

Manufacturing Management

Why Manufacturing Management?

Manufacturing management is a great place to begin a second career, as the U.S. manufacturing sector is a robust, dynamic industry. The U.S. manufacturing sector by itself is the eighth largest economy in the world per the Manufacturing Institute, producing more than 21% of the world's goods. It employs more than 12 million Americans (9% of the U.S. workforce) and U.S. manufacturers conduct two-thirds of all research and development in the U.S. A management or engineering position in manufacturing can provide you an excellent understanding of the core business operations required to move on to more senior leadership roles in the company. Manufacturing management is very well suited for JMOs with a very strong leadership background. A technical background is sometimes required to fully understand the operations and maintenance of mechanical, electrical, and hydraulic devices that are typically found in a manufacturing setting.

Each manufacturing plant varies in the complexity of its machinery and the skill level of the people on the production line. Some plants are very labor intensive, requiring strong managers to motivate the work force. Other plants vary from semi-automated to fully automated plants where computerized machines do the manufacturing and the work force is limited to those machine operators that maintain quality assurance aspects. As companies introduce newer and faster equipment, the production line constantly changes. An individual in manufacturing must be able to adapt to change. It is the job of the Production Supervisor and the Plant Engineers to maximize efficiency of operators, assemblers, and machinery to increase production, lower cost, and improve product quality. The transition to Manufacturing is one of the best areas for JMOs due to the direct correlation of your military experience and leadership style. Unlike many other career paths, you can hit the ground running and make an immediate impact on the organization's bottom line and profitability.

Typical Positions

Listed below are some of the most common positions available to transitioning military officers in the Manufacturing field:

Production Supervisor

A Production Supervisor, also often called Area Manager, Team Leader or Shift Supervisor, is a mid-level manager that leads a team of plant operators or assemblers and is overall responsible for day-to-day operations in their area of responsibility. Production Supervisors ensure maximum production by regulating schedules, ensuring safety, and assigning operating quotas. These roles often require candidates to be open to shift work. You also work closely with the Maintenance Supervisors, Quality Assurance Personnel, and Inventory Control to maximize efficiency. Strong leadership experience is required.

Maintenance Manager

A Maintenance Manager is responsible for maintenance personnel to ensure routine maintenance and emergency maintenance is taken care of quickly and efficiently to minimize "line-down" time. A solid background in maintenance operations is typically required.

Process /Manufacturing Engineer

Process Engineers establish and monitor ongoing processes, and look for problems within a company's processes and offer solutions to increase efficiencies where possible. Process Engineering also involves developing new processes and troubleshooting existing procedures. Process Engineers are typically trained in, or receive training in, Six Sigma and other Lean Manufacturing processes.

Career Progression

From these roles, you can expect to move into other roles of increasing responsibility to include Operations Manager, Engineering Manager, Plant Management and ultimately into executive leadership positions within a company. Due to the robust nature of manufacturing in the U.S., workforce aging, and a resurgence of domestic manufacturing, starting a career and gaining experience in manufacturing in our current economy will prove to be a very rewarding decision.

Keys to a Successful Interview

Generally, the key to a successful management interview is to focus on examples in your past that will support your answers. Specific examples (with places, names) add depth and meaning to your answers. Giving an answer on philosophy alone will not work in a management interview. Here are some additional points of focus during a manufacturing interview:

- Have a game plan focused on your three of your best attributes that you feel, based on your company research, are important to the company.
- Focus on growth/promotion potential and company stability as opposed to how well you know the company or how popular a product may be when you are choosing a company. (Most Fortune 500 CEOs started their careers in companies most people have never heard of).
- Focus on leadership. Give good examples to show that you have the ability to jump right into a prospective role.
- Specifically talk to the diverse work force you have worked with (ages, ethnicity, varying levels of experience).
- Let them know you are used to working in fast paced, dynamic and most times stressful environments.
- Show them that you are interested in the role. Emphasize the blue collar work ethic and environment in the military.
- Review our prep module for management interviews and practice your questions.