affordable way for interested community members to obtain skill training, by developing both pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities.

The more people we can expose to pre-craft training opportunities the more potential for

individuals to see manufacturing as a prospective career.

Many of our manufactures are located in small rural communities; this creates a problem with having large enough numbers in a training program to offset the costs. Due to these numbers the alternative has been for the people to travel to Lewiston or Spokane for skill training. With the price of gas hovering at \$4.00 per gallon this greatly increases the cost of attending these training programs.

The Work Force Committee (WFC) is working on alternative ways to provide skill training that is available and affordable to potential employees in rural communities. Two pilot programs will be started in the near future, one in welding and the other in CNC machine operation.

WFC is also working on developing the goals and objectives needed to finish our Economic Development Grant. Goal one: How do we educate all schools on the manufacturing opportunities within their communities in a way that will help slow down the out-migration of young people from these communities? By providing schools and youth with information on job opportunities, in manufacturing, right in their own back yard.

The next area of concern is affordable health and retirement benefit programs. Kim Giese Jr. is the chairman of the Benefits Committee and they have been working hard on a list of items to reduce cost and improve quality on these issues. We are looking forward to their report.

Next, what can we do to help manufactures that have been negatively affected by a global economy in which many countries can sell into the US without being subjected to many of the overhead conditions that affect our manufacturers?

We can't forget that 95% of the world's population lives outside the U S borders and according to the National Association of Manufacturers 52% of small manufacturers either import or export. NIMA's local survey indicated that only 20% of our manufactures either import or export. We must help identify markets where our local manufacturers can be competitive. Additionally, we can't forget that not all customers make purchase decisions based strictly on price, some look for quality, short runs, and responsive turn around times. That's what small rural manufactures are really good at doing.

The Sustainability Committee was formed to determine how we, NIMA, can stick around to continue to champion for small and medium manufactures. The Sustainability Committee Chair is Ed Endebrock, with Hydraulic Warehouse and they have developed a number of revenue streams and now are working on identifying the list of objectives to ensure success.

Those of you that were at the general meeting were introduced to the NIMA committee chairmen:

- Barry Ramsay –Work Force Committee
- Bruce Larson –Communications Committee
- Kim Giese Jr. –Benefits Committee
- Ed Endebrock –Sustainability Committee

Although all of these committees have members we are always willing to accept more help. There is never enough time and energy available to meet the demands of supporting our area's manufacturers. If you would be interested in volunteering for any of the committees please don't hesitate to contact the committee chairperson. The NIMA board also recently expanded the size of the NIMA Board of Directors and anyone interested in applying for a board position should contact Dave Bonfield.