

// by Robert Farrell, marketing communications consultant,

Farrell MarCom Services LLC //

# INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

A longtime manufacturing professional addresses leadership and industry concerns



**F**rom rising equipment costs to ongoing labor shortages, today's fabricators are under more pressure than ever to maximize productivity and protect their margins. Few people understand those realities better than Matt Garbarino, who recently joined SafanDarley North America as president. With more than three decades of experience working alongside shop owners, operators and production teams, Garbarino brings a unique perspective to his new role.

In this conversation, Garbarino shares how that experience shapes his leadership approach, what fabricators are most concerned about today and how SafanDarley is positioning itself to help customers compete and grow in a demanding and ever-changing market.

**Farrell: How has your experience shaped the way you approach your role at SafanDarley?**

Garbarino: When you've been on as many shop floors as I have, you get a clear understanding of what's at

stake. Jobs are hard-earned and every machine has to justify its place on the floor.

Equipment decisions directly impact uptime, labor efficiency and cost of ownership. That's why we focus on building long-term partnerships, not just selling equipment and moving on. That means helping customers make informed decisions from day one, setting clear expectations, responding quickly when support is needed and standing behind every machine we deliver. My role is to see that we deliver on these day-in and day-out, individually and collectively.

**From the conversations you've had, what keeps fabricators up at night?**

Labor and machine uptime are top of mind for many fabricators. These companies invest heavily in equipment; it's critical that those machines are running. Machine uptime, or "green light" time, is the difference between machines that are contributing to the bottom line and >

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*// Matt Garbarino, president, SafanDarley North America //*

those that are quietly costing money. Every minute a machine isn't running is lost output, delayed orders and added strain on teams already dealing with labor and cost pressures.

Fabricators are prioritizing quality, proven machines, but the machine itself is only part of the equation. Just as critical is the service and support

network behind it. When something goes down, responsiveness matters. Fast diagnostics, accessible expertise and reliable support can be the difference between a minor disruption and a major setback. In that sense, uptime, or maximizing green light time, isn't just about the equipment, it's about the strength of the partnership standing behind it.

Aside from that, it's many of the same things the industry has been dealing with for years – skilled labor, material costs and automation. Labor isn't just about finding good people, which is a challenge in itself; it also includes training, retaining and empowering people to be as productive as possible and as quickly as possible. Wages are higher, turnover is costly and onboarding takes time.

Material costs, especially with all the uncertainty surrounding tariffs, are a factor for any manufacturer including SafanDarley. Scrap and rework are always expensive, but those costs are multiplied tremendously as raw materials become more expensive. >



↑ *Matt Garbarino, the new president of SafanDarley North America, has a long career in the metals fabrication industry, including more than 22 years at Cincinnati Inc.*

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And, of course, there's automation. Technology can help, but many aren't sure how deep to jump in. Things can get expensive and companies shouldn't automate for the sake of automation, which is why we guide and educate customers on what returns to expect in the short term and how to scale that up when ready. All these investments, costs and returns are where equipment decisions really matter.

### You mentioned cost of ownership. What does that really mean?

Think about buying a car. The sticker price is just the start. Over time, you're going to have to pay for gas, oil, maintenance and repairs. That's why you do your homework and select a brand with the best reputation for reliability. I've often said, visiting a dealership service department during the buying process may impact your decision.

It's the same thing with fabrication equipment. Our servo-electric press

brakes eliminate the need for large volumes of oil and oil changes and only power when cycling. This offers low energy consumption and a more eco-friendly footprint. With labor at a premium, downtime erodes margins quickly. A machine that runs consistently protects profitability.

Precision and repeatability also play a major role. Features like automatic angle correction and repeatability reduce trial bends and scrap. When material costs are high, those savings compound. When I say that we offer a low cost of ownership, that isn't a marketing phrase. It's engineered into our machines.

### How is SafanDarley addressing the labor shortage?

We approach it from multiple directions. There's a one-to-one relationship an operator has with the machine. Making the machine intuitive to use simplifies programming and setup, which allows that relationship to develop faster. Offline programming,



↑ Even though Garbarino recently joined SafanDarley, he already feels at home with his new team.

graphical workflows and built-in intelligence allow newer operators to become productive faster.

Second is automation readiness. Shops can start with a standalone press brake built on the same platform as our robotic systems. When they're ready to scale, they don't have to replace what they already own.

Finally, there's structured training and support. With the help of our large distributor network, we're expanding preventive maintenance programs and ongoing training to ensure customers aren't left on their own. Additionally, our distributor network does a good job of teaching the basics, press brake 101, if you will, for incoming operators that are totally new to the world of metal fabrication. Labor costs are real and >

reducing complexity while improving usability makes shops less dependent on highly specialized operators.

**Automation can feel like a big leap for smaller companies. What advice can you offer?**

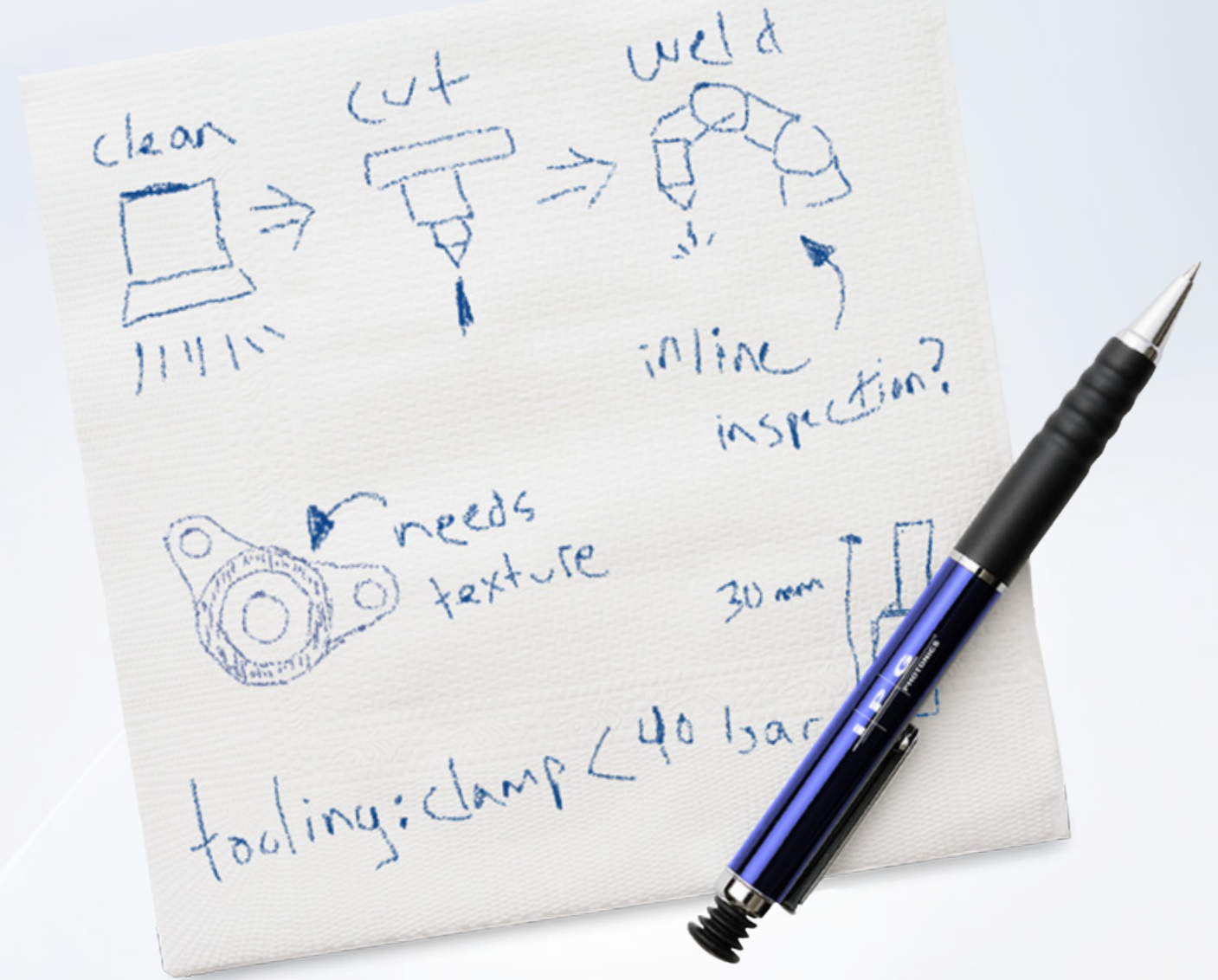
Make it measurable and manageable and take small steps. Use ROI tools to quantify labor savings, scrap reduction

and throughput gains. And above all, remove the guesswork. Our automation team focuses on the right solution, not the biggest one. Often, a phased approach makes the most sense. Start where it delivers value and scale when you're ready.

Technology comes with a cost. But trying to compete without it can be costly. That said, I want to add >



↑ Garbarino pictured with Alec Damon, a new automation engineer with SafanDarley's automation solutions team, and Brandon Bigelow, a company service manager.



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Let's Talk >

something that often gets overlooked. It's important to have the right person assigned to run or manage the automation. This can make or break your success. Even if this person has no technical experience, it can be taught. The bottom line is you need someone who takes ownership, is responsible, and is excited about

the challenge and opportunity that technology can provide.

### **Are service and support a major focus of SafanDarley moving forward?**

One of our benefits is our distributor network, especially Capital Machine >



↑ Garbarino poses on the left with the team at Capital Machine Technologies, a SafanDarley distributor, in their Dallas showroom.



“As the saying goes, sales will sell the first machine, but good service will sell the rest.”

// Matt Garbarino, president, SafanDarley North America //

Technologies LLC and Gladwin Machinery & Supply Inc. These two companies cover 85 percent of the United States for us and combined have 100 service technicians all regionally based for quick access to customers, meaning they provide goodwill calls and better customer service relationships. This is critical to how we sell and service our customers.

Consistency is essential and we're standardizing service procedures, strengthening communication with our distributors, and expanding preventive maintenance and priority response programs. We provide ongoing distributor service training, basic to advanced, at our Waukesha, Wis., facility to make sure that new and veteran service techs alike have the training and support they need.

Again, it's all about how we can help our customers get the most from their investments and lower ownership costs. As the saying goes, sales will sell the first machine, but good service will sell the rest.

### **Recent SafanDarley press releases indicate that you're emphasizing leadership from within. Can you discuss it?**

Absolutely. As we grow, the most important investment we can make is in our people. Leadership is a learnable skill. It isn't dependent on a title but rather, it's about creating an environment of trust where people feel safe to be the best they can be. Leadership is also about ownership, extreme ownership. No matter what obstacles or issues our team faces, the mindset and culture I am striving to create is to first look at ourselves and how we can do better to achieve the outcomes we want.

We support that growth internally and I've started monthly leadership training for our team using a Navy SEAL-founded leadership company called Echelon Front.

It starts with hands-on training and structured mentorship, but it also means giving people real

responsibility early with clear goals so they can build technical expertise and leadership confidence. Mentorship also plays a big role in that process, and we partner with a local technical college to give students hands-on exposure before they enter the workforce.

All of this benefits the individual, strengthens our team and, ultimately, improves how we serve our customers. When you value and strive for growth, accountability and exceptional service, leadership becomes part of your culture.

### **Looking ahead, what excites you most?**

The manufacturing industry always amazes me. It seems like every time we face pressure, whether it's rising costs, material volatility, increased competition or new technology investments, fabricators find a way to adapt and come back stronger. There's a resilience in this industry that's hard to match.

The thing that really excites me is our SafanDarley team and our distributor network. In both cases, we have very motivated people who truly live the "customer first" mindset. This makes it easier to coach and develop people, and the Waukesha team has really embraced the Echelon Front leadership training.

### **Thanks, Matt. Anything more you would like to add?**

Thank you for the opportunity to talk a little about SafanDarley. We've been the industry's best-kept secret for too long. For us, the formula for success isn't complicated: Stay close to what truly matters to our customers and help them become even more successful. When you build a strong foundation, good things follow. ■

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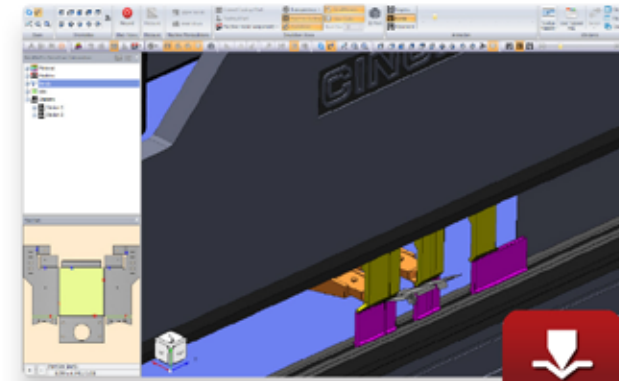
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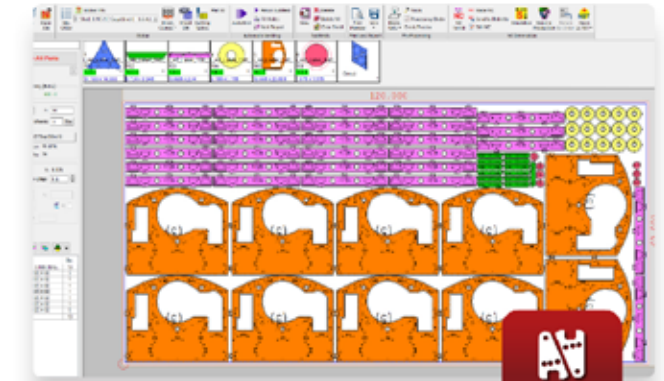


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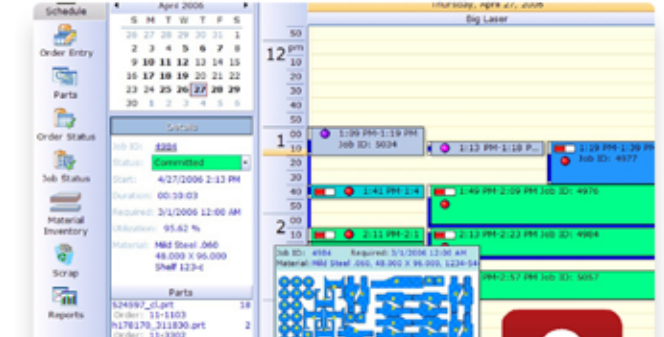
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