



The Plumbing Manufacturing Story is One of Safety and Health

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

There is a fundamental misunderstanding about the complexities of product manufacturing. For most people, product manufacturing begins when they take a product off the shelf at their local hardware store or home center. If pressed, they would hazard a guess the product arrived by truck. The factory is not top of mind.

Does it matter whether a consumer understands what's behind a product or its place of origin, as long as they buy it? It does. Recent experience navigating conversations about what's required to bring a new faucet, showerhead, toilet, or other plumbing products to market makes clear the limitations of what people understand about plumbing fixtures and fittings and perhaps manufacturing in general.

Perhaps it's time to tell our industry's story differently. With support of the PMI Board of Directors, the new PMI Marketing Committee will be working to do exactly that. You may recall in 2018, PMI launched the Plumbing Industry Economic Impact Study examining the direct and indirect financial contributions the plumbing products industry makes to America's economy. The results were fascinating. For the first-time the industry's economic contributions were quantified in a way everyone could understand – taxes, wages, direct economic output and jobs. Even without a manufacturing plant in a given state, our industry still contributes indirectly to the economy by supporting jobs and economic contributions by retailers, wholesalers and distributors.

The Marketing Committee will provide the insight and expertise to build on the stories behind the economic strength of the industry. Plumbing product manufacturers play a critical role in every community across America. PMI members are creators – of jobs, wages and healthy, strong communities. It's a compelling story. And that story lends meaning, unity and purpose to our lives. But there's more to our industry than just dollars and extraordinary good sense. In the midst of a global pandemic, our products are assuring

the availability of water to drink, to wash hands and soothe bodies. Beyond the mask or face shield so many of our member companies pivoted to produce, our core products – most notably sinks and faucets – continue to help stem the spread of the increasingly deadly COVID-19.

If consumers lack understanding about manufacturing, it may be dwarfed by the limited awareness of the 1.2 million miles of water-supply mains that crisscross our communities to deliver drinking water. About 285 million Americans rely on water treatment plants in their communities for drinking water while more than 43 million Americans rely on private wells. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) research paper, "Strategies to Achieve Full Lead Service Line Replacement," estimates between 6 to 10 million lead service lines are in place across the United States. With lead service line replacement costs ranging between \$1,200 to \$12,300 per line, property owners and communities face significant economic challenges toward getting this job done, especially at a time of dwindling revenues brought on by the pandemic.

The high cost and complexity of lead service line replacement has led to other efforts to get lead out most everywhere else. The EPA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agree that no amount of lead is acceptable. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) called for regulations limiting exposure of lead in drinking water for schools and day care centers to no more than 1 part per billion. Which bring us to a truly extraordinary collaboration between PMI

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Belinda Wise Values PMI as One-Stop Shop for Vital Support

Current title and employer: Director of Business Development North America, KEROX.

Length of time in the plumbing manufacturing industry: Since 2003, 17 years.

My proudest plumbing manufacturing career achievement: It was such a pleasure to join the KEROX team in early 2019, and I was able to jump right in and help finalize a big project with a large plumbing manufacturing customer. It involved a refresh of a shower valve system with the product launch at KBIS, where the valve system got a great response. My role is to act as a bridge between our customers in the United States and KEROX in Europe, dealing with sales issues and strategic development projects. So, on this project, I helped jump-start the project, push it along and, eventually, win the business.

I also enjoyed working for Neoperl in Europe, where I was instrumental in achieving high sales growth for a new product category – supply and kitchen pulldown hoses – by securing and managing business with key global original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and top brands in the U.S.

I started a career in the plumbing manufacturing industry because: Honestly, I loved the auto industry and thought I'd stay my entire career. I was enjoying my time living and working in Germany and then I met and married a Belgian! We moved to Brussels, which didn't have a lot of opportunities in the automotive industry. I opened up my job search to other industries and found Ideal Standard, the European arm of American Standard Companies.

My purchasing background in the automotive industry led me to help standardize and consolidate projects and purchasing across Ideal Standard's European plants – ultimately saving a



Belinda Wise

lot of money. It was exciting to learn about all the different parts and materials used in building faucets and to get to know the suppliers. I fell in love with the industry! I call myself a manufacturing “rat” because I grew up in factories and love them.

What is your current role in PMI? What do you hope to accomplish in this role? My company is committed to bringing innovation to the industry, so I channel useful PMI information and industry news back to KEROX's headquarters' team while also offering support to PMI and key OEM companies who are allied members of PMI. I'm currently figuring out where my expertise fits best within PMI and looking forward to finding the right committee to support.

I promote PMI within my company by: Sharing important news and changes to regulations and requirements that PMI provides. I engage with our internal certifications and development team, sharing relevant information and providing the connection back to fellow PMI members involved with our team.

Our PMI membership delivers the following benefits to my company: PMI is definitely a “one-stop shop” for

us as they provide up-to-date relevant industry information. While KEROX is based in Europe, we have key customers in North America relying on us to provide compliant products, so it is vital that we stay informed on requirements. PMI also is an outstanding source for current information on industry trends, forecasts and overall news. We've been especially grateful for how supportive and informative PMI has been during the pandemic. It's wonderful to see PMI playing the role of a central communications point on COVID-19 updates and how our industry is being affected. It's comforting to know that companies can reach out to PMI for help and support!

Best career advice I ever received: Look ‘em in the eyes, be honest, and stay true to yourself.

I'm currently reading: I just finished a great book, “The Storyteller's Secret,” by **Carmine Gallo**, who also wrote the bestseller, “Talk Like Ted.”

My favorite movie: My mother was born in the South, so I have a fondness for all things “southern.” My favorite movie is “Gone with the Wind.”

When I face a challenge at work (or in life): I take a pause and force myself to walk away as I have learned that I need to take a little time before jumping in. It's always better to thoroughly think through a situation, find options and focus on a positive approach to work through a challenge. My goal is to always work hard to achieve a little win in the process – by either learning something new, successfully resolving an open issue and, hopefully, making someone happy.

In my spare time, I enjoy: Sand and surf, biking, hiking, running, spending time with friends and family, enjoying good wine and playing with my two dogs – Buckeye and Scooby!

Industry Webinar Delivers Snapshot of ‘COVID Rollercoaster’

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Government officials from Texas and Maryland provided a snapshot of the issues their states and counties have been facing to reopen businesses, buildings and local economies to PMI members and others during an industry webinar on July 15.

Armando Walle, Texas state legislator and Harris County (Houston) COVID-19 recovery czar, and **Matthew Helminiak**, Maryland commissioner of labor and industry, discussed their observations and local recovery plans during a free webinar on “The COVID Rollercoaster: Navigating Your Business Through the Ups and Downs of State COVID Responses.”

The webinar was presented by PMI, IAPMO, the Alliance for Water Efficiency, the American Society of Plumbing Engineers, the Plumbing Contractors Association, Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association, and the United Association. PMI members can watch the webinar on PMI’s website (tinyurl.com/y5z33pcc).

Mixed conditions, uncertainty prove challenging in Harris County

Walle described the conditions in Harris County – the third largest county in Houston – as mixed, with challenges in employment and differing reopening guidance between federal, state and county governments. He noted that the construction and energy industries are the two top employers in the region, but with a COVID-19 positivity rate of those tested at about 14%, some businesses continue to struggle and unemployment remains high.

Even though residents and businesses have dealt skillfully with past disasters, the pandemic has left his community feeling unsteady. “Whether it’s a flood, hurricane or tropical storm, we’re ex-

perts in responding to natural disasters which have an end to them,” he said. “This is different. You can’t see it and there’s no end in sight for COVID-19 – unless there’s a vaccine.”

Guidance for reopening is listed on the Texas website and is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, Walle noted. Stay-at-home orders and county work-safe measures have helped curb the infection rate somewhat; however, residents are still losing jobs, getting their hours reduced and being evicted from their homes. Walle stated that he wants to help as many people as possible and hopes the federal government approves another round of stimulus for impacted businesses and the unemployed. “We need to save lives and livelihoods here,” he added.

Strong guidance, testing and business autonomy curb issues in Maryland

In contrast, Maryland is experiencing a lower COVID-19 positivity testing rate and lower unemployment, explained Helminiak during his presentation “Maryland’s Roadmap to Recovery.” He attributed both to strong, early guidance

and communication at the state level, consistent contact tracing and testing, and allowing businesses to decide whether or not to reopen.

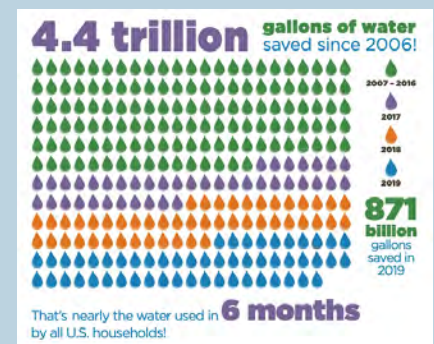
Early on, the state set up a special website, open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness, to provide COVID-19 guidance and best practices, based on CDC guidelines, to help businesses reopen. Helminiak noted that the construction industry had its own advisory group and developed a set of best practices, listed on the website, for preparing a jobsite, communicating with workers, planning social distancing measures and reducing touchpoints.

Because Maryland employs many state and federal government workers who stayed on the job during the initial shutdown, Helminiak said the unemployment rate has remained low. In addition, construction and manufacturing jobs were considered essential, so most in those industries continued working. “We left it up to businesses to decide whether or not to stay open,” he stated.

Another focal point of Maryland’s recovery plan, which kept infection rates low, was a robust contact tracing program and a consistent message to wear masks, Helminiak added.

WaterSense Saves 4.4 Trillion Gallons of Water!

The new WaterSense Accomplishments Report updates statistics showing how millions of Americans are saving water, energy and money by installing WaterSense products in homes and businesses. The latest figures shows that 4.4 trillion gallons of water have been saved since 2006, and 871 billion gallons were saved in 2019 alone. In 2019, there were 34,033 total WaterSense models in stores. Read more: tinyurl.com/y4nwg30



Experts Share Optimism for Home Demand, Sensor Fixtures

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Experts in construction and related fields have been sharing their optimism about bright spots in the economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Strong demand for homes, an uptick in public construction spending, and orders for innovative touchless products are a few factors positively impacting the plumbing manufacturing industry.

Construction and housing outlook remain upbeat

Several indicators, such as strong demand for homes early in 2020, suggests housing will lead the overall economic recovery, reported **Robert Dietz**, chief economist and senior vice president for economics and housing policy, National Association of Home Builders, during the PMI Virtual Legislative Forum on June 24. He noted that more people bought homes in the first four months of 2020 than during the first four months of 2019, and new home sales were running 2% higher in the first five months of 2020 than during the same period in 2019.

Dietz also said that home sizes will trend up as more people work from home and need home offices and gyms, fueling demand for building materials, including plumbing fixtures. “We’re positive about housing prospects but watch for a second wave of COVID to affect our outlook,” he added. PMI members can view Dietz’ presenta-

tion on the PMI website (tinyurl.com/y5fxg3ct).

The U.S. Census Bureau recently shared mixed news for the building industry. The agency reported that public construction spending increased 1.2% in May, with 4.7% growth over the past 12 months. However, private construction spending dropped 3.3% in May, falling for the third consecutive month to a 15-month low.

Growth in construction has resulted in a windfall for PMI member ICC-Evaluation Services (ICC-ES). **Shahin Moinian**, president of ICC-ES, said applications for its conformity assessment services rose by about 50% by the end of March – right when the pandemic was heating up. ICC-ES has been publishing more reports and listings and conducting a higher volume of virtual inspections, too. “We also anticipate that as construction continues to expand, we’ll see increased code books sales – from cities selling more building permits – and additional product evaluations as more clients revise and redesign products,” he added.

Infection control top of mind in post-COVID bath design

Some architects and designers are predicting that bath designs with touchless fixtures will become more popular in homes after the pandemic.

For example, **Kerrie Kelly**, a Zillow design expert, foresees products that help reduce the spread of bacteria and offer smart-home features taking a lead role in bathrooms, according to a recent AARP article. Self-cleaning toilets and hands-free faucets are among those products.

The demand for touchless fixtures has been delivering strong results for several PMI members. **Tom Hubbard**, chief marketing officer for PMI member Symmons Industries, Inc., said since the pandemic started, his company is selling touchless faucets as fast as they can make them. “We’ll likely sell five to 10 times more sensor faucets this year than last year. This is where the world’s going,” he added. Hubbard noted that the demand has been fueled by the commercial and office building segment, as well as by schools making the switch from traditional to hands-free faucets.

PMI member Sloan Valve Company has been experiencing a similar situation. Sloan’s line of touch-free products, including solar-powered faucets, soap dispensers and flushometers, will be used in Chicago’s new Fulton East office and retail building, according to a June PHCP Pros article. The building was designed as the country’s first to specifically focus on employee health, safety and wellness in the post-pandemic business environment.

Kohler Co., a PMI member, also has reported a boost in sales of touchless bath fixtures, saying its intelligent toilet sales to residential customers in the first two weeks of March were up eight times over the same period in 2019, according to an article on theinformation.com. Kohler’s intelligent toilets incorporate bidets and toilet seats that open and close automatically.

“Touchless restrooms are here to stay,” stated **Jon Dommiss**, director of strategy and corporate development for PMI member Bradley Corp., in a recent Bradley news release. The release also discussed Bradley’s Healthy Hand Washing Survey (tinyurl.com/yygobhhq), which found that 91% of Americans believe it’s important to outfit public restrooms with touchless fixtures.



Members First: PMI Education Coordinator Sets Priorities

By Judy Wohlt and Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Stephanie Lass has jumped into the deep end of the PMI pool, immersing herself in learning everything she can about members' educational needs. As PMI's new education coordinator, Lass said she's looking forward to applying her association experience in creating and managing live webinars and online content to help develop and support PMI's educational offerings.

Listening to PMI Tech Talks and Advocacy/Government Affairs Committee calls and studying the results of PMI's 2019 membership needs assessment have helped her better understand the types of educational topics and formats members are seeking, she said. Topping her priority list is helping with the virtual PMI20 Manufacturing Success Conference in November.

Lass said she plans to support growing PMI's education program with more live webinars like the recent PMI Virtual Legislative Forum and with events and online courses. For example, she plans to work with PMI Technical Director **Matt Sigler** to examine ways to potentially upgrade courses on standards, regulations and codes.

Before joining PMI, Lass worked as the education administrator for the Association Management Center and the Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association,



PMI Education Coordinator Stephanie Lass

where she developed online course content and produced monthly online webinars. One of her recent accomplishments involved creating a recertification course for pharmacists, managing everything from speakers to content reviews to building the online course in the association's education portal.

Virtual learning options likely to rise as COVID lingers

As the coronavirus crisis lingers and many PMI members continue working remotely, PMI is considering offering more virtual educational opportunities, Lass said. However, there will always be a need for live events because people enjoy networking and the camaraderie they develop through face-to-face

interactions. "The pandemic has forced people to get used to the new educational environment and it has introduced how useful virtual education can be," she added.

As an example, Lass focused on the June PMI Virtual Legislative Forum, which delivered a strong mix of presenters from various backgrounds with plenty of visuals highlighting some of the latest industry trends and market data. "People are recognizing that we can do a lot with these webinar formats to offer some great benefits," she said.

Partnerships could help diversify courses

Drawing from her past association experience with building collaborative relationships, Lass said she would like to explore potential industry partnerships to diversify and expand educational options for PMI's members.

She's ready to put her best foot forward to serve PMI and its members. "Something that I picked up early in my career is the concept of good, better and best. Even if something is good, there's always a way to make it better, and you can always be striving to make it the best that it can be. I'm always trying to continually improve processes and release the highest quality product that I can," Lass said.

PMI Applauds House Bill Supporting 2021 WaterSense Funding

PMI expressed its appreciation to the House Appropriations Committee, which approved a fiscal year 2021 funding bill on July 10 that includes language supporting the EPA's WaterSense program and directs the agency to continue funding the program at the enacted levels.

PMI CEO/Executive Director **Kerry Stackpole** thanked committee chair **Nita M. Lowey** (D-N.Y.) and ranking member **Kay Granger** (R-Texas), as well as House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies chair **Betty McCollum** (D-Minn.) and ranking member **David Joyce** (R-Ohio), for their continued bipartisan support

of this successful water-savings program vital to consumers, manufacturers, states, cities and utilities. "WaterSense has proven to be a model for an effective public-private partnership program," Stackpole said. "Toilets, showerheads, bathroom faucets and other products bearing the WaterSense label remain popular with consumers."

Administered by the EPA, WaterSense is a voluntary, consumer product program that promotes water efficiency. Products bearing the WaterSense label meet high performance standards while using at least 20 percent less water than products meeting federal water-efficiency standards. ([tinyurl.com/y9mpu92f](https://www.epa.gov/watersense))

PMI20: Moving from San Diego to a Screen Near You

The PMI20 Manufacturing Success Conference, Nov. 10-12, promises to be a digital experience filled with three days of member-focused, content-rich insight. And what an event it is going to be!

A top-shelf keynote speaker is coming your way, along with compelling presenters on current topics, innovative networking opportunities, and tantalizing sponsorship options. You can look forward to a volume and quality of

learning true to PMI's mission, delivered through the latest virtual technology!

You will definitely want to participate in this exciting online experience – a special event that will inform, engage and enlighten you while keeping you safe.

With PMI20 as close as your computer screen, join the many members and guests expected to participate virtually over the three-day program. You will

enjoy the convenience of devoting a few hours each day to PMI20 learning and networking while staying on top of your job responsibilities.

PMI will stay true to our vision – safe, responsible plumbing – always – while giving it new meaning to PMI20 during these challenging times.

Mark your calendar for PMI20 today!



Bob Neff Named to PMI Board of Directors

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Bob Neff of Delta Faucet Company has joined the PMI Board of Directors.

An active PMI member since 2016 and co-chair of PMI's Technical Committee since 2019, Neff is the product compliance and regulatory manager at Delta Faucet Company. In this role at Delta, he leads the compliance and regulatory team at Delta in new product development and sustainment.

As the co-chair of PMI's Technical Committee, Neff plays a key role among a group of industry technical experts who monitor proposed changes to local, state, national and international plumbing codes and standards, including "green" codes to foster greater sustainability. "Our group relies on collaboration and feedback from PMI members to guide our activities," he said. "It's amazing how much activity there is to keep up with and how quickly things move."

Having started his career at Delta as a lab technician in 2012, Neff said this personal perspective will complement other board members who come mostly

from engineering backgrounds. Lab testing validates whether or not plumbing products meet codes and standards. A self-described millennial, Neff said his point of view will help the board to more thoroughly understand the values and contributions younger workers bring into the workplace.

A graduate of Purdue University with a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering technology, Neff said he is looking forward to building bridges between PMI and industry allies. For example, he recalls introducing himself at a town hall event in Indianapolis to **Dave Yanchulis**, director of the Office of Technical and Information Services at the U.S. Access Board, the federal agency that develops and maintains accessibility guidelines and standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other laws.



Bob Neff (right) at the PMI19 Manufacturing Success Conference with Patrick Gurian, Ph.D., associate professor, civil, architectural and environmental engineering, Drexel University (left)

This introduction led to Yanchulis coming to St. Pete's Beach, Fla., to present at the PMI19 Manufacturing Success Conference and opened the door to PMI members having the opportunity to provide feedback on the ADA Standards' chapter on plumbing elements and facilities. "His presentation at the conference was very interesting and helpful," Neff stated.

The Plumbing Manufacturing Story (Contd.)

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and members of the NSF International Joint Committee on Drinking Water Additives - System Components that ultimately delivered real value for plumbing product manufacturers, consumers and kids. The new NSF/ANSI/CAN 61 standard imposes a lead test statistic on endpoint devices under which the Q value may not exceed 1 microgram (1 µg) when normalized for the 1 liter (0.26 gal) first draw sample. The new NSF 61 standard goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2024.

It's widely known California takes pride in being on the leading edge. Assemblymember **Chris Holden** pushed California to that edge, introducing

Assembly Bill 2060, which sought to place the newly proposed NSF/ANSI/CAN 61 standard into law effective Jan. 1, 2021 – a full three years before the new NSF 61 standard is set to actually take effect. The goal is to reduce the risk to children from lead in potable water sources in childcare centers and schools across California. With the successful collaboration on the new NSF 61 standard behind us, PMI launched a fresh effort to work with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and the California Environmental Working Group (EWG), both sponsors of the bill, and Assemblymember Holden, the author, to divine a workable solution to deliver endpoint devices meeting the new Q

value of 1 µg in some proportion over three years culminating in a final Jan. 1, 2024 deadline.

Paul Harvey, the controversial conservative radio show host, delighted his listeners by sharing the historical backstories of events and people both in and out of the news. His signature line "and now you know the rest of the story" signaled the end of his daily broadcast. While the story of NSF/ANSI/CAN 61 and California AB 2060 is still being written, the backstory here is that PMI members continue providing products to help families stay safe and healthy in times of peril and peace. That's a story that deserves telling.

Preserving Diversity Efforts Amid Pandemic Can Bring Rewards

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Building a diverse workforce and recruiting more women during the pandemic could help plumbing manufacturers enhance their performance. New research shows that companies maintaining their diversity and inclusion efforts now will be rewarded later with new levels of resilience, revitalization and inspiration – all necessary to recover from the economic and operational challenges caused by COVID-19.



PMI members, such as Viega, have recognized the benefits of promoting a diverse workforce and hiring more women. Viega recently highlighted its efforts in a series of blog articles, one of which features **Kim Smith** (tinyurl.com/yycdgagc), supervisor of the molding department of Viega's plant in McPherson, Kan., and another featuring **Tricia Musgrave** (tinyurl.com/yvf4dg3s), Viega's director of technical marketing.

Smith said Viega focuses on training and promoting workers into positions of greater responsibility and noted that as a woman, she has felt supported throughout her career there. Musgrave noted that Viega has similar values as her – appreciating the value of hard work and understanding the importance of helping others.

Skills to drive innovation, strong performance

Which skills and strengths will help companies successfully perform during and after the pandemic? Enhanced problem-solving skills and agility are more important than ever as businesses respond to challenges brought on by COVID-19 – from disrupted supply chains to new customer product needs and more employees working from home. These skills will be stronger in companies that embrace diversity, according to a recent article from McKinsey and Company titled “Diversity Still Matters.” (tinyurl.com/ybtqyuyu)

Other critical areas for strong company performance during and after the pandemic are the ability to keep top talent, improve decision making, boost customer insight and innovation, and sustain employee motivation and job satisfaction. McKinsey's article stated that businesses keeping their commitment to diversity and inclusion can make significant progress in these areas, ultimately resulting in stronger business performance. For example, bringing workers together with varying perspectives increases the chances that more creative solutions will emerge.

A study from Boston Consulting Group (tinyurl.com/y4ddteat) showed that companies with more diverse management teams have 19% higher revenues because of innovation. This is particularly crucial for industries, such as plumbing manufacturing, where innovation stimulates growth.

Read More Online

Read this article and others on our PMI@Work blog: safep plumbing.org/communications/pmiblog

PMI@Work explores efforts to develop the manufacturing workforce for the future, particularly among PMI members. If you'd like to submit a post or content for consideration, contact PMI communications team member **Ray Valek** at ray@valekco.com.

Another McKinsey report, “Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters,” (tinyurl.com/ybyy47sc) reinforces the business case showing that diversity, inclusion and performance are interwoven. It discusses how research proves that diverse companies are more likely to outperform their industry peers.

Continued online at tinyurl.com/y3aaq5fb

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