

WOMEN **AT** WORK



An Interview with Allison Grealis

President

Women in Manufacturing



Allison Grealis is founder and president of Women in Manufacturing (WiM), a national trade association focused on supporting, promoting and inspiring women in the manufacturing sector. She is also the vice president of membership and association services of the Precision Metalforming Association (PMA), a full-service trade association representing the metalforming industry. Since joining PMA in 2001, Grealis has held a variety of positions that included district, committee and division management; affinity partner relations; sponsorship sales; new product and service development; and member services. Grealis earned her Bachelor of Arts in English with a certificate in Women's Studies from Ohio University and a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Akron. Presently, Grealis serves as the president of the Greater Cleveland Society of Association Executives and as a board member of Our Lady of the Elms High School.

We are thrilled to have Allison join us at the **American Manufacturing Summit**. She will be Chair of our People & Workforce Management Stream, as well as hosting a Lunch and Learn on "Succession Planning: Support, Promote, and Inspire Women in Manufacturing", and participating in a panel on avoiding the skills shortage in the next 10 years.

We sat down with Allison in advance of the event to ask her some questions about where manufacturing is going and how to support women in the industry.



OVERVIEW

- What is the overall mission for Women in Manufacturing?
- What is the importance of mentorship, and how has that been a factor in your success story?
- How does WiM plan to empower the next generation of skilled manufacturers?
- How would you summarize the current state of manufacturing?
- Does manufacturing need to be re-branded?



Video: Women in Manufacturing

What is the overall mission of Women in Manufacturing?

WiM is a more than 1,000 member strong national association dedicated to supporting, promoting, and inspiring women from every level of the manufacturing industry year round. Our goal is to encourage the engagement of women who want to share perspectives, gain innovative manufacturing insights, improve leadership and communication skills, participate in sponsoring programs and network with industry peers. WiM achieves this goal by providing a personal and professional network for women in manufacturing with regional and national programming, mentorship opportunities, professional development webinars, and much more.

What is the importance of mentorship and how has that been a factor in your success story?

The value of mentorship is irreplaceable across all industries, but female role models are especially valuable in STEM fields. Currently, women account for 49% of the national labor force, but only 29% of the manufacturing industry. Being the only woman at one's workplace can limit opportunities for growth and advancement. WiM is dedicated to bridging the gap between women in our industry by providing the spaces and circumstances that allow them to engage with and inspire one another, share insights and make life-long mentorships.

In my 20-year professional career, I have not had any formal mentors, but I have been informally mentored, inspired and influenced by many women and men. Going to an all-girls high school provided a powerful foundation and that support network still influences me personally and professionally today. I have had the opportunity to professionally work with so many accomplished men and women who have imparted invaluable guidance, advice and

support. In creating Women in Manufacturing, my peers' guidance and support was so important as I was building a national association from scratch.

How does WiM plan to empower the next generation of skilled manufacturers?

The manufacturing industry offers excellent career options for men and women alike. WiM is dedicated to helping women find these positions and ultimately excel in their careers. In late 2016, we established the Women in Manufacturing Educational Foundation (WiMEF), the 501 (c)(3) arm of WiM. WiMEF breaks down barriers by improving access to vital programming for women who want to further their careers. We also have a partnership with Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management to support the WiM Leadership Lab. The Leadership Lab provides executive training for female managers and senior leaders in manufacturing. Finally, we have recently rolled out a new Management Development Program, a series of in-person and webinar training sessions addressing a variety of key topics to prepare women in manufacturing for management and supervisory roles.

How would you summarize the current state of manufacturing?

We are certainly seeing progress across the country, as national conversations about the importance of recruiting women and helping them succeed mark a significant change for our industry. This couldn't come at a better time: projections show that over the next eight years, nearly 3.5 million manufacturing jobs will become available, and women are the perfect talent pool to fill this skills gap. WiM's role in reaching young women who could be the future generation of manufacturers is to help elevate women in the manufacturing sector and make them available as role models and mentors.

Does manufacturing need to be re-branded?

Recent studies have revealed the many commonalities between what women want in their careers and what modern manufacturing offers. However, outdated perceptions of manufacturing have impacted women's desire to join the industry. WiM is committed to educating women on the abundance of great opportunities available throughout the industry and dispelling these misleading, long-irrelevant perceptions.

What is the importance of expanding collaboration in manufacturing and attending networking events like the 2018 American Manufacturing Summit?

Expanding collaboration in manufacturing and attending networking events is a critical component of encouraging more women to pursue a career in manufacturing. Research indicates that, while the majority of women in manufacturing are pleased with their jobs, most women outside of the sector are unaware of the opportunities available to them. Collaboration and outreach give WiM the opportunity to showcase the rewarding prospects available in manufacturing and allow the reality of our modern industry to speak for itself.

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About Women in Manufacturing

Women in Manufacturing™ is a national association dedicated to supporting, promoting and inspiring women who are pursuing or have chosen a career in the manufacturing industry. This group encourages the engagement of women who want to share perspectives, gain cutting-edge manufacturing information, improve leadership and communication skills, participate in sponsoring programs and network with industry peers.



[View the Program](#)