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## Company Success Isn't Made ... It's Just Born

Tony Bingham and Pat Galagan

If you buy candy at the movies, you've probably eaten a Just Born product. They make Mike and Ike, and Hot Tamales, and several other jelly bean-type candies. But the product that makes them famous is the iconic yellow marshmallow chick known as a Peep. The Just Born assembly line in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, produces 1.2 billion Peeps a year, enough to circle the globe twice.

Just Born is a company with a clear link between its strategic objectives and the efforts of its HR unit, in which employee learning plays a key role. The company is headed by cousins Ross Born and David Shaffer, who are co-CEOs. We spoke with them recently about the company's commitment to learning.

"Learning is like breathing for us," says Born. "We operate in a changing world. In our industry, we have globalization. We have low-cost competition; and we use a lot of technology. If you don't learn in this industry, you'll go out of business. Our competition is learning so we're learning all the time."

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## Born to Grow

Meloney J. Sallie-Dosunmu

The Just Born People Development System (PDS) is designed to ensure that learning and development not only align with corporate strategy but actually drive business results, while equipping associates with the skills to excel in their current and future roles.

It is based on corporate strategy as well as the mission of the organization. It is the vehicle through which Just Born ensures that employees, or "associates" as Just Born calls them, understand performance requirements, are clear about expected results, have opportunities to learn skills necessary to achieve their performance objectives, and are able to identify and prepare for future opportunities.

Businesses often lose their highest performers because they don't provide growth opportunities. Just Born's career development program is the vehicle through which high-performing associates are given the opportunity to map their career at the company and position themselves for their next job. With the career development plan, associates identify their short-term career goals as well as long-term goals.

In addition to these specific learning opportunities, Just Born offers a comprehensive, foundational leadership program called the High Performance Leadership Development Program. In this program, all members of management learn fundamental leadership skills, including communication skills, coaching, and situational leadership.

Alignment is the key to having a learning system that drives business results and contributes to corporate strategy. It is only possible when you start with strategy, build systems to align all activities around the strategy, and empower the people to support it. When you have the right structure, the right processes, and the right tools, alignment can be achieved.

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## Skills Shortage In Manufacturing

Dan Sussman

Anyone who keeps up with the news can tell you that manufacturing, once the bedrock of the U.S. economy, has been shaken, rattled, and rolled in recent years by globalization, "merger-mania," and plant downsizing. In 1993, the United States alone accounted for 29 percent of global production. Last year, that figure had fallen to 21 percent.

A general lack of interest in manufacturing careers spawned, in part, by misconceptions about the field and a lack of training, both in schools and on the job, have resulted in a severe shortage of skilled manufacturing employees.

There's been significant publicity about the need for renewed emphasis on math and science in the nation's schools, but manufacturers will need to make their companies more attractive to workers by continuing the recent increase in training investments. In addition, manufacturers and workers can take advantage of training resources that are being provided by community colleges, industrywide manufacturing technology consortia, and the vendors of manufacturing automation systems and software.

"Manufacturing isn't about brawn anymore," says Stacey Jarrett Wagner, managing director of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) Center for Workforce Success. "It's about brains. You have to be able to communicate, to problem solve, and to work in teams, and you should know something about statistical analysis. These are things that, in the past, were considered higher order skills, but which now are baseline for any job."

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