



# Growing Montana's Economy by Helping Manufacturers Succeed

*Growth, Innovation & Profit Enhancement*

*Since 1996*

*November 2025*



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# What is Manufacturing?

Manufacturing is when you add value to something physical, that was grown, mined, or previously manufactured.



↓  
Manufacturing

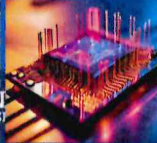
Value Added Ag



Value Added Forestry



Value Added Mining



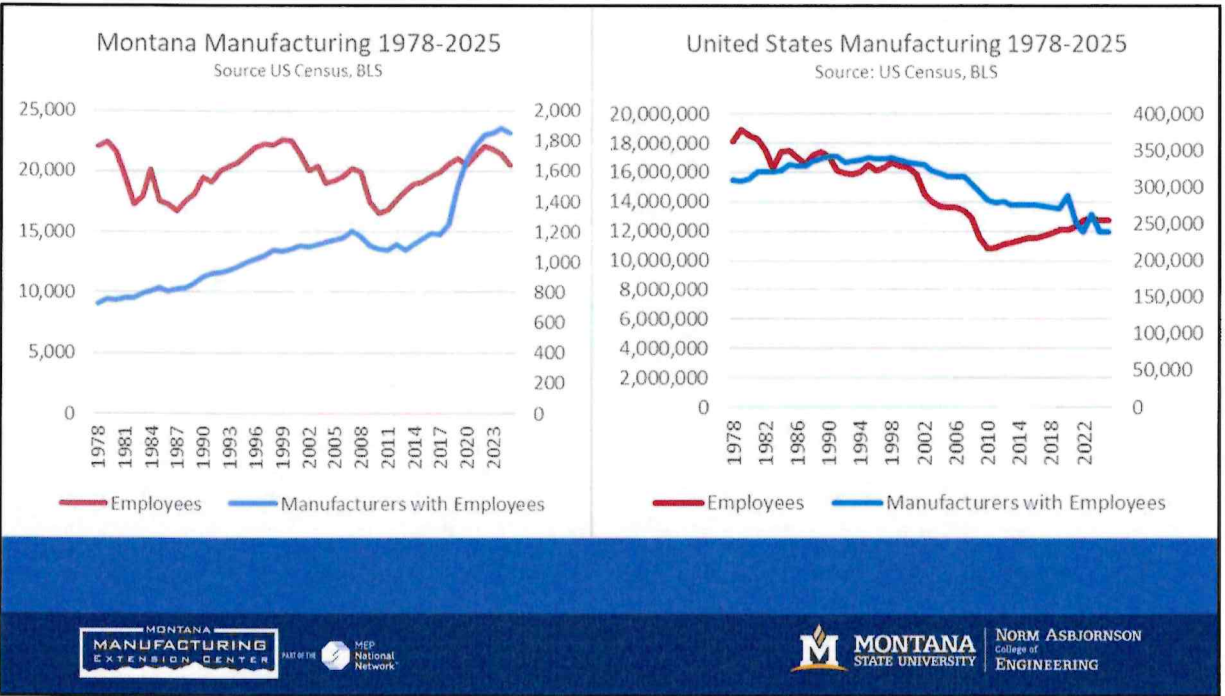
## Why Is Manufacturing Important?

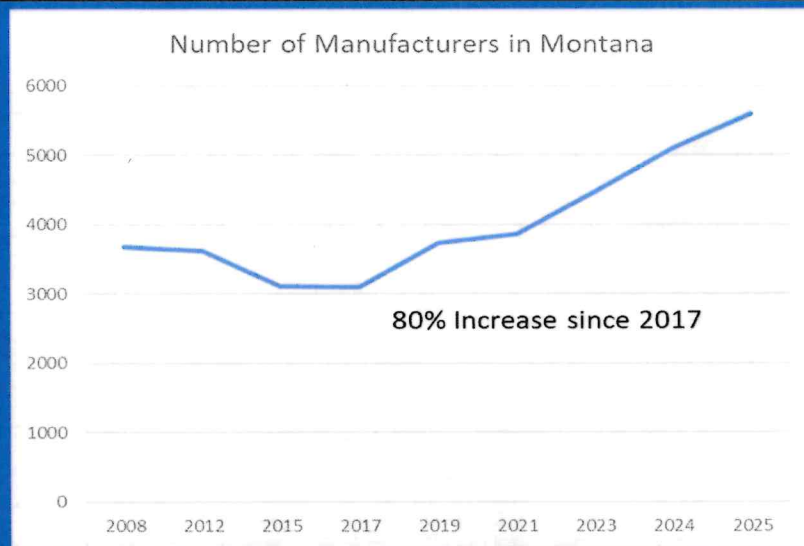
- According to UM Bureau of Business and Economic Development...In Montana, every manufacturing job creates 2.63 additional non-manufacturing jobs in the community.



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Source: D&B Hoovers, Includes sole proprietor manufacturers

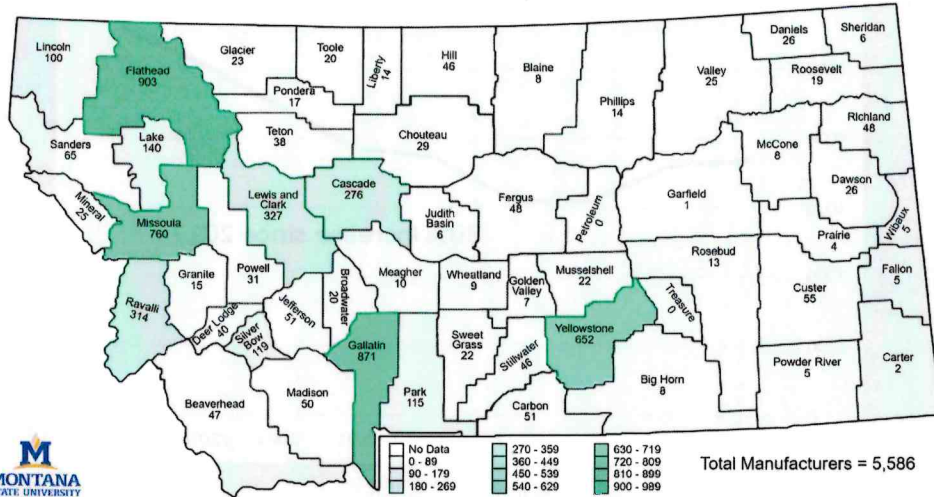


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## Manufacturers in Montana 2025



The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach



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## Background

- Automation has been around since manufacturing began.
- AI is a newer form of automation.
- Jobs are made up of numerous tasks.
- Tasks are frequently automated.
- Jobs are rarely automated.



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## Montana Manufacturers Top Concerns

2025 Montana manufacturers top concerns:

1. Attracting and retaining workforce to meet customer demands
  2. Ongoing continuous improvement to remain competitive
  3. Identifying growth opportunities to grow their company
- Automation can be a partial solution for concerns 1 and 2
  - AI can be a partial solution for concern 3



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## Reasons to Implement Automation

Reasons for automating a task

1. Safety – Employees are getting injured doing this task
2. Employee Turnover – Employees do not like completing these tasks
3. Quality Improvement – Customers rejecting product – manual inspection not accurate enough
4. Increased Productivity – Company unable to keep up with customer demand due to manual processes
5. Increased Profitability – Company cannot compete with competitors' pricing due to manual processes

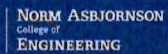
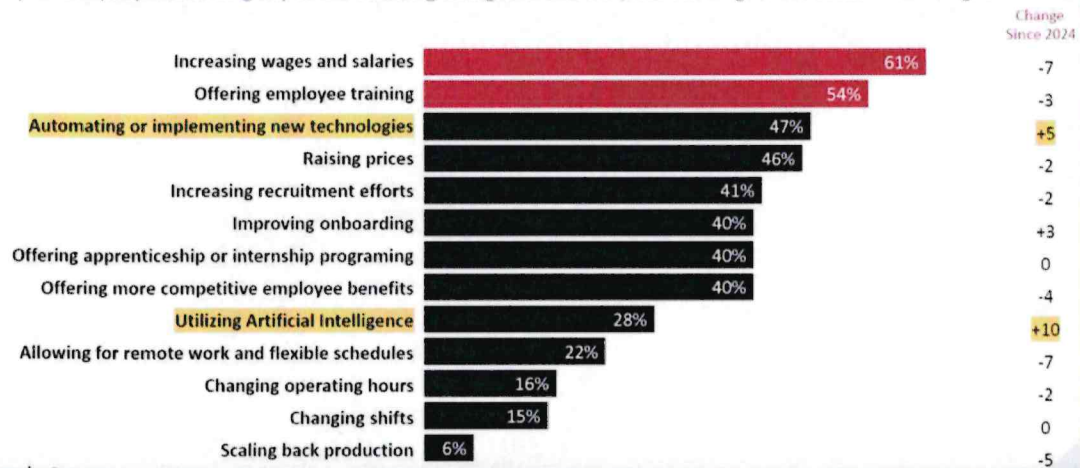


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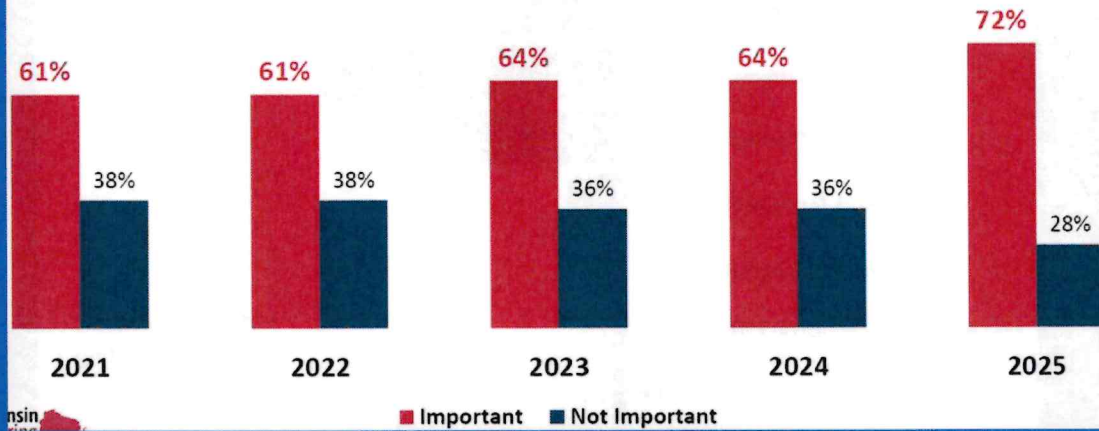
## From the 2025 Wisconsin Manufacturing Report

"Is your company considering any of the following changes to address potential long-term workforce challenges?"



## From the 2025 Wisconsin Manufacturing Report

"Generally speaking, how important do you think automation will be to your company's future?"



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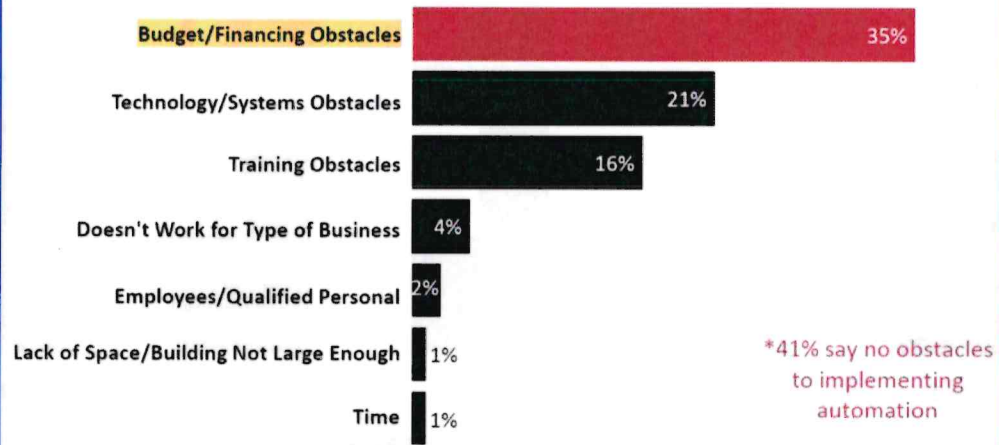


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## From the 2025 Wisconsin Manufacturing Report

"Are there any obstacles to implementing automation at your company?"



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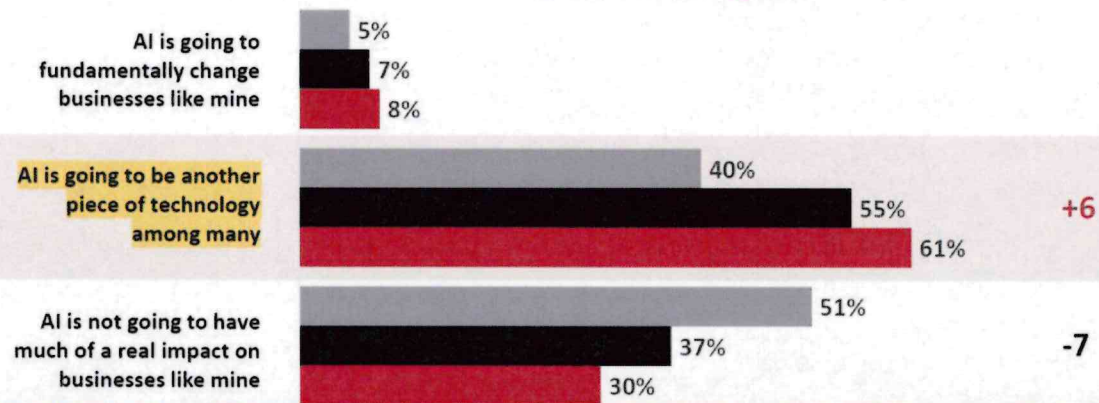
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## From the 2025 Wisconsin Manufacturing Report

"Thinking about the next few years, which ONE of the following viewpoints on the impacts of artificial intelligence, or AI, on businesses like yours do you agree with more?"

■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025



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## Conclusions

- Montana manufacturers have been implementing automation since manufacturing began.
- We have seen very little loss in the number of manufacturing jobs since 1978 despite the automation that has occurred. Output has significantly increased since 1978.
- When automation is implemented, it is extremely rare for companies to lay off employees. They are often upskilled and moved to other open positions.
- Montana manufacturers are already unable to fill open positions and expecting significant worker shortages in the future.
- MMEC believes there will be little to no loss in manufacturing jobs in the next 5-10 years due to automation including AI.



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