

What's Happening in America

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Let's take a look at what's happening in America. We're a changing society, a changing workforce. Thirty-two percent of companies in the United States are downsizing. We have the lowest unemployment rate in history. Average pay is going down because service sectors are not paying the wages that engineers, salesmen, and marketing people make. Of businesses in America, 11.3% are outsourcing products to other countries and more manufacturing jobs are on their way out every day. Another 9.4% of the companies are closing complete business units. On top of all that, only 5.7% of all American companies are involved in a total quality management program. As companies restructure and acquire new business, pressure increases on the people in the nation's work force.

Do you realize that there is more computer power in a \$19 watch from Wal-Mart than there was in the entire world in 1960? By late 1960 there were 50,000 computers. Now, there are 50,000 going on-line daily. That is what's happening in America. Many of you remember the fifties, when 50% of Americans were involved in agriculture. That figure is down to 3% today. In the decade ending in the 1960s, 50% of Americans were involved in building things and manufacturing with their hands. That figure is now only 12%. In 1984, there were about 20,000 robots in our country. Today, there are 32 million. What does a robot do? It puts people out of work, but did you know that there's a good side of a robot? It is there every day and it doesn't talk back. In the 1980s there were 480,000 steel workers in America. Today there are 180,000 and they are producing more steel than they did when they had nearly half a million workers. This is what is happening in technology.

Do you love to sit in front of a fireplace? Have you heard of the microwave fireplace that has just been invented? You can sit in front of it all night in just 8 minutes. Have you ever been in a manufacturing plant? Talk about automation. Do you know what the plant of the future is going to look like? It is going to be run by a man and a dog. The man will be there to feed the dog and the dog will be there to see that the man touches absolutely nothing. That's the future of America.

Did you know Zebco is the last major fishing tackle company left in America? We build more fishing reels in Tulsa, Oklahoma, than are built in any other country in the world. We want to keep production here, but it gets tougher to compete with

foreign production every day. Of the 18 million fishing rods sold in the United States each year, less than 1 million were built in America. While other companies continue to take manufacturing overseas, we have been bringing jobs back. Nearly 300 jobs were brought back since 1991 by making rods here again. MotorGuide trolling motors and a variety of other products were brought back too.

Many of the companies that are no longer in business here today are gone because they failed to structure a value system within their own walls to help them survive the hard times. Not at Zebco. We structured our company more than 25 years ago around 3 basic principles that we still follow every business day.

The first is quality. The goal is quality in everything we do, from creating new products, to supplying the customer, to answering the phones, to sweeping the floor. The second is service. We strive to serve the customer better than anyone else. Then we have the "WOW!" effect that we want. The third is people. Though many companies say it, we truly believe our people are our most important asset. People have to trust their management for a company to be at its best. You have to be at your best if you want to be able to successfully compete.

Our company, just like all the different companies and organizations that each of you represent here today, is part of an industry that faces many challenges, many changes in the years ahead. We can't do things tomorrow as we did them today, and certainly not like we did them yesterday. If we try, we won't survive long. To get someone to choose fishing over some other activity, we're up against a lot of tough competition. And that competition doesn't have to mean golfing, walking, or whatever. It can be simply staying home and watching TV or working in the yard.

Plus, the American household is changing. Lots of divorces, lots of single parent families out there today. Who's going to take those kids fishing when they want to go? Statistics reveal that even if a kid starts fishing before the age of 12, chances are only 1 out of 10 that he or she will ever take up the sport. We, Zebco, see the industry statistics. We know that those who do fish are going more often and are spending more money on their pastime. But we also know that the total number of anglers is stable at best, and more realistically, is on a gradual decline.

We have always been a company to give back to this industry in which we make our living. Zebco and our sister Brunswick companies started the FishAmerica Foundation and have contributed nearly \$2 million to it over the past 20 years. We gave \$150,000 to help build and sponsor the kids casting pond at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. We sponsor the BASSMASTERS CastingKids program that puts a rod and reel in the hands of almost 200,000 youngsters each year. I could go on and on.

But we're talking changing times here and we know as well as anybody that we can no longer spend all of our time, effort, and money "preaching to the choir." If we are to keep this a healthy industry and to continue to grow our business, we have some work to do. We have to reach out to those that aren't fishing but that might want to. That certainly includes kids, but isn't limited just to them. That's why you see Zebco doing lots of non-traditional advertising right now. We have lots of kids' products and programs to get more kids involved in the sport. We have a video to

help single parents who want to take their kids fishing get started. We have a national celebrity spokesperson in Karl Malone, the NBA's most valuable player who appears often on ESPN's SportsCenter and at other venues, who talks about how fishing is a great way to spend quality time together with family and friends. We even have ads designed specifically for kids that we are putting in kids' magazines. We have another one with women in it that is appearing in a lawn and garden magazine, as well as other books where fishing ads normally don't appear. We're trying to do things that can grow our industry. If we can convince someone to go buy a fishing license, to go buy fishing equipment, then we have succeeded. We don't even care if they didn't buy a Zebco, Quantum, Browning, or Lew's rod and reel. As the market leader in most categories, we'll be getting our fair share.

We know we're doing the right things and that our efforts can indeed have a positive influence on this industry that we so dearly love. However, we also know that we can't do it alone. We need your help. We need the industry's help. This shouldn't be Zebco's project, or that of any other single company in this business. This is "our" project, yours, mine, and the person's sitting next to you. This is "our" job to do and we can't do it by thinking about tomorrow, or next year. We have to be thinking about 15 years from now and beyond.

I can guarantee you one thing, we plan on continuing to do our part for this industry, and we're confident that you will, too. We look forward to working with you, as partners, as we proceed.