



Driving Plumbing Manufacturing into the Future

By Chip Way, PMI Board of Directors President, Lavelle Industries



Chip Way

Customer expectations and preferences – relating to both technology and sustainability – are key factors driving plumbing manufacturing into the future.

And, in turn, to meet those expectations and preferences, plumbing manufacturers must reinvent their supply chains and workforces.

Meeting and exceeding expectations for hi-tech

Technologic advances continue to seep into virtually every aspect of our lives. Whether we realize it or not, algorithms influence our daily productivity, decision making, knowledge base, and opinions. Innovations such as voice and touch ID, IoT-enabled devices, and artificial intelligence have become regular features in many products rather than expensive options. Now that customers regularly interact with technology, they've come to have even higher expectations for it. For example, they no longer want to remember passwords, use a dictionary, or look up directions – they expect technology to do these things for them.

Advancements in smart plumbing systems enable convenience and water efficiency and also mitigate damage caused by leaks or burst pipes. Another technological advancement – 3D printing – enables customized plumbing components, more cost-efficient production, reduced waste, and increased design flexibility. Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) members continue to find ways to make toilets, urinals, showerheads, faucets and other fixtures and fittings more water-efficient while equipping them with features that can improve hygiene and sanitation.

Achieving sustainability has become a new requirement

Just as many customers now expect hi-tech, they also require businesses to develop sustainability practices including the use of eco-friendly materials, water- and energy-efficient manufacturing processes, and renewable energy sources. With the effects of climate change becoming apparent everywhere, customers want businesses to reuse and recycle materials to keep waste out of landfills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Reaching sustainability goals requires a nimble and resilient supply chain that sources eco-friendly materials as close to home as possible and that has plans B, C and D in case of disruptions caused by pandemics, wars, weather, or other disasters. Reducing carbon emissions within the supply chain has become a goal of virtually every responsible manufacturing organization.

Meeting the needs of the future requires rethinking the workforce

As technology and sustainability play increasingly significant roles, having a digitally literate workforce becomes more important. Investing in training programs to equip your employees with necessary skills and fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration between workers, such as data scientists and engineers, will be needed to achieve innovation and address complex challenges.

While much has been written and said about the shortage of skilled-trade workers, the competition for STEM workers also remains intense. By providing inviting and stimulating work environments and teams in pursuit of solutions to the water and climate crises, PMI member companies can compete successfully for these workers.

Synergizing our industry's strengths will lead to success

The plumbing manufacturing industry has always responded well to challenges, whether they be technical or regulatory in nature. Now, we must add sustainability and workforce development to our areas of expertise. Manufacturers who stay at the forefront of these industry trends will not only thrive in the global market but also contribute to an efficient, sustainable and socially responsible plumbing industry that provides great opportunities for its workers and other stakeholders.

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How PMI Helps You Navigate the Regulatory Maze

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

The business landscape is marked by a stampede of government regulations across industries. From climate change initiatives to cybersecurity mandates, regu-

latory bodies are increasingly asserting their power to address pressing societal challenges. While some regulations aim to enhance accountability, protect customers and promote sustainability, they also pose significant challenges for our business. In this environment, effective management of the regulatory maze is essential for maintaining compliance, mitigating risk, and driving sustainable growth.

The surge in government regulation reflects a growing recognition of a perceived need for robust frameworks to address complex global issues. In response to mounting concerns about climate change, governments are implementing stringent environmental regulations aimed at reducing carbon emissions, promoting renewable energy, and fostering sustainable practices. Similarly, in the wake of increasing cyber threats, regulators are enacting stringent cybersecurity measures to safeguard sensitive data and protect against cyberattacks.

Navigating the regulatory maze requires a comprehensive understanding of the evolving regulatory landscape, proactive engagement with regulatory bodies, and the implementation of robust compliance programs. To effectively manage government regulation in 2024, Plumbing Manufacturers International members will benefit from adopting a strategic approach that encompasses active engagement in PMI's advocacy initiatives and work.

In a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape, staying informed is paramount. PMI continues to invest in robust regulatory intelligence capabilities to monitor and analyze regulatory developments across jurisdictions. By leveraging technology-enabled solutions such as regulatory compliance software and data analytics tools, PMI shares real-time insights into regulatory changes and anticipates potential impacts on business operations. In addition to PMI's dedicated advocacy team, we are fortunate to have collaborative partnerships with a number of plumbing industry associations and PMI member companies; they leverage their own regulatory and compliance contacts to support our work.

We have found that engaging with regulatory bodies early and often is essential for shaping regulatory outcomes and influencing policy decisions. PMI has a longstanding history of establishing proactive communication channels with regulatory stakeholders, actively participating in public consultations, and regularly providing feedback on proposed regulations. By building constructive relationships with legislators, regulators and policymakers, PMI successfully advocates for sound, science-based policies that strike a balance between regulatory objectives and business imperatives.

One of the innovative approaches taken by PMI members is the embrace of a culture of compliance by design. This involves embedding compliance considerations into all aspects of business operations, from product development and supply chain management to marketing and sales. Integrating compliance into the fabric of your company helps to minimize the risk of non-compliance and demonstrates a commitment to ethical business practices and safe, responsible plumbing.

Not all regulations are created equal, especially in a presidential election year.

Often following a national election, Congress has used its authority under the Congressional Review Act to overturn certain federal agency actions. CRA requires agencies to report the issuance of "rules" to Congress and provides Congress with special procedures, in the form of a joint resolution of disapproval. If a CRA joint resolution of disapproval is approved by both houses of Congress and signed by the president, or if Congress successfully overrides a presidential veto, the rule at issue cannot go into effect or continue in effect. Agencies sometimes choose to accelerate their rulemaking in advance of elections, knowing a newly elected administration or Congress might seek to overturn their work.

PMI prioritizes the resources provided by members according to the level of risk posed by different regulatory requirements. Adopting a risk-based approach to compliance allows us to focus our efforts on areas of highest impact and allocate resources accordingly. By conducting regular risk assessments and implementing targeted mitigation strategies, PMI serves as a guide to members on the best ways to manage regulatory risk and ensure compliance with key regulations.

It is no surprise that regulatory compliance is not a one-time exercise but an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring and adaptation. PMI's robust monitoring mechanisms to track changes in regulatory requirements – our "boots on the ground" approach to advocacy and the identification of emerging risks – is at the core of PMI's efforts. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, PMI adapts to evolving regulatory challenges and helps your company to maintain compliance in the face of uncertainty.

Managing the stampede of government regulation in 2024 requires all of us to adopt a strategic approach that

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PMI Expanded Advocacy and Outreach to Meet New Challenges

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.



Fernando Fernandez

Fernando Fernandez recalled a period of major progress at Plumbing Manufacturers International when the association forged new relationships with

legislators, collaborated on new water-efficiency standards, and entered new electrical code territory. His recollection is in tribute to PMI's 70th anniversary this year.

As the PMI Board of Directors president in 2015, Fernandez worked with the board to deepen PMI's influence by expanding the association's advocacy and outreach to more policymakers, he said. PMI participated in meetings with Environmental Protection Agency officials on topics such as product labeling and played a central role in organizing the first Plumbing Industry Leadership Coalition's Congressional Briefing on the Future of Water in Washington, D.C. "From there, we branched off into how we would communicate those efforts to members," he added.

How PMI Helps (Contd.)

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encompasses regulatory intelligence, proactive engagement, compliance by design, a risk-based approach, and continuous monitoring and adaptation. PMI is your partner in progress, and by embracing these principles together, we can navigate the regulatory maze with confidence and continue to position ourselves for sustainable growth in an increasingly complex and regulated environment.

"It's been such a great experience seeing the overall trajectory of PMI and helping shape policies while growing the organization to better reflect the needs of its members," said Fernandez, senior director of codes & standards for PMI member TOTO USA.

He enjoyed his first PMI leadership role as co-chair of the PMI Plumbing Fixtures Committee, and looked forward to more, he said. Fernandez went on to serve on the PMI board from 2010 to 2016 and again as a director in 2020 and 2021. He has spent 30 years working in the plumbing manufacturing industry.

Collaborating to meet in the middle

The biggest issue facing PMI in 2015 involved the California Energy Commission seeking to overhaul regulations on water flow rates, as the state entered its fourth year of severe drought, Fernandez said. California's regulations aligned with EPA WaterSense flow rates at that time, so PMI and its members needed to educate the CEC on the consequences of reducing those rates too severely, he added.

PMI members rallied together to develop a strategy map that successfully explained the ins and outs of how plumbing fixtures come to market – encompassing customer expectations, testing, certification, and delivery timelines, Fernandez stated.

"During think-tank strategy sessions with PMI member company CEOs and presidents, we decided to engage with our suppliers – Home Depot, Lowe's and wholesalers," he said. "We reached out to all our allies and lobbied with letter-writing campaigns so that we were all engaged with the CEC." PMI and the CEC



met somewhere in the middle – with a win-win situation. "It was our mutual collaboration that allowed us to follow the adage that it's better to be at the table than on the menu," Fernandez said.

Entering uncharted territory

PMI evolves with members' growing and changing needs. Fernandez said he believes one of the best ways to stay relevant is to encourage new ideas.

He recently asked the PMI Technical Committee to consider getting involved in electrical codes – a path PMI doesn't traditionally follow. "Out of the blue, we had discovered that electrical codes for locating electrical outlets near plumbing fixtures had changed," Fernandez stated.

PMI worked with the National Fire Protection Association – the organization that develops electrical codes and standards – to revise code language to be more "mutually agreeable" for electrical outlet placement near plumbing, particularly toilets and bidet seats, he explained. While his request was specific to TOTO, the new code language helped other PMI members who make these products, he said.

"All our success is an accumulation of everyone's expertise and what every president, board member, member, and staffer has brought to the table," he said. "The value PMI brings to the industry is one uniform voice that comes from providing resources and support and facilitating collaboration, networking, and promoting interests of members on a broader scale."

MMA Fighter Headlines Exciting Roster of PMI24 Speakers

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

The PMI24 Manufacturing Success Conference, Nov. 4-7, at the InterContinental Hotel Buckhead, Atlanta, will feature keynote speaker **Justin Wren**, presentations about the industry's critical issues, enjoyable networking, and a celebration of PMI's 70th year. The event will be centered at stunning hotel accommodations within the elegant and sophisticated Buckhead district of Georgia's capital city.



Justin Wren

Wren, an elite mixed martial arts fighter turned global humanitarian, will share his remarkable story as the opening keynote speaker. A chance collection of circumstances led Wren to live among impoverished and marginalized Pygmy people in the rainforest.

This transformative experience led to his founding of the non-profit Fight For The Forgotten which, since 2013, has provided more than 52,000 indigent people with access to clean drinking water and replanted thousands of trees. The organization also acquired more than 3,000 acres of land in the name of the Pygmy tribe and helped 1,800 people out of slavery and into freedom. Current projects include housing,

education, healthcare and sustainable livelihoods through community empowerment.

His keynote presentation will cover his tools and techniques for navigating adversity, finding purpose, and making a meaningful impact in business and life. Despite his success as a fighter, he questioned the significance of his athletic accomplishments. Each time his hand was raised in victory, he thought, "Is this it? Is this as good as it gets?" As he fought his way to the top and battled never-ending injuries that accompany the profession, he slid into pain-killer addiction, battled depression, and attempted suicide – all experiences that eventually led to his transformation into a humanitarian.

Women's Breakfast to feature Atlanta Braves' chief culture officer

The PMI24 Women's Breakfast on Nov. 6 will feature **DeRetta Cole Rhodes**, Ph.D., executive vice president and chief culture officer of the Atlanta Braves, who will focus on the importance of voice as a female leader. Dr. Rhodes, whose doctorate is in adult education, oversees people capital initiatives, communications and community affairs for the Braves, The Battery Atlanta, and the team's spring training facility operations.

Dr. Rhodes previously worked as the executive vice president and chief human resources officer of the YMCA of Metro Atlanta, vice president of human resources at First Data, vice president of



DeRetta Cole Rhodes, Ph.D.

human resources for Turner Broadcasting, and held leadership positions at Ernst & Young, ADP, HomeGrocer.com and YUM Brand.

She is a certified facilitator for the Benchmark 360 assessment by the Center for Creative Leadership, a DISC coach and facilitator, a qualified facilitator for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and a qualified coach for the HOGAN Assessment and HOGAN 360.

Among other accolades, Dr. Rhodes was recognized on the 100 Women of Influence list for the last four years by the Atlanta Business Chronicle, in the Sports Inclusion Conference Top 100 Women in Sports, and the National Diversity & Leadership Top 100 HR Professionals in 2022 and 2023.

Become a more agile leader at the PMI24 Inspiring Leaders Program

Leaders of PMI member companies won't want to miss the PMI24 Inspiring Leaders Program, "Strategic Doing – 10 Skills for Agile Leadership," on Nov. 4 at Atlanta's Carter Center. **Scott Hutcherson**, who has a Ph.D. in strategy and complex collaboration, will introduce attendees to a





Scott Hutcheson, Ph.D.

new strategic management approach developed at Purdue University.

Dr. Hutcheson, a senior lecturer and professor of technology leadership and innovation at Purdue, will share a practice-proven framework that helps leaders form action-oriented collaborations quickly. Attendees will learn the skills needed to better manage complex challenges, add evidence-based tools to their portfolios, and gain the confidence to use the new tools and insights immediately.

His presentation will be based on the book “Strategic

Doing: 10 Skills for Agile Leadership,” which he co-authored. Having worked with more than 4,000 leaders from 147 countries, Dr. Hutcheson speaks at conferences and other events worldwide, and his TED Talk on the science of prospecting has been viewed on YouTube more than 1.3 million times.

This year’s program will take place at Atlanta’s Carter Center, founded in 1982 by former president **Jimmy Carter**. In partnership with Emory University, the center is guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering, according to the center’s website.

Located on 37 acres of parkland near downtown Atlanta, the Carter Center’s incredible grounds feature formal gar-

dens, sculptures and waterfalls tucked between two small lakes. Program attendees will have access to many “must-see” features on the grounds: the Circle of Flags, displaying the flags of all 50 states; a native Oak forest; Koi pond; and a beautiful panoramic view of the Atlanta skyline. Also on the property are the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum.

Experience southern sophistication in Atlanta

The InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta is where southern sophistication meets international allure. PMI24 attendees can stay in a stylish guest room or suite, enjoy the exclusive amenities of the Club Lounge, and savor flavorful dishes at the Americano, Atlanta’s first Italian steakhouse. From indulgent spa services and state-of-the-art pool and

fitness to exquisite events in two grand ballrooms or 22 modern meeting rooms, you can experience reimagined luxury in Atlanta’s prestigious Buckhead neighborhood.

Save the dates - registration will open soon!

Stay tuned for details about additional speakers and activities sure to make PMI24 – and PMI’s 70th anniversary celebration – a can’t-miss event!



Help Shape California's Water Future at June 3-4 Forum

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Plumbing Manufacturers International members have an outstanding opportunity to help shape the future of plumbing manufacturing and water efficiency across the Golden State. By attending the pivotal PMI California Legislative Forum and Fly-In, June 3-4 in Sacramento, members can collaborate with each other while representing their companies' interests.

Activities will begin at 6 p.m. on June 3 and finish at 4 p.m. on June 4. All employees of PMI member companies are welcome to attend.

PMI staff members are working closely with PMI California government affairs consultant **Jerry Desmond** to develop the forum's agenda and preparatory materials for attendees.

"I enjoyed the experience of interacting directly with those in the legislature," said one past attendee. For this reason, the PMI team is working to create as many opportunities to meet influential California policymakers as possible.



Members should not miss this unparalleled opportunity to shape California's plumbing manufacturing landscape for the better.

Topics on the PMI agenda

On the forum's agenda are various topics relating to proposed legislative or regulatory actions:

Responsibly Managing PFAS: PMI is pursuing the responsible use and management of PFAS, including regulatory requirements that protect health and the environment, while permitting the use of PFAS if it's necessary and no safe alternative is available.

Incentivizing Water Efficiency: Replacing older, inefficient plumbing products with new, water-efficient alternatives can save water at an accelerated rate. PMI is advocating for financial

incentives and rebates that can drive the adoption of these sustainable solutions.

Protecting Future Generations: Safeguarding children from lead exposure in school water systems is vital. PMI is a champion of comprehensive efforts that coordinate both testing methods and proper remediation.

Developing Resilient Packaging: The implementation of California's ambitious extended producer responsibility program for plastic packaging is only beginning. PMI is voicing concerns about new bans on specific packaging components that will only complicate matters.

Harmonizing Climate Reporting: PMI is advocating for California's new greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting requirements to align with, rather than exceed, federal standards proposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Register, and learn more about the agenda, schedule and recommended hotels at tinyurl.com/3wxpmhm3.



Housing Comeback to Increase Plumbing Product Demand

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Having gone through a recessionary period earlier than the rest of the economy, the housing market is poised for a comeback starting this year and continuing into next, stated ITR Economics' **Connor Lokar** during Plumbing Manufacturers International's Market Outlook LIVE presentation, "2024-2025: A Changing Landscape."

"The worst is behind us. We've already taken our medicine," Lokar emphasized. He added that he expects housing demand to increase the demand for plumbing fixtures and fittings. He encouraged PMI members to be ready to meet this demand.

With population growth and housing start permits up across the nation, the good news comes as inflation abates from its highest levels and mortgage interest rates come down accordingly.

However, Lokar warned that the outlooks in the commercial, multifamily and remodeling sectors will not be quite as rosy, especially as the overall economy begins to soften later this year.

Sitting at about 3.5% on April 18, the inflation rate in America is not likely to come down to the below-2% levels seen before the COVID pandemic, he explained, due to factors embedded into the economy such as government spending and the cost of labor.

Top 10 management objectives for the recovery phase

As the market turns more positive, 10 management objectives from the PMI Market Outlook for the Phase A recovery are: 1) Scrupulously evaluate the supply chain, 2) Model positive leadership (culture turns to behavior), 3) Start to phase out marginal opportu-

nities (products, processes, people) and repair margins, 4) Perform due diligence on customers and extend credit, 5) Be on good terms with a banker to borrow cash more now than in any other phase, 6) Invest in customer market research and know what customers value and market/price accordingly, 7) Hire key people and implement company-wide training programs ahead of the Phase B growth stage, 8) Allocate additional resources to sales and marketing, 9) Invest in system/process efficiencies, and 10) Make opportunistic capital and business acquisitions and use pessimism to your advantage.

PMI members can access the latest PMI Market Outlook LIVE video, presentation slides and transcript under Market Outlook/Economic Reports at tinyurl.com/yxc5yxzc.

U.S. Cyber Trust Mark Program Readies for Launch

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

J. David Grossman of the Consumer Technology Association provided attendees of the recent Plumbing Manufacturers International Washington Legislative Forum and Fly-In an overview of the U.S. Cyber Trust Mark program.

In March, the Federal Communications Commission adopted final rules for the voluntary cybersecurity labeling program to help customers identify wireless consumer Internet of Things (IoT) products that meet robust security standards. Customers will be able to scan the new U.S. Cyber Trust Mark logo on labeled products to find easy-to-understand security information. The program is expected to launch by the end of the year.

Grossman said the program was developed in response to cyber attacks from IoT devices; these attacks have increased

from an estimated 200,000 devices in 2022 to 1 million devices in 2023, generating more than 40% of all distributed denial of service (DDoS) traffic today. DDoS attacks originating from insecure IoT devices increased five-fold over 2022 and 2023, he explained.

In addition, the number of IoT devices keeps growing, with the FCC estimating that 49 million U.S. households own at least one IoT device. Globally, there are an estimated 17 billion connected IoT devices; expected to almost double by 2030, Grossman stated.

Gary Shapiro, CEO, Consumer Technology Association, applauded the FCC for advancing the U.S. Cyber Trust Mark. "Internet-enabled consumer products improve everyday life from video doorbells to smart washers and dryers, but there is also the risk of bad actors

exploiting consumers' connected devices. The U.S. Cyber Trust Mark program will give consumers more information about the cybersecurity of the connected products they buy and ensure that those products meet certain standards.

"(FCC adoption of the mark) is a major accomplishment resulting from many years of work and close collaboration between the government, industry and other stakeholders. We are pleased to see a voluntary IoT cybersecurity labeling program based on the work of NIST that recognizes the need for international coordination and the importance of educating consumers about the label," Shapiro said.

To learn more about the U.S. Cyber Trust Mark Program, visit tinyurl.com/ev6kk23b. PMI members can view Grossman's presentation slides at tinyurl.com/47tac3jh.

PMI Updates Industry Economic Impact Data

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

The plumbing manufacturing industry directly provides 208,283 jobs and \$13.2 billion in wages to their employees, according to economic impact data summarized in the updated Plumbing Manufacturing Industry Economic Impact Study.

After adding the impacts of suppliers and household spending by employees of the industry and its suppliers, the total economic impact of the plumbing manufacturing industry increases to \$116.7 billion – about four-tenths of 1% of America’s gross domestic product. This total impact accounts for 517,696 jobs, \$35.3 billion in wages, and \$15 billion in tax revenue.

Reports can be tailored according to state or legislative districts

Plumbing Manufacturers International members can generate reports showing national data or tailoring the data by state, congressional district, state house district, or state senate district. “PMI members can use these reports to communicate our industry’s economic contributions to elected officials, policymakers, regulators and others to inform their perspective on the value of manufacturers delivering safe, responsible plumbing,” said PMI CEO/Executive Director **Kerry Stackpole**.

“It’s important to emphasize that our industry creates jobs not only in manufacturing plants but throughout the supply chain, including wholesale and retail settings. We also create a tax base that funds schools and other public services,” Stackpole added.

The study was prepared for PMI by John Dunham & Associates. Read more about the study, including viewing its methodology and FAQ, at tinyurl.com/dfcddx2c.

Economic benefits add value to industry that saves water and energy

These economic benefits add more value to an industry that has helped America save significant amounts of



water and energy with the creation of more than 41,000 EPA-certified WaterSense products, including 20,105 faucets, 13,008 showerheads, 6,867 toilets, 925 urinals, and 572 spray sprinklers, according to the WaterSense Accomplishments Report.

Combined, these fixtures and fittings saved 1.1 trillion gallons of water in 2022. Since 2006, the year WaterSense began, the program has saved more than 7.5 trillion gallons of water while reducing the bills of water and energy customers by \$171 billion. WaterSense products have reduced the energy needed to heat, pump and treat water by 800 billion kilowatt hours – enough energy to supply a year’s worth of power to about 83 million homes – and have eliminated 337 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions – the equivalent of planting 5.6 billion trees, the report states.

Read the WaterSense report at tinyurl.com/tdz5y8mj.

The plumbing manufacturing industry is a part of one of the most significant and productive sectors fueling the U.S. economy – the manufacturing industry. Manufacturers contributed a record estimate of \$2.89 trillion to the U.S. economy in 2023, according to the National Association of Manufacturers. For every \$1 spent in manufacturing, there is a total impact of \$2.69 to the overall U.S. economy, making manufacturing one of the highest economic sector multipliers, NAM states.

2024 PMI LEADERSHIP

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