



Machining

Coronavirus, Careers and Metalworking Tips: Better MRO's Top 10 Stories of 2020

Roland Jones | Dec 07, 2020

While 2020 was a year of disruption, marked by a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, it also forced manufacturers both large and small to dig deep to find resilience, courage and adaptability. Here's a look back at the stories that drew your attention the most over the past 12 months.

The year 2020 was certainly one of challenge and change, as the COVID-19 crisis altered everyday life for most of us. So it's not surprising that when we look back at Better MRO's top 10 articles for 2020—featuring content that drew the most reader engagement—stories about the COVID-19 pandemic dominate.

Other issues affecting manufacturing today—such as the skills gap, employee recruitment and retention, and the most effective ways to maintain machinery—also feature in the 2020 list. Even in a pandemic, manufacturers were still concerned about finding good talent, training their workers and keeping their machinery in good working order.

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So check out our story list, and if you agree with the selections, let us know in the comments below. Did you have a particular favorite or helpful topic? We are always interested in learning about the topics you like so we can bring you more meaningful content in the months ahead.

Now here's our list.

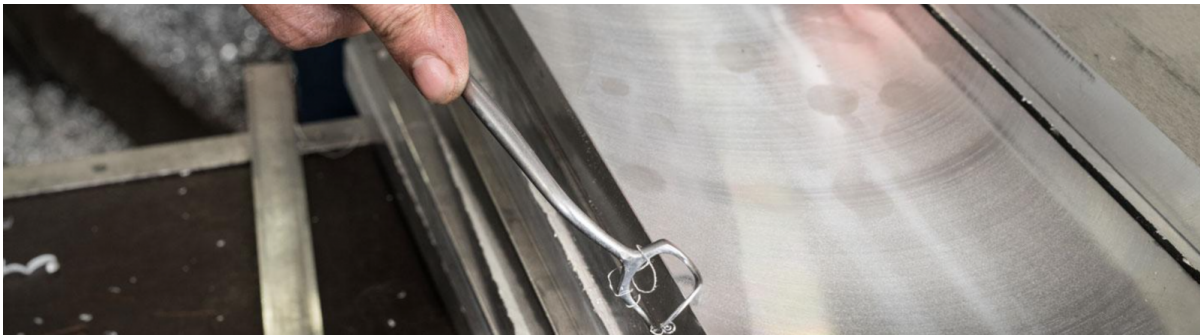
No. 10: Manufacturing and Process Engineer Career Guide: Salaries, Skills and Job Descriptions



As manufacturers continue to embrace automation and data-driven processes, the skills gap is growing. It's an issue that worries machine shops, and so it's little surprise that ***our guide to the salaries and pay rates for manufacturing and process engineer jobs*** was one of our most popular stories in 2020.

The article notes that the need for engineering talent has grown amid the evolution of manufacturing processes such as Industry 4.0, lean manufacturing, the Industrial Internet of Things and the rise of automation.

No. 9: Hand Deburring vs. Machine Deburring: The Cost Factor

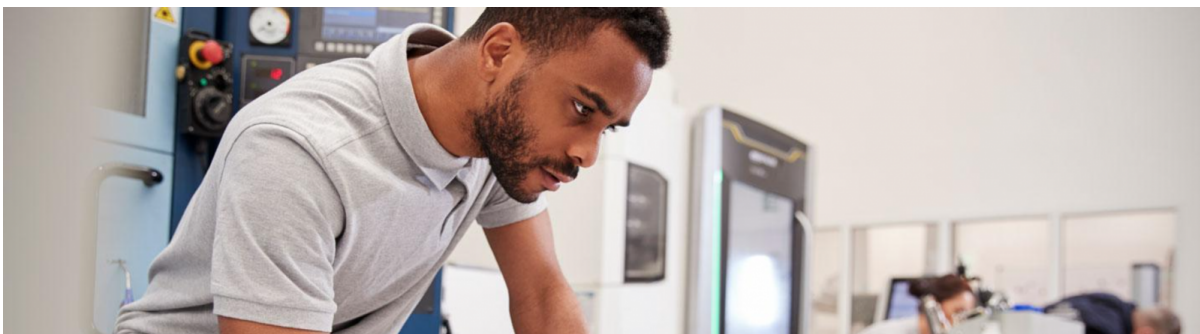


No matter how efficient the metal removal process, no matter how sharp and well-maintained the cutting tool, burrs are a fact of machining life. The question is: What's the best way to remove them?

Our January article on ***hand deburring vs. machine deburring*** tackled this perennial question, examining the pros and cons of each approach.

Read the article and ***let us know your thoughts*** on this subject.

No. 8: Machining Skills Gap: 'It's Not Dirty' Won't Cut It



In ***our January article on the machining skills gap***, Broc Bryson, a 30-year machining industry veteran

and a branch sales manager for MSC Industrial in Utah, asked how we can solve this long-standing problem.

According to Bryson, few really understand what it's like to work in the industry. To counter this, we need to rethink the "messages we use in our efforts to recruit potential machinists into the trade." We need "messaging that will resonate with recruits," he wrote.

How do we do this? Read the article to find out.

No. 7: How to Manage Employee Anxiety in the Workplace During the COVID-19 Pandemic



As manufacturing workers emerged from their homes to resume work over the spring and summer after several weeks in lockdown, coronavirus cases were spiking nationwide, leaving many asking if it was safe for employees to return to their work sites.

The ongoing pandemic created a major dilemma for business leaders: Should they reopen and ask employees to risk exposure to the virus, or keep their businesses closed indefinitely and run the risk of them never getting back on their feet again?

The challenge was particularly acute for manufacturing companies where much of the essential work cannot be done remotely.

Our *July article on employee anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic* sought to offer some solutions to managing and supporting a workforce during these difficult times, offering ideas such as projecting leadership, building a sense of community through increased communication and offering third-party mental health programs.

No. 6: Recordable or Reportable to OSHA? What Employers Need to Know About Handling COVID-19 Cases



While employers have done all they can to decrease the spread of the virus inside their facilities and reduce its potential impact, it's still unfortunately likely that some workers will contract the coronavirus.

So inevitably the question will arise as to whether the illness is work-related and therefore recordable (or reportable) under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recordkeeping standards.

Our *October article* sought to shed some light on the reporting requirements for workplace COVID-19 cases.

No. 5: Aerospace Industry Trends: What COVID-19 Means for Manufacturers and Suppliers



While all industries have suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the hardest hit in 2020 was aerospace. Already suffering from the stoppage of the Boeing 737 MAX jet, industry suppliers faced the ripple effects of reduced air travel, plummeting airline revenues and the resulting deferral of orders and deliveries of aircraft.

Our *article on how the global aerospace industry can manage through the crisis* received a lot of attention this spring.

In it, we told how some aerospace suppliers are shifting to other markets to remain in business, such as making parts for ventilators to help the pandemic relief effort after *the Defense Production Act* was leveraged.

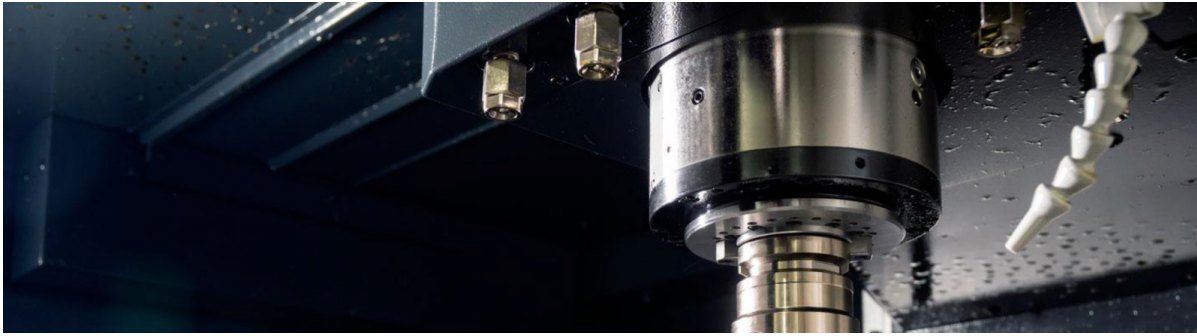
No. 4: How the Manufacturing Rebound Will Change Employee Recruitment and Retention



The U.S. economy nearly ground to a halt when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, and manufacturing companies were among the hardest hit, mainly because a weakened supply chain dried up demand for products, and many workers in the sector do jobs that can't be done remotely.

Unsurprisingly, concerns about employment, skills and the rise of automation were big themes in 2020. In our *August article on employee recruitment and retention*, we looked at how a drastically changed employment picture may challenge companies to rethink their workforces in the near and long term.

No. 3: Your CNC Machine Spindle Maintenance: Here's How You Can Optimize Its Life Span



The spindle is the heart of any machine tool. Unfortunately, it's also the most prone to damage. Over time, your spindles will usually break down due to wear and tear. But there are things you can do to keep them in good shape. That's likely why *our article this year on CNC machine spindle maintenance* gained so much attention.

Ted Ladzinski, owner of Motor City Spindle Repair, told us many of the rebuilds he does could have been avoided or at least delayed had their users followed the best practices listed in this article.

"From my side, the two most common failure modes are crashes and contamination, with contamination falling into two categories—chips and coolant," Ladzinski said.

No. 2: How to Prepare for Possible Viral Outbreaks Within Your Workforce



As the coronavirus fanned out around the globe in February, *our article on handling viral outbreaks* attracted significant attention.

The article offered eight ways to protect your workers from the virus, including regularly *cleaning* and disinfecting areas prone to attract germs, encouraging workers to wash their hands frequently with soap and water and use alcohol-based *hand sanitizers*, and recommending workers avoid touching their eyes, noses and mouths with unwashed hands since that can spread the virus.

No. 1: Coronavirus and Workplace Safety: How to Manage Employees During a Pandemic



Unsurprisingly, with news about the coronavirus dominating global headlines, our article on *managing employees during a pandemic* was one of the most popular of 2020.

As the pandemic began to grow, keeping workers safe was a primary concern for manufacturing businesses, many of which were considered essential and continued to work even in the early stages of the crisis.

In our March article, Deborah R. Roy, safety consultant and then president-elect of the American Society of Safety Professionals, discussed keeping workers safe during an extremely contagious viral outbreak. She noted that companies should require social distancing, staggered work shifts and breaks and serve packaged foods in the cafeteria. She also stressed the importance of workplace cleanliness.

“Cleaning is critical,” Roy said. “You have to clean high-touch areas repeatedly.” Use of the *cleaners recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency* can “kill this virus fairly quickly,” she said. “Even 70 percent alcohol will kill this virus in about a minute.”

LEARN MORE: You can watch the ASSP webinar featuring Roy and find additional resources shared by the society at the ASSP coronavirus resources page.

Let us know the stories and topics you found most useful in 2020—whether it’s related to one of our stories above or didn’t make this year’s list.

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