

SPECIAL REPORT

Manufacturing Update

North Bay manufacturers cope with economic uncertainty

U.S. ‘fiscal cliff,’ regulatory environment continue to pose challenges

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NORTH BAY – With the fiscal cliff looming and demand for manufactured goods falling, North Bay manufacturers are finding ways to cope with uncertainty.

One thing is sure: manufacturing is not for the timid.

“To stay in the game you have to make your own opportunities,” said Jim Judd of J & M Manufacturing Inc. in Cotati. “You can’t sit around waiting for things to improve.”

According to the November report from the Institute for Supply Management a leading index showed a decrease of 2.2 percentage points

from October’s reading, indicating contraction in manufacturing for the fourth time in the last six months.

Distrust in national leadership added to the usual burden of state and federal regulation is taking its toll on the industry, according to some local business owners.

“We saw the slowdown start in November and we don’t expect much change through the first quarter of 2013,” said Richard Hunt of Datum Technologies Inc. in Santa Rosa.

The precision machine shop saw a

fall-off in the semiconductor industry, while oil and energy sectors flattened.

“Medical equipment is showing steady growth and aerospace is looking good. In times like these diversity is key,” said Mr. Hunt.

With diversification in mind, Datum Technologies is pursuing AS9100 certification, which will allow it to expand into the aerospace sector.

Certification is part of a strategic initiative plan put in place last spring. Mr. Hunt and his wife, who acts as

president, also added 850 square feet to their manufacturing operation and made improvements to the laboratory.

“Before things fell off we were running two eight-hour shifts, keeping the machinery going all night. If orders pick up again we’ll even add an employee or two,” he said.

Other local manufacturers contemplate no hiring during the first part of the new year.



The crew at Datum Technologies. The owners hope to add to the staff sometime next year.