

# AMERICAN HEROES

Happy days are here again for U.S.-made components.

BY LINDA LONGO

After being down in sales, but by no means out, domestic manufacturers of lighting parts and fittings have rebounded, experiencing increased business for the past year or more. In order to stay competitive, some companies have had to source a small amount of items from overseas; however, they're noticing growing demand for domestically made goods.

The escalating costs of labor and materials in China have caused a rise in export prices, affecting the overall savings a firm may achieve by sourcing in Asia. Factor in the time spent waiting for containers to arrive by sea and

then perhaps discovering products with finishing flaws or mechanical defects and the profit margins become slimmer still.

Granted, there are plenty of American lighting companies that operate Asian factories with barely a hiccup, but there are many more that are exploring alternatives, such as searching out domestic factories.

"Since my brother, David, and I took over the family business, we started importing all of the commodity, smaller-diameter items plus high-volume items in order to remain competitive with the overseas vendors," notes Peter Zuckerman, president of New York-based Liberty Brass. "We

have also given our customers an insurance policy of sorts that guarantees that we won't let them run out of parts in the event an overseas vendor is late on a delivery of our parts. If that happens, we will make those items in our Long Island City facility. The influx of customers we've gotten from the Internet has given us the ability to expand our CNC machine and design capabilities. We have also added a wire EDM machine to

give us all the in-house tooling we require at lower prices."

Besides the fast turnaround times available by their investment in cutting-edge machinery, Zuckerman believes that manufacturers appreciate working with factories in the USA. "It's easier to deal with firms located here," he recounts. "We answer the phone and keep our promises. We can set up quickly and deliver in days if necessary. Overseas, [the same order] could take months. We are able to get a sample out the door in a matter of hours, plus we accept all quantities."

There is also plenty of variety. "We offer domestic as well as import ability and we work in all metals, not just brass," Zuckerman states. "I see a great return to domestic manufacturing [for us] because of [our] price, quality, ease of communication, and getting the job done in a professional and efficient manner. These are all reasons why we are celebrating our 90<sup>th</sup> year in business and the success of the third generation of Zuckerman family ownership and management."



LIBERTY BRASS



Bruce Guttler of Bruce Guttler Associates (left) and Peter Zuckerman of Liberty Brass pause for a break during the HD Boutique show in September.