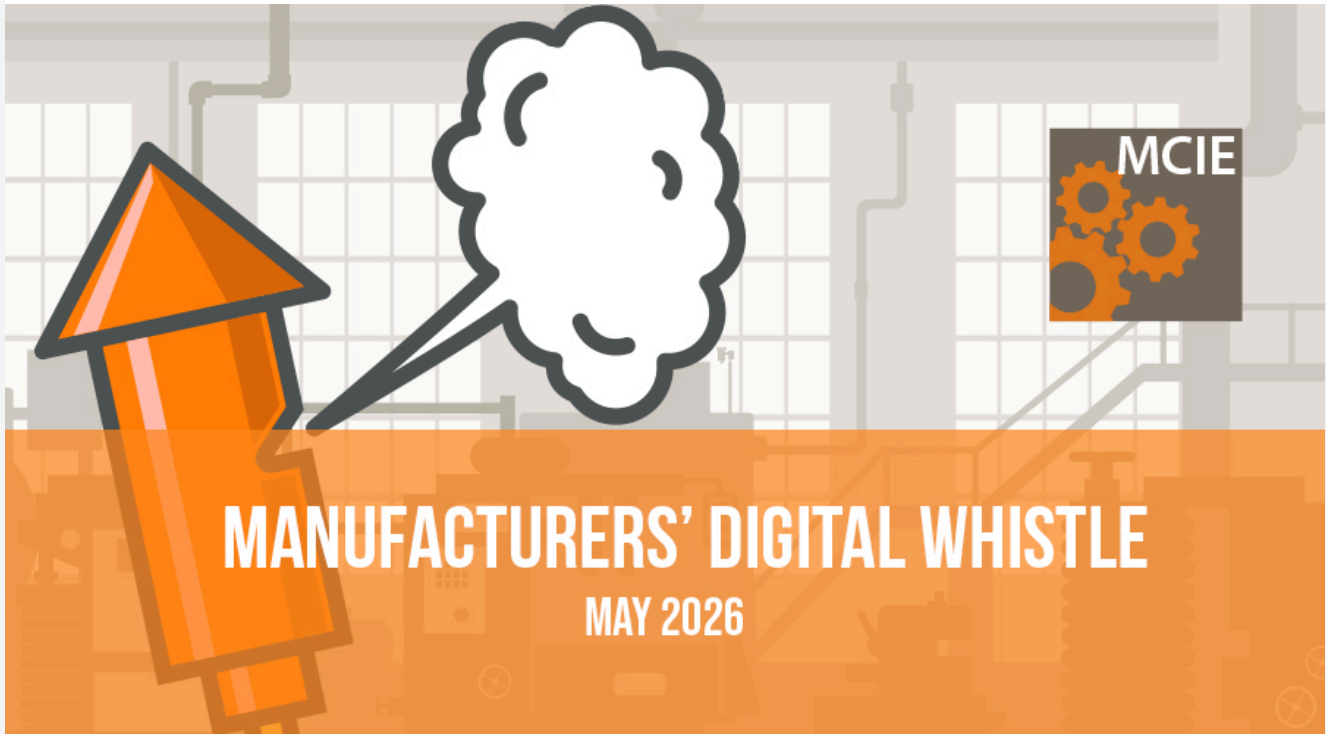


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Is a Manufacturing Assessment or Roadmap Right for You?



Every manufacturer has three categories of problems.

- **There are the things you know:** the late shipments, the bottlenecks, the supplier delays, the machine that keeps sitting idle, the improvement project that has been on the list too long.
- **There are the things you know you do not know:** whether automation would help, whether AI is worth exploring, whether funding may be available, whether the business is ready to expand, whether a process can scale, whether the team is prepared for a major jump in orders.
- **And then there are the things you do not yet know you do not know:** the hidden gap behind the obvious symptom, the process weakness that will only show up when sales increase, the tribal knowledge concentrated in one or two people, the KPI that is not being measured, the workflow issue that everyone works around but no one has fully named.

The Manufacturing Modernization Assessments program was designed to help Inland Empire manufacturers take a closer look at all three.

Through the Manufacturers' Council of the Inland Empire, eligible manufacturers can work with experienced consultants who walk the floor, review key indicators, ask practical questions, and help identify gaps between the company's current state and where leadership wants the business to go. From there, a roadmap can help translate those findings into initiatives the company can act on.

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Lance Hastings Brings a Clear-Eyed Message to MCIE Innovation Awards



When Lance Hastings arrived at the Manufacturers' Council of the Inland Empire's Innovation Awards, he brought both encouragement and realism.

As President of the California Manufacturers & Technology Association, Hastings came to celebrate the companies moving Inland Empire manufacturing forward. But he also offered a candid assessment of the environment manufacturers are operating in today.

"The present state of manufacturing is good, not great," Hastings said. "Unfortunately, I've been saying that same phrase for the last several years now because we have so many headwinds facing manufacturing."

Those headwinds include the high cost of energy, high cost of land, and workforce challenges that continue to shape the future of California manufacturing. Yet Hastings' message was not one of pessimism. Instead, he emphasized the importance of focusing on the positives in manufacturing and looking ahead to the changes needed to ensure a successful future.

That made his appearance especially fitting for MCIE's Innovation Awards, an evening dedicated to recognizing manufacturers that are adapting, investing, problem-solving, and finding new ways to compete.

Hastings also highlighted the policy work CMTA is pursuing to help turn some of those headwinds into tailwinds. One priority is a proposed manufacturer's investment credit, which would support small, medium, and large manufacturers investing in new capital. While similar legislation has faced fiscal challenges in Sacramento, Hastings said CMTA continues to press the issue and has engaged gubernatorial candidates on the importance of supporting manufacturing investment. For manufacturers, Hastings said one of the most important ways to help is to keep telling their stories.

“All of our stories are individual and unique,” he said. “If we aggregate those stories, it really stresses the importance of manufacturing local.”

That message resonated strongly in the Inland Empire, a region Hastings described as a key geographic area for California manufacturing.

“If things are going well here in the Inland Empire,” Hastings said, “they should be going well for the rest of the state.”

The evening also gave Hastings a chance to spotlight the scale and ingenuity of California manufacturing. More than 1.2 million Californians go to work every day in the sector, and innovations such as Lockheed Martin’s X-59 aircraft continue to show the state’s ability to build technologies with global impact.

His closing message was simple and fitting for the night: “Keep on making things.” For MCIE, the Innovation Awards were a celebration of that charge—and of the manufacturers whose work continues to shape the region’s economy, workforce, and future.

Meet Alfonso Aramburo - Helping Manufacturers Turn Gaps Into Roadmaps



Manufacturers are rarely short on ideas.

There may be a wish list on the owner’s desk, a half-finished improvement project in the plant, a process change that never fully stuck, a bottleneck everyone knows about, or a growth

opportunity that is exciting but also exposing the limits of the current operation.

The challenge is knowing where to start.

That's where the MCIE Manufacturing Modernization Assessments program comes in. Through the Manufacturers' Council of the Inland Empire, regional manufacturers have access to experienced consultants who can walk the floor, review key performance indicators, listen to leadership, and help identify practical opportunities for improvement.

Our lead consultant, working with MCIE manufacturers through the program, is Alfonso Aramburo, a manufacturing and operations professional with more than 18 years of experience helping companies find and close operational gaps.

Alfonso is a mechatronics engineer with a master's degree in business and certifications in lean manufacturing, Six Sigma Black Belt, project management, and supply chain management. His background includes work as a continuous improvement engineer, plant manager, general manager, and VP of Operations.

Alfonso has worked with lower- and middle-market manufacturers, family-owned businesses, companies after acquisition, high-volume environments, high-mix custom production, sourcing, automotive projects, and complex manufacturing operations.

His specialty is straightforward: production gaps.

"Anything where somebody touches a product or a part, that's been my specialty," Alfonso says. "The more tailored or custom the part or product is, the more complex the manufacturing, that's where I've specialized."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS LIMITED TIME OPPORTUNITY VISIT:

<https://mfgcouncilie.com/automation>

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Agile Manufacturing, Part 2: Is Your Operation Ready to Flex?



In manufacturing, growth is a good problem - but it is still a problem.

A sudden increase in orders can expose weaknesses that were easier to manage at a lower volume. A new customer can strain an already busy production schedule. A supplier delay can reveal how dependent the operation is on one part, one process, or one key employee. A new piece of equipment can increase capacity in one area while creating bottlenecks somewhere else. That is where the idea of Agile becomes useful.

In last month's article, we discussed how Lean Manufacturing principles can extend beyond the production floor into the business processes that support the entire company. Agile is closely related. It is not about moving fast for the sake of moving fast. It is about building a company that can respond to change, test improvements, adjust priorities, and keep moving without losing control of the operation.

For manufacturers, **Agile starts with a simple question:**

Can your operation flex?

- Can it handle more orders without chaos?
- Can it absorb a supplier delay without shutting down a line?
- Can it train new people fast enough to support growth?
- Can it maintain quality when volume increases?
- Can it adapt when revenue softens?
- Can leadership see the right information soon enough to make a good decision?

Those questions are especially important for small and mid-sized manufacturers. Larger companies may have deeper management teams, more specialized departments, and more formal systems.

Smaller manufacturers often rely on fewer people wearing more hats. That can make them resourceful and entrepreneurial, **but it can also create hidden risks.**

[READ MORE](#)

Board Member Feature: Wallace “Wally” Brithinee, Board President, Manufacturers’ Council of the Inland Empire



For Wallace “Wally” Brithinee, building things has been a lifelong theme.

He has built companies, helped build institutions, supported the development of technical standards, and, in recent years, helped build the Manufacturers’ Council of the Inland Empire into a stronger regional voice for industry.

As Board President of MCIE, Wally brings decades of experience as a manufacturer, entrepreneur, technical problem-solver, and civic-minded industry advocate. His perspective is rooted in the practical realities of running companies: developing talent, solving operational problems, earning customer trust, adapting to changing technology, and finding ways for manufacturers to do together what no single company can easily do alone.

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Donate Now for Scholarships

The Manufacturers' Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is asking for your support to help fund scholarships for students pursuing industry certifications in manufacturing and technical trades. Your donation equips local talent with the skills employers urgently need, strengthens the regional workforce, and creates life-changing career opportunities.

A contribution today delivers immediate impact—helping students succeed and ensuring a stronger future for Inland Empire manufacturing.

Donate Now

**Last Call for June 1st Event.
Registration closes May 29th!**

[Register to Play Now!](#)



When: June 1, 2026

Shotgun Start: 8:30 AM

Where: Bear Valley Country Club, Victorville, CA

Register here: <https://3rdgolfeventmcie.rsvpify.com>

Why play?

Every swing supports the future of our industry.

A portion of each registration directly funds student scholarships for careers in manufacturing through:

- Technical trade schools
- Apprenticeships
- Career pathway programs

This is more than a great day of golf — it's an opportunity to invest in the workforce that keeps manufacturing strong. Bring your team together, enjoy unforgettable on-course experiences like the Golf Cannon, and help fuel the next generation of talent.

Lock in your foursome and sponsorship package now.

Secure your spot. Support students. Be part of something bigger than the game.

For questions, contact Sarah Johnson at sjohnson@mfgcouncilie.com

Thank You to Our Wonderful Sponsors:



WATCH OUR EVENTS PAGE FOR UPCOMING TOURS [Events – MCIE](#)

LET US TOUR YOUR PLANT! Contact Debbie at dsmith@mfgcouncilie.com

Economy and Regulations:

- (May 8) – In April, the US economy increased 115,000 jobs. The unemployment rate was flat at 4.3% compared to the month prior. Job gains occurred in Healthcare, Transportation, Retail, and Warehousing. Federal employment edged downward in the last month. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- (May 22) – In April, the California economy lost 3,300 jobs. The unemployment rate was flat at 5.3% compared to the month prior. Job gains occurred in Healthcare and Utilities. Information, Publishing, and Computing edged downward in the last month. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- (May 12) – The Federal Open Markets Committee will meet again in June. Most expect the Federal Reserve to keep the federal funds rate at current levels, though further cuts may occur later in the year. At their meeting on January 28 they agreed that inflation's approach to 2% normal levels could be slow and uneven, leaving the Federal Overnight Rate in the targeted range to between 3.5% and 3.75%. CPI inflation increased to 3.8% in April, with energy costs driving the increase in addition to services and housing, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics. (Federal Reserve, Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- (May 13) – By June 1, 2026, all manufacturing companies that qualify as “producers” with more than \$1 million in annual revenue must register under California’s SB 54 packaging law. Unless otherwise exempt under the law, all entities producing, selling, and/or placing single-use packaging (all material types) or plastic food service ware in California are likely required to register. Importantly, even entities that do not manufacture or use consumer-facing packaging may have compliance obligations for business-to-business and transport packaging. (CMTA)

Ready to make a difference?

Join the Manufacturers’ Council – Be Part of the Movement Shaping the Future of Manufacturing in the Inland Empire

Become a Member Today at <https://mfgcouncilie.com/membership>

Since 2005, the Manufacturers’ Council of the Inland Empire (MCIE) has supported a thriving manufacturing economy by securing over \$50 million in workforce training, production innovation, and industry growth.

With nearly 95,000 manufacturing jobs in our region and continued growth projected in 2026, MCIE is committed to building a skilled, sustainable workforce and shifting public perception about the importance of manufacturing in our community.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, MCIE connects manufacturers with education, workforce programs, and regional resources, while promoting career pathways for the next generation of talent. Now is the time to get involved. Become a member and help drive real impact.

[READ MORE](#)

Sponsorship Opportunities

We invite you to consider partnering with us as a **Yearly Sponsor** for our upcoming events and initiatives for the year.

The MCIE is proud to host a variety of impactful events that bring together business leaders, community members, and changemakers across the region. Sponsorship provides a unique opportunity to:

- Build brand awareness
- Connect with targeted audiences
- Align with meaningful causes and business development efforts
- Gain year-round visibility across digital and in-person platforms

Upcoming 2026 Opportunities Include: Visit the MCIE events page here for all events.

[Events – MCIE](#)

Included are sponsorship packages to fit a range of goals and budgets—including early visibility opportunities for companies who commit now.

For questions and to move forward with sponsorship, please contact Sarah Johnson, Events Operations Director at sjohnson@mfgcouncilie.com | (253) 880-2333

Thank you for your continued support of our mission—we look forward to collaborating with you in the year ahead.

Have a profitable June!

Molly

Molly Burgess

Executive Director

mburgess@mfgcouncilie.com

Cell: 909.965.6089

Office: 909.474.7120

[Website](#) | [Social Media & News](#)



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