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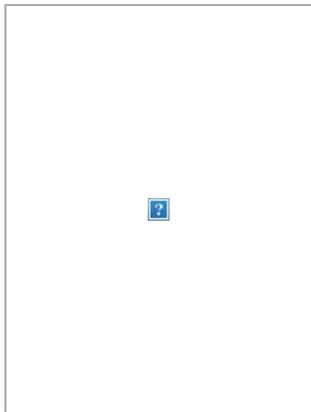
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Viewpoint: American manufacturing lacks flexibility, motivation

By Allen Polk Hemphill

One of the main points of national discussion is that jobs are being "outsourced" overseas. The most financially successful company in the world, Apple Computer, once bragged that their computers were "Made in America."



No more.

The New York Times sums up the current jobs situation by telling the story of a dinner in which President Obama asked Steve Jobs why the jobs were going overseas, and Steve replied, "They are not coming back." The article explains the reason in brief but superb detail:

"One former executive described how the company relied upon a Chinese factory to revamp iPhone manufacturing just weeks before the device was due on shelves. Apple had redesigned the iPhone's screen at the last minute, forcing an assembly line overhaul. New screens began arriving

at the plant near midnight.

A foreman immediately roused 8,000 workers inside the company's dormitories, according to the executive. Each employee was given a biscuit and a cup of tea, guided to a workstation and within half an hour started a 12-hour shift fitting glass screens into beveled frames. Within 96 hours, the plant was producing over 10,000 iPhones a day.

"The speed and flexibility is breathtaking," the executive said. "There's no American plant that can match that."

That is a summation of the problem. It is not just the cost, because as cheap as the foreign labor is, Americans are many times more productive. They are simply not as flexible or motivated. Unions would not permit such flexibility or motivation..

We are capable of responding as quickly as any workforce on the planet. Do you think a battalion of Marines would respond as quickly? You bet! As would active members of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Our military would not shrink. Only our soft civilian workforce would shrink — and yet they too responded in World War II.

We have grown soft, led by unions and supported by lawyers who have turned this entitlement society into a society of wimps!

The competition with Japanese automakers is instructive. In 1970 it took Toyota four hours to change the die in a 1,000-ton stamping machine from a left fender to a right fender. They set about to first reach an hour and a half — which they achieved in six months — and then three minutes, which they accomplished in 18 months. Detroit, which was even more inefficient, created a competition and almost matched the Japanese or at least came close enough to seriously compete.

But we can't compete with current attitudes and union rules.

Meanwhile, although there is a federal requirement that U.S. firms be used for improving infrastructure, right here in California a Chinese firm has been hired

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to build a \$7-billion bridge between San Francisco and Oakland. State officials said they could not find enough qualified welders.

We are moving in the opposite direction. A Chicago policeman has filed for overtime for receiving emails on off-hours. To avoid European Union potential rules, VW has turned off employee email servers after hours. Brazil is considering such rules.

I doubt that China is.

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