Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Wendy Peebles, Lead Outreach Coordinator, Census Bureau, Economic Management Division.

The Census team is happy to host this kick-off celebration for Manufacturing Month 2021, along with the partnership agencies to include the U.S. Commercial Services, EXIM Bank of the U.S., U.S. Small Business Administration, and MEP National Network, to bring you valuable information on manufacturers and federal agency resources to increase global business opportunities.

The Webinar is being recorded and the question-and-answer period will occur at the end of today's Webinar via the chat. Please submit questions to all panelists. The presenters will address as many questions as possible during the Webinar.

The contact information will be provided for further follow-up. A few weeks following the Webinar, the transcript recording and presentation will be posted to the Census Academy Web site. The link will be placed in the chat as well.
We will have an evaluation that we would like for you to complete as we value your feedback and it assists us in planning future Webinars. The link will also be provided in the chat.

I would like to remind you that every Thursday in the month of October, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, we will feature a topic in celebration of manufacturers across the country to help grow your businesses. You can obtain that information from where you registered for today's Webinar.

But I just wanted to share with you a few takeaways from today's Webinar, - you will discover online tools to access valuable trade data, assist in finding new distributors and buyers. You will receive support with financial deals, information on how to minimize non-payment risks, and extend credit to buyers.

So, once again, these are the takeaways for today. And as we take a look at today's agenda, we will have welcome remarks, we will have a video presentation from Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, overview of Manufacturing Day by Alexis Aafedt Director, Trade Facilitation Policy, National Association of Manufacturers. We will have a virtual manufacturers' roundtable in which Antwaun Griffin will be the moderator, and he is the Chief of Staff of U.S. Small Business Administration.

We will also have agency highlights that will share with us information on their services, programs and tools, SBA on Fast Track and the Step Program, MEP National Network. There's a national network center in every state and they will work with manufacturers.
EXIM will provide insight on financial solutions. U.S. Commercial Service will share information on export counseling and business matchmaking and other services. And last but not least, you will hear from the Census Bureau on our trade data tools. At the end we will have our Q-and-A from all the attendees. If you have questions, once again, please submit them via the chat, to all panelists.

And as I mentioned, we do have a special guest today. We are ready to kick off the Manufacturing Month celebration by showing a special video from the 40th and current United States of Commerce Secretary, Gina Raimondo. She was sworn in by Vice President Kamala Harris on March the 3rd, 2021.

We appreciate the Secretary's strong support for our manufacturing Webinar series and wishes to introduce herself with this video. Please welcome the message from the 40th Secretary of the Department of Commerce, Gina Raimondo.

((START VIDEO))

Gina Raimondo: Hello, everyone. Welcome to the kickoff of Manufacturing Month. Thank you, Wendy, for that introduction. Special thanks to the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee and the National Association of Manufacturers for hosting this event.

Today is about showcasing the importance of manufacturing to our economy. It's also about making you aware of government resources at your disposal to help grow your businesses abroad. We have an incredible line-up of speakers for you over the course of five Webinars this month. You'll hear from U.S. manufacturers across the country about their success stories in exporting. And
you'll learn about federal resources to support your business overseas, including export counseling, market intelligence and export financing.

We all know how important manufacturing is to the U.S. economy. According to the U.S. census, manufacturing employs over 12 million Americans. And since July, it's created more than 135,000 new jobs. Today, more than 70% of the world's purchasing power is outside of the United States. And I encourage U.S. companies to tap into this incredible customer base.

Manufacturers that export are more productive, more profitable, and more competitive. Here at the Commerce Department, we are laser focused on creating the conditions that empower American businesses to succeed at home and abroad. It starts with investing in American manufacturing, so that more products are made right here at home.

For too long, manufacturing jobs moved overseas, to regions with lower wages and fewer protections for workers. My family lived that experience. My dad worked in manufacturing for 28 years in Rhode Island, until the factory moved to China where labor was cheaper. It forced my dad and all of his friends into early retirement and it was really tough on everybody's family.

That story is very common all across America today, which is why the Biden administration and our team at commerce are making historic investments to strengthen America's domestic manufacturing, investments that will help local economies rebuild, create millions of good-paying jobs, and position American businesses to compete globally.

We're making a lot of progress, but there's so much more to do, and government can't do it alone. It takes strong partnerships with all of you to get the job done. So, please stay in touch with the Commerce Department. It's
more important than ever that we work together to build an economy with American manufacturers at the forefront. Thank you.

(WEND VIDEO)

Wendy Peebles: All right. It's always a pleasure to hear from our Secretary of Commerce and we thank her for her opening remarks to kick off the Manufacturing Month celebration. Now I will turn it over to Alexis Aafedt, Director, Trade Facilitation Policy, National Association of Manufacturing, for the manufacturing overview.

Alexis Aafedt: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ali Aafedt. I am the Director of Trade Facilitation Policy at the National Association of Manufacturers.

First of all, I'd just like to say thank you so much to the Census Bureau, EXIM Bank, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Commercial Service for putting on not only this great event, but a full series of programs to celebrate manufacturing and highlight the ways that the federal government can support manufacturers in expanding sales to global markets.

The NAM is the largest manufacturing association in the United States, representing 14,000 manufacturers large and small, in every industrial sector and in all 50 states, along with the over 12 million workers that they employ. Manufacturers contribute 2.44 trillion to the U.S. economy annually and have the largest economic multiplier of any major sector. And taken alone, manufacturing in the U.S. would be the eighth largest economy in the world.

These impressive numbers are supported by international economic growth, which has dramatically increased opportunities for manufacturers to sell to the
95% of the global population living outside of the U.S. In fact, U.S.
manufactured goods exported totaled nearly 1.2 trillion in 2020, even amidst
the global pandemic. The NAM works to foster an open global economy and
propel the continued expansion of our vibrant U.S. manufacturing sector,
while also advocating for a level playing field.

While trade and exports are extremely important to the thriving manufacturing
sector in the United States, equally important is ensuring the sector has the
skilled workforce to make things here in America. And this is where
Manufacturing Day comes in.

Manufacturing Day is a nationwide initiative that encourages manufacturers
across the country to open their doors, both physically and virtually, to
students, teachers, parents and community leaders to show them what
manufacturing really is in the 21st century. As of today, we have an incredible
420 Manufacturing Day events scheduled throughout the country.

By addressing misconceptions about careers in manufacturing, Manufacturing
Day is one step in filling our skilled labor shortage and ensuring the ongoing
prosperity of the whole industry. This year is special because, on top of
Manufacturing Day events, it is the official kickoff of the NAM and the
Manufacturing Institute's creative - Creators Wanted Tour, our largest
campaign to inspire and build the workforce of tomorrow.

The Creators Wanted Tour, including an immersive mobile escape room like
experience or other community programming, is coming to the cities
highlighted on the map on the slide. If you're interested in learning more about
Manufacturing Day and the Creators Wanted Tour, or hosting or attending an
event, you can visit creatorswanted.org for resources. If you'd like to learn
more about the National Association of Manufacturers, please feel free to contact me and my email address on the slide.

Again, thank you so much for the opportunity to be with you today to celebrate manufacturing. With that, I'll turn the floor over to Antwaun Griffin at SBA.

Antwaun Griffin: Thanks so much, Ali. And I want to thank the National Association of Manufacturers, the entire U.S. Department of Commerce, especially my friends and former colleagues at Commercial Service, Manufacturing Extension Partnership and Census Bureau, as well as the EXIM Bank for joining us to honor and learn from some great companies here on this eve of Manufacturing Day 2021.

Manufacturing has always been the engine that drives our economy, and a high priority, especially for the Biden-Harris administration, as well as all the federal agencies coordinating the celebration. In fact, just last month, President Biden announced that SBA is launching a new manufacturing hub, that you'll hear more about during the supply chain Webinar taking place on October 21st, also a part of this Manufacturing Month series.

Now, our focus today is on the success of U.S. manufacturers in the global marketplace and resources available to support more global sales growth. As mentioned, I'm the Chief of Staff at the U.S. Small Business Administration, and I previously had the pleasure of serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Commercial Service at Commerce. So, export promotion for U.S. small businesses is really near and dear to my heart.

I'm pleased to moderate this panel of manufacturing success stories that you'll hear from today, because one of the great joys of my, you know, being, and
quite frankly, the service I've been able to have here in the government is
getting to know these businesses and sharing their stories of success.

So, before we jump really into Q-and-A, I do want to take a moment to briefly
introduce them. Jonathan Szucs is the President of Advanced Superabrasives,
and the current Vice Chair of the North Carolina District Export Council and
the National Association of District Export Councils.

Jonathan started as an engineer after graduating with an electrical and
computer engineering degrees from Western Carolina University. And now he
runs his family's business. Under Jonathan's leadership, Advanced
Superabrasives earned the 2013 Presidential E Award for Exporting Excellence.

And in 2019, the SBA awarded Advanced Superabrasives its North Carolina
Small Business Exporter of the Year award. Back in June 2018, the Carolina
World Trade Association also awarded Jonathan their Leadership in
International Commerce Award.

So, in addition to all these accolades, I'm also told that Jonathan is so
proficient at exporting that he's even figured out how to sell something into
outer space. And hopefully he'll key us in on that a little bit.

Next, Terry Davis is the Founder and President at Brilliant You Denim, a
North Carolina apparel manufacturing company. She oversees operations,
product development, global marketing, and business development.

Previously, Terry spent over 13 years designing, developing and integrating
communications, command, computer controls, and intelligent systems for the
Department of Defense industry. In 18-plus years, leading programs and
projects for millions - many multimillion dollar mission-critical IT, telecom, and military initiatives, and startups for Fortune 100 to 500 giant companies.

She holds a master's degree in electrical engineering from Cornell and a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Kansas State University. I'd actually be interested in hearing how Terry got from there into the blue jeans business.

Finally, Craig Carson is the CEO of Jeco Plastic Products, which manufactures both custom and standard products for the aerospace, printing and automotive industries. Jeco has been nominated for innovation awards in both the U.S. and in Germany, and also received the 2016 E Award for Excellence in Export Sales from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

With nearly two-thirds of sales to international customers, Mr. Carson credits the U.S. Commercial Service, SBA and EXIM for providing critical assistance in researching new markets, making key contacts, and providing essential financial support with export credit insurance. I look forward to hearing more about how Craig has utilized these federal agencies to contribute to Jeco's export success.

I want to thank you all for joining us, and congratulations on your success. I have a few questions for you. Before we jump into those, I'd actually ask that you introduce yourselves and the company in your own words. Especially, tell us about what you make and anything else you can - any other information you can provide to help our audience get to better know you and a little bit about your company.

Jonathan, let's start with you. Tell us a little bit about your company.
Jonathan Szucs: Thank you, Antwaun. Thank you, everybody, for having me. It's been good to see Antwaun. I haven't seen him since he was back at Commerce. So, good to be back with friends. But I'm here to talk about manufacturing and all the things that Antwaun and I used to do when he worked for Commerce. So let's get started.

So, Advanced Superabrasives. What do we do? What do we make? In short, we make grinding wheels. Most of your probably going, what are grinding wheels? What do they do?

Well, let's just face it, if it weren't for grinding wheels, you wouldn't be able to be on the computer with me, you wouldn't have cell phones, you wouldn't be able to drive a car, fly in a plane. If you recently got a COVID shot, you're welcome because my grinding wheels actually ground the needle tips that went into all your arms.

So if you like food like I do, our wheels grind blades for cutting bread, slicing bread, cutting meat, all those things. So, you know, whether it's medical, aerospace, energy, whether it's renewable energy, anything, grinding wheels are a part of everybody's life.

So, Advanced Superabrasives, you know, we're out here in rural western North Carolina. You know, started in 1993 from humble beginnings with my father. Bought the company from him in 2017. But we've been doing exporting since 2006. And since that time, when my father said, "Hey, you're going to be our international export team, good luck, you're a team of one." The first call I made was to my local U.S. export assistance center and I said, "I need help, guys," and in stepped SBA, EXIM Bank, you know, everybody as a team to say, "Hey, we're here to help you."
So, ASI has extensive experience in working with these groups and working - utilizing STEP grants for different things, going to U.S. Commerce events such as Discover Global Markets, Trade Winds, Gold Keys, which helps us find distributors and customers around the world, and even trade missions.

And I'm even doing a virtual trade mission right now. I'm in the middle of it next month. I mean, that is so cool to be able to do it. And the only thing I miss is meeting people in person. But the 10-hour flight sometimes you don't always miss.

But, you know, we're here, we're growing our exports. Just a little something about what we do with our exports. You know, we're selling into all these different industries. And this year has been a year of explosive export growth for us, which is shocking. You'd think in a world of pandemic, everybody would be down and exports would be down for us. Well, I'm here to tell you, we're not.

Just a little bit of information and I'll be quiet, so we can get to the next panelist, is that, just this year we went live, at end of last year, with a Web site that we globalize for Mexico. And we are almost to the point, we started exporting in 2006, we are almost to the point where we have surpassed the past 15 years of export revenue to Mexico in just this year. I mean, I am so close, I can taste it. I'm thinking next month we should beat that record of the past 15 years.

So when I talk about exports and things, I am a true believer in exports, I love working with small businesses and mentoring them to sell around the world, in some of the toughest markets like India and Brazil and China, and we don't shy away from competition and we don't shy away from exporting.
So it's in my blood, partially because I'm an engineer, and the other part is because when I started in this business, my father said, "Hey, you're it, son, and exports depend on you." So I'm here and love to hear and talk about other exporting stories with our other panelists.

Antwaun Griffin: Thank you so much, Jonathan, and thanks for the story. And we're looking forward to, you know, obviously seeing and hearing many more great things from you and the Advanced Superabrasives team.

Let's kick it over to Terry. Terry, your turn. Tell us a little bit about Brilliant You Denim, and in particular, how you made that jump from engineering and mission-critical support systems with the Department of Defense into being a blue jean manufacturer.

Terry Davis: Absolutely. So I always kind of start at, most of us by the time we turn 16, 17, early 20s, something in our bodies is going to change. So I am no exception. That is literally where the innovation came from.

So, Brilliant You Denim design, manufacture and distribute custom jeans for women and men. Our denim brands are engineered in Greensboro, North Carolina, by the first Black female jeans manufacturer in the USA. Our company has six employees.

The company has been - we've been in business for nine years now. The first four years was focused on patent submission to grow our IP portfolio and other operational legwork. Very key for small businesses, well, you want to spend the time up front protecting your own new ideas. We decided that was a great situation for us.
Three years have been focused on manufacturing, setting it up, as well as a lot of initial product development. The last two years were focused on product exposure, sales, and growing our brand portfolio.

The unique sales proposition for our brands is based on patented enhancement innovation which both focus on comfort, fit and versatility for customer's unique body. The innovation solves the jeans problems that all of us are familiar with around comfort and fit.

And what we do is that we sew stretchy material into the seams of a jeans, and by opening up the seams in the areas where typically the body experience changes, this methodology allows the jeans to conform to each unique person's individual shape and body. They'll wear our brands and experience jeans the way they should fit and feel.

Antwaun Griffin: That's awesome. Thank you, Terry. Thanks for being here. Really appreciate it. And last but certainly not least, Craig, tell everyone a little bit about Jeco.

Craig Carson: I started a little differently than others on the panel. Rather than a product, I started with processes. I've got two, and generically speaking, they relate to very large products. And as I started doing research both in the United States and overseas, I realized this included some products that now are fairly standard for us and have worldwide appeal.

One of our pallets that are used for a specific application in printing, you know, may sound a bit weird, but I mean, I knew about as much as you do right now 23 years ago. But I found out that, in fact, it's a very critical thing that affects the productivity of those that use it. And we've expanded that to include contracts with all major manufacturers.
The other area that we do a lot with is something called thermoforming. It may not mean much to you, but we have an unusual one here that allowed us to also get into things with international potential, like, say, aerospace. And we actually have - there's two.

We actually have a part on the International Space Station. I don't get too excited about it because it is only just two of them that I make but they are backers for a cryogenic container, which they put, I'm not kidding you, they put in spiders after the spiders have spun their webs and they freeze these guys and bring them back down for who knows what. Okay, but it did do that.

The other one was for a very large French aerospace manufacturer called Safran, supplies Airbus and Boeing. So I started with the process and I ended up actually going overseas to sell things to overseas customers, who are our primary customers, by the way.

So along the way here, I picked up some things with football pads and oddball things, but not giving any kind of example of how to proceed, I would suggest you start with something that has international appeal. Football fans are really kind of limited to the United States and those didn't go very far. On the other hand, airplane interiors, for example, are one that did so. By the way, you ever see stuff on an Airbus aircraft, in the bathroom, those are mine. Thank you.

Antwaun Griffin: Thank you so much for sharing your story, Craig, and congratulations for all your great success.

We'll take a little bit of a turn here, and I want to invite each of you to respond to a question, particularly, you know, curious about how the pandemic and COVID has impacted your business and how it has changed the way you do business. One of - I know that, you know, was made mention earlier about the
importance of the business-to-business engagement, you know, trade missions, trade events, pressing the flesh, meeting your buyers, distributors and potential partners.

Certainly the pandemic for some time limited the ability to do that. I'd like to hear each of you talk a little bit about your journey during the pandemic and how it's impacted your operations and your business development. Let's go back to Jonathan, start with him at Advanced Superabrasives.

Jonathan Szucs: Yes. So, thank you. You know, obviously, the biggest impact for us was we couldn't travel. You know, when you're selling grinding wheels and it's a B2B market, in this industry, you know, you're expected to travel the world and go into factories and help them improve their processes and look at things. And we couldn't do that.

So the big question for us was, how do we reach these customers? What do we do? How do we get to them? How do we get our brand awareness out there? I mean, I heard Terry talking about brand awareness and everything, and so Advanced Superabrasives had that same issue, especially during a pandemic, is if we can't travel, we can't be in front of the customer, how do we do that?

And so we looked into Web site globalization. And that led to us creating Web sites for Canada and Mexico. And, you know, instead of cold-calling customers, we're getting, you know, 80 requests for quote a month. So, I mean, you know, just do the math, that's 20 a week request for quotes from customers that we didn't have in the past. So, you know, that's part of our brand awareness, looking at different channels like social media, how do we leverage social media, especially during a pandemic?
And then, how do we utilize U.S. Commercial Service - or Services during a pandemic? I mentioned a virtual trade mission, a virtual gold key. How do you do that? You know, in the past, we would just get on a plane and go, and you can't do that right now. So, how do you do that? And then, how do you do it effectively? And then, how do you train distributors and reps overseas that can't visit your facility?

So, you know, ASI really grasped a hold of all this during the pandemic and said, okay, we're really going to look outside the box. We're going to work with all these organizations. And what was great is that, whether we worked with, you know, SBA and their STEP grant program, whether we worked with Commerce, there were some out-of-the-box solutions. You know, they had some great ideas. "Yes, let's look at your Web site. Let's - what about your social media campaigns? You know, let's just take a look at that."

And so, you know, they even started making us think of, you know, me as an older school engineer, you know, I want to look at a book and figure something out. Well, the new engineers just want to look at YouTube and watch a video. So, how do you create videos? How do you create content? So that the up and coming generation, even post-pandemic, would be able to be interested in your company.

So, you know, we've stressed a lot on our online presence, whether it's been social media, Web site, and then really pushed these programs that we use through Commerce more to the virtual realm, and have been very successful with it. So that's what's really affected us. And like I said earlier, it's really led to explosive growth in exports and something I would have never imagined during a pandemic.
Antwaun Griffin: Thank you. Terry, talk a little bit about like what your experience has been like before, during, and, you know, I guess I can't say after, but talk to us about like how your business development strategies have evolved during the pandemic.

Terry Davis: So the five major areas of our company that have been impacted by COVID are, first, number one, financially. Financially, we have been using my own personal funds to help with the operations of the business. Due to COVID, I lost my engineering contract work for six months and did not have funds to provide for the business.

So the company resorted to apply for funding through grants and loans. We also launched our first-time crowdfunding campaign, which helped with our brand awareness exposure, which we did meet our goal.

The second area, revenue generation. We have restructured our product offering price model. We have now a tiered pricing model which lowers the cost for most of our popular design jeans. This was a win-win scenario with so many people being affected by COVID and out of work.

The third area that COVID affected us, customer retention. Although we did get some cancelled orders due to the North Carolina stay-at-home mandate, we realized that by offering discount with a no expiration date, some of our customers actually agreed to wait several months on their orders.

The fourth area, product offerings. We have launched a new product line much sooner than we had planned to. And this is because the additional time spent engaging customers, that our customer retention plan actually and the loyalty of our customers actually increased.
And the fifth area that COVID impacted us has to do with distribution strategy. So, prior to COVID-19, we had very little digital presence. Due to the devastation on the retail industry, our digital presence is now the primary way of generating company revenue, whether that's partnering with other B2C and B2B digital platforms. Thank you.

Antwaun Griffin: Thanks, Terry. And now let's go to Craig. Craig, can you talk to us about how Jeco has evolved during the pandemic? Any particular challenges and how you addressed them?

Craig Carson: Yes, thank you. I did it a little bit differently than the other two. We were facing a contraction in the industry the same time that COVID hit. So that was kind of like a one-two punch.

But what we did actually was we - the good side, I guess, was that the - most of our products had to go through large OEMs as a component of the products that they sold. So we focused on fewer customers but the larger ones, both on the receiving side and also those who've used them as an adjunct to their own materials. So that helped quite a bit.

We did use the virtual as the others did, but we didn't have to rely so much on the digital approach because of these personal contacts that were done by the guys that actually buy the pallets in this case for their machines. When it came to other large accounts, like, for example, the aerospace and so on, these were done by, once again, focused in just the very large guys, like Safran, for example. And then we used those to actually leverage the situation.

The biggest problem we had was losing people. I mean, it's very difficult, ours is somewhat labor intensive. So what we did is we actually increased the number of molds that we have per machine and that made up for some of the
productivity on that. But it's been very difficult, and the problem does not fully solved for us.

Antwaun Griffin: Thanks, Craig. So let me change gears a little bit and ask you, talk about - I think many of you have done this already, but if you could be specific about the federal services you've utilized to grow your global sales and how important that assistance has been to your success. Let's go back to Jonathan for this one.

Jonathan Szucs: Yes, thank you, Antwaun. Yes, we've used quite a bit of services, whether we're insuring our receivables through EXIM with policies, whether we're utilizing STEP grants. For those of you that don't know what STEP stands for, it's State - the State Trade Expansion Program. And those are grants handed out by the SBA.

And that helps you as an exporter, could be used for things that we've used it for, document translation, our Web site globalization I just told you about going live with Mexico and Canada. That came from STEP grants.

You know, pre-pandemic, we were going to trade shows. We were going to U.S. Commerce events such as Trade Winds. For those of you that don't know what Trade Winds is, Trade Winds is basically, I call it speed dating with your potential customers in a foreign country. And it is one of the best experiences.

But if you are afraid of traveling for whatever reason, they have these great things called Discover Global Markets, which is what I call speed dating in the U.S. with the international global market. So, you know, you can do either/or. If you want to tiptoe and start with Discover Global Markets and then head over to Trade Winds and head overseas.
Doing Gold Keys is another thing. Gold Keys is really where U.S. Commerce comes in and holds your hand. They help you find potential distributors, customers, do market research, things like that, things that help small businesses that maybe it's your first time into this market and you don't know, is it a market for me?

And I always tell this story. I was visiting with a foreign Commercial Service officer in Vietnam, and this was several, several years ago. And I asked her, you know, she had my market research, and I said, "Is Vietnam a good market for me?" And she was very plain and blunt and says "No. It is not a good market for you at this time."

Fast forward a couple of years, I ran into her in Washington, D.C. at a trade event, and she says, "Hey, by the way, you're in Vietnam, I hope, because it's time, if you're not in there." And so it's funny how these U.S. commercial officers actually remember you and your company over the years.

So it's not only these products and services, but they also really become a part of your company and family, so to speak. And that's what's so great about utilizing these services, is that, when you meet with these foreign Commercial Service officers, whether you're working with somebody here locally in the U.S. at you're U.S. Export Assistance Center, or SBA, or state trade promotion agency, these people really help you.

And so we've utilized all these services, and it's made a tremendous difference in our sales. You know, we were an accidental exporter, like most of you probably started out. Somebody called us from Canada and said, "Hey, we want to buy your product." We never thought about selling internationally. We were just happy to sell in the U.S. Now we're actively looking for this.
And not only are we using those programs, but, you know, U.S. Commerce is a great program that I'm utilizing right now from the Rural Export Center, which is the RAISE program, Rural America's Intelligence Service for Exporters. And if you're a small business in a rural area, I highly suggest you look this up. They give you a matrix of every country in the world, and what you sell, and they actually work with you with questions you want to know about going into this country.

And you can rank, weight and rank what are the most important questions. And they will give you every country rank where you should start exporting, and then the countries you definitely don't want to be exporting in. And at least it gives you a snapshot of that. And then they can take their services even further than that to help you find through, again, a Gold Key service, those potential distributors or buyers over there.

So when I say ASI exporter, I mean, we're trying everything, anything that Commerce or SBA or anybody is coming out with, we're definitely trying, because we are serious about wanting to grow our exports. We're in 28 countries around the world, you know, roughly. I'm not as big into exporting revenue wise as Craig where two-thirds of my business is there. We're still under 30%. We want to be 50-50 or higher.

We want to - we want to be like Craig. You know, we want to say, hey, we're selling all over the world. Yes, U.S. is great, but there's one thing you have to remember. In the U.S., we are the pickiest consumers and purchasers in the world. Once you leave the 50 United States, the rest of the world is actually a lot easier to work with. I mean, just think about how many times you open up a box and you look at the packaging, "I wish somebody would have packaged that a little better." You know, it's different when you sell internationally.
And selling an American-made product means something internationally. You go to Latin America or Europe or Asia, they have - I have customers that take our boxes with the Made in USA logo on and put it on the machine. And like this machine has Made in USA products on it. So it's a thing of pride for us. We really enjoy it. And I mean, we've had great success with all these programs.

So I hope anybody out there listening, you know, reach out to your people and really start exporting and utilize these programs. Because they are the best kept secret. Nobody knows about these programs, not because people aren't out there telling them about it. It's because, when you're a small business owner, you're so tied into your day to day and you miss a lot of these programs that may be out there. So I hope today you're going to hear from us and utilize some of these programs.

Antwaun Griffin: Thanks so much for that, Jonathan. And, you know, certainly, you know, one of the things that we hear (unintelligible) if you could figure out the U.S. market, like, the foreign markets are not nearly as daunting as people would have you believe.

Same question over to Terry. Like, talk about what federal services you utilized to support your sales growth overseas.

Terry Davis: So, Brilliant You Denim, we have utilized federally funded services for small business since day one. We started out with the Small Business Technology Development Center. They helped us to develop a business plan. Do not take that lightly. You really do have to have a focus in terms of your market size, what you're trying to do, your goal, et cetera, the whole nine yards. You have to have that. Otherwise, it is really hard for you to really focus on what you're trying to do as a small company. So that was really up front.
They also performed USA marketing research for us. Remember my background in electrical engineering? Absolutely no background on the denim industry. So I really needed a lot of help in education. They did that initial market research for me.

They also helped me with counseling regarding setting up a manufacturing facility. Invaluable support. After that, we've also utilized the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. They also perform international marketing research for us. Because you get this idea of, oh, my God, everyone loves denim, and they do, but you really have to understand the international market and what they're willing to pay and the pricing and the distribution method. So they performed international marketing research for us.

They also identified new international buyers for us. Absolutely, it would take us years to do what they actually did for us, you know in a month or so.

We've also utilized the STEP program funding. We just attended a really big trade show. We got some new domestic business. But we also got some new international contacts, which is awesome.

The third federally funded resource we've used is the U.S. Commercial Services Gold Key business matching services. And they also are very instrumental and doing a lot of the groundwork and talking to different boutiques and retailers to really help move our brand and educate, you know, boutiques and consumers on what we bring to the table, how our brands are different. And so, again - and distributors as well.

So those are the major sources that we have used to help our brand grow internationally.
Antwaun Griffin: Thank you so much for that, Terry. And last, let's go to Craig with the same question. Tell us about the programs or products and services you've been able to leverage, particularly here in the federal government.

Craig Carson: Well, I did a lot of the same things that Jonathan and Terry did. The Commerce Department is particularly helpful in any number of ways here. They've already been enumerated, so let me just add my own endorsement to using that very valuable service.

In addition to that, though, I have to also say the MEP program it's outstanding. I had all these different certifications which I had to achieve with very few people to do them. They were just absolutely invaluable, I mean, so, whether it be the ISO transitions to 2015 AS9100, CMMC requirements. These things were just - I couldn't do without. I mean, honestly, it was an absolute stop right there.

I also say though that, you know, don't forget the financing part of it. I mean, it's really serious. EXIM is great for AR, accounts receivable, insurance on it. But the SBA is great for working capital. It happens real fast. You can't, you know, when you're in trouble and you're small, you know, you'd better have somebody who's actually going to move and help you out. And I just can't say enough about all of those organizations.

One more thing I'd like to add, Jonathan touched on it, and that is that I had never had an experience with any government agency that has been as satisfactory as the ones I just mentioned. They give you personal attention over the years, in my case, 23. You actually get to know these people real well. I mean, I think Jonathan was talking about guys he knew overseas. I think Terry had mentioned it too. Well, I'm telling, it's really the case.
If you have a question about some place, Germany, for example, you know, you can go there and actually talk to these people. They actually care about you. I'm not kidding you. They answer the phone, they do stuff like this that nobody else does. You know, I mean, just try to find that when you're small. I've been at big companies, okay, no problem, right? Guys everywhere. Sweet.

I got a small one, okay? I got 25 people. That's when things are really good. Who are you going to go to? Where your staff? Well, you know who my staff is? These organizations right here, you know, and they know what they're doing.

So if I just got to emphasize one thing, I'd say don't forget that kind of personal attention because it doesn't happen in my experience in government or civilian life. But it happens here.

Antwaun Griffin: Thank you so much for that, Craig. And, you know, regrettably, we're at about time, so that we have more time for Q-and-A. There's been some great questions and comments coming into the chat feature.

But I want to, on behalf of, you know, certainly my colleagues at the Small Business Administration, my colleagues at the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Census Bureau, Manufacturing Extensive Partnership, Commercial Service, Census Bureau, EXIM Bank, thank you all, you know, Jonathan, Terry and Craig, for, one, sharing your time because that is increasingly our most valuable commodity, but also your stories and your journey, and, you know, and sharing your trials and tribulations. It's really impressive, really inspiring.
And I just want to thank you all and wish you much success. Look forward to seeing you the next Export Achievement Award ceremony.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Dan Pische from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Daniel, the floor is yours, sir.

Daniel Pische: Thank you, Antwaun. My name is Dan Pische, I’m the National Director at Trade Finance here at the U.S. Small Business Administration. Actually had the pleasure of participating in this event last year when I was a commercial lender focusing on what I've seen from the commercial side of the house. And subsequent to that event, now I have an opportunity to join the agency and take my experience working with small and midsize exporters and apply it to our loan program.

So, at the Office of International Trade, we offer a range of solutions to help small and midsize businesses engage in exports. Had an opportunity to hear about several of them today from our panelists. But we have the Business Intelligence and Policy Team, the STEP grant program, and the financing program that I oversee.

So in the next slide, we'll take a look at the business intelligence services. Essentially, this is one on one consultation available with international trade experts within the SBA who are there to help assess and diagnose trade and policy questions that the small business might have. Think of this as areas related to tariffs or other questions about accessing markets. It's also a great resource for helping to pull together the various offerings of the federal government.
We do maintain a toll-free international trade hotline. The phone number is listed there, as well as the centralized inbox which you can send questions to or make requests for future meetings.

On the next slide is our State Trade Expansion Program. We heard both Jonathan and Terry reference that earlier. STEP is a grant program that's administered by the SBA. It's done in partnership with our partners at the state level, in the international trade development areas, and can support a variety of business uses.

So, traditionally speaking, it was used for international trade development, a lot of businesses use it to support the Gold Key program with the Department of Commerce. The program has been in place for about 10 years and has really evolved. So it's expanded beyond trade missions to include everything from Web site modernization, translation services, accounting software upgrades, in some states, they're starting to cover the EXIM Bank trade credit insurance product. So, it is a very versatile program.

It does have a little bit of variance state by state. So if you're interested in international trade, whether you're already involved or considering, I would strongly recommend looking up the STEP program as it's available in your state.

And then finally, we have our loan programs, on the next slide here. We maintain a variety of working capital oriented solutions for businesses. So this is the area of the International Trade Office that I oversee, along with our staff of export finance managers.

I come to this position as a lender. So I specialize in trade finance and working capital. And if you look at the effects of the pandemic, you know, it's
pretty evident it's resulted in some stricter credit underwriting standards. Working capital availability has been curtailed in many situations. And, you know, this all comes at the same time where small businesses everywhere, and as consumers, we're facing supply chain disruptions. So, as a result, buyers are requesting longer sales terms. To quote Mike Howard, a friend of mine at the EXIM Bank, 90 days has become the new 60.

So the working capital products that we offer help businesses pivot and meet market challenges while also positioning them to take advantage of the many opportunities that are available to small businesses.

We do maintain three products, that I can go over briefly and also to plug our upcoming Webinar on October 14th, where I'll be joined by Ursula from the EXIM Bank, as well as folks from the commercial lending and trade credit insurance space.

But we have three products -- the Export Express, is a flexible working capital solution to assist with development. It's also a great product for any small businesses who are beginning or engaged in e-commerce on the international stage.

Export Working Capital. This is our flagship product. Supports everything from accounts receivable to purchase order financing, as well as the issuance of standby letters of credit.

And then finally, we maintain the export, I'm sorry, the International Trade Loan product. This is a term loan product that can support permanent working capital, so, term-based based working capital, as well as help expand capacity, re-shore manufacturing, and support facility expansion and equipment
purchases. So that loan is actually probably the most standard of our three and that it's very similar to the SBA 7/8 program for anyone familiar with that.

But finally, I want to actually reference our network of export finance managers. We have an incredibly talented team spread throughout the country, in most major metro markets, and are really there to help a business assess their lending and working capital needs, as well as serve as a resource to help pull together local and federal resources. So, at the bottom there sba.gov/international, you can find your way to our export finance manager list.

And feel free to reach out to representative in your local market. We're really here to assist. And, you know, one of the benefits of the new virtual environment that we all operate in is it certainly makes engaging a lot easier when you can just jump on a Teams call.

So with that said, I'd like to pass it over to my colleague in the MEP Network. So I'll let you take it away now.

Anthony Diaz: Great. Thank you, Dan. Hello, everyone, and happy early Manufacturing Day. My name is Anthony Diaz, I'm a strategic partnerships manager with the National Institute of Standards and Technologies, Manufacturing Extension Partnership or MEP.

MEP is a public-private partnership with 51 centers located in every state and Puerto Rico. And we're here to help small and midsize manufacturers. Our mission is to strengthen and empower U.S. manufacturing.

Next slide, please. So, like I mentioned, we're a public-private partnership with 51 centers in every state and Puerto Rico. Across this network we have
over 1400 manufacturing experts that serve as trusted advisers that are here to help your company grow. They're experts in manufacturing. They know the business. They're there to hear about your company's challenges and help you find solutions.

You can get - you can get your service in over 385 service locations. Our network leverages over 2100 partners that include universities, federal laboratories, state governments, federal agencies, and more.

A little bragging moment for the MEP National Network. We have a net promoter score of over 84, which is well above the industry standard, when asked that question of "Would you recommend, you know, the MEP Network to a friend or colleague?"

Next slide, please. Great, thank you. Sorry, there's a little bit of delay.

So, how do we help? You can see from the slide, we have a broad wheel of services. Manufacturing is a broad sector. We know that a lot of manufacturers are quite small. And because of this, we have a great variety of services.

So, lean, we can help your business to train staff on lean principles. We can help implement lean practices that can help your company to improve productivity, to improve the layout of the factory, to make it more efficient, to reduce costs.

We have business growth services like market intelligence information. We can help you to find new clients, to retain existing clients. We can help you to develop and prototype new products. We can also help you to implement new technologies into your factory floor like robots and cobots.
We can help with cybersecurity. So, for example, if your - we can help you to keep your business safe from cyber, by adopting best-in-class cyber best practices. We can also help your business to be compliant in the DEARS (Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement which is a requirement that's needed to be part of the DOD supply chain.

We help with workforce development, so, whether that's finding talent, training talent. We can develop customized training solutions that can teach soft skills like leadership, to customized training solutions like how to use the technology that you just implemented into your factory floor.

We can help companies with exporting and re-shoring. So we work with the commercial service, which should be delivering their presentation soon, on a program called Export Tech, that can help small and medium-sized manufacturers consider exporting and developing an export strategy.

We also help with supply chain. So if you're looking to, you know, find new suppliers, if you're looking to, you know, mitigate risk with your current supply chain, MEP is here to help. And like Craig had mentioned earlier, we also help with ISO and quality certifications.

Next slide, please. I'm going to skip this slide to give a little bit of time. But basically we're here to help, we're trusted advisers, and we'll walk you through the process when helping you out.

But another bragging point of ours is some of our metrics. So this is what our clients last year told us. We helped out MEP clients to create or retain over 105,000 jobs. We've helped our clients to increase their sales or get new sales or retain sales of $13 billion, that's billion with the B. We've helped our clients
to invest nearly $5 billion into their operations. We've helped their clients to save nearly $3 billion in costs.

Next slide, please. Also, and just a quick shout-out. I see that our (NCMEP) in the chat, so, hello.

But again, my name is Anthony Diaz. Here's some resources. Our MEP main page. Find Your Local Center, so you can find that center that's in your state or your locality.

We also have success stories. We have over a thousand success stories that are publicly available on our Web site. If you're looking to find success stories in your state and see what the local MEP center has done for manufacturing in your state, check it out. And I'll also post this in the chat for everyone to look at.

So with that, I turn it over to my next colleague, the EXIM Bank. So, thank you.

Ursula Wegrzynowicz: That afternoon, thank you so much for inviting EXIM Bank here today. My name is Ursula Wegrzynowicz and I'm with EXIM Bank, here to introduce you to our services. We are a federal government agency. If we can go to the next slide.

We are a federal government agency based in Washington, D.C., with offices all around the country. I personally sit in Chicago. And as Dan had mentioned, oftentimes actually we're in the same suite as our SBA colleagues and as well as our Department of Commerce colleagues who you're going to hear from next. And so when you can visit us in person someday, we're all there and
working closely together. And for now, we're just a Teams or a Zoom or a call away.

So, what does EXIM Bank do and who are we, for those of you who may not be familiar with us. We are a federal government agency, and basically our task is to make sure that U.S. based companies have the resources that they need to compete on a global scale.

Why do we do that? Well, most other industrialized countries have an EXIM bank or an export credit agency. And the reason why is because those governments, much like ours, believes that jobs are created through exports. And so we want to make sure that you have the tools necessary to either finance an export transaction or mitigate the risk of non-payment, as we heard from Craig earlier. And he mentioned already one of our kind of platinum products. So that's kind of why we exist.

And how we do what we do is we do make sure that the customers that you potentially give credit to or making sales to are credit-worthy institutions themselves. And so we are doing due diligence. And in case they don't make a payment, that is our job to then collect on any potential bad debts. And we have a really good track record of chasing after our funds.

If we can go to the next slide. So, most of our customers that we run into are manufacturers. And one of the major concerns is, well, how am I going to get paid if I am actually going to export my product overseas, which is a very valid concern.

There are certainly a lot of different options when it comes to selling internationally as far as payment terms are concerned. You certainly can ask for cash up front, but the concern there is that potentially you're losing on
sales opportunities if you're being too conservative in the terms, because you also have foreign competition that is offering potentially terms either supported by their government or by some type of other resource like private credit insurance.

Some of our customers sell letters of credit, which are definitely appropriate sales terms. But that can be difficult when you're trying to establish a relationship with a distributor dealer or even a client on an ongoing basis. It could be clunky, it could be time-consuming, not to mention expensive.

And so what we offer to our customers is what Craig mentioned earlier, which is export credit insurance. It comes in a variety of different options. But essentially what credit insurance is, is an insurance policy to cover your foreign accounts receivables. You have many times insurance on many other assets within your business, but typically accounts receivable could be one of those assets that are not covered.

And so what credit insurance does for our customers is it gives them confidence to offer terms so that they can be competitive on the international marketplace and then, potentially, in the event that there is a non-payment situation, that's the whole purpose of the policy, turn to us and we'll cover that receivable 90% or 95%, depending on the type of policy that we're talking about, but that's covering a majority of your risk, so that you can confidently sell to Colombia or Mexico just like you would to Kansas or anywhere else here in the United States.

Other customers of ours have difficulty when it comes to cash flow, access to cash flow. Much like Dan at the SBA, we offer a form of working capital guarantee as well. The whole purpose of this type of program is to make sure that you as the U.S. manufacturer, if you're receiving a large international
purchase order, that you have the funds that you need to fulfill that purchase order, whether it's to pay for labor, overhead expenses, purchase raw materials, and so forth.

For a lot of our companies who are it turns out they're already doing business internationally, I think somebody alluded to earlier, the accidental exporter. Many of the companies that we work with, that's exactly what they are. They have had international sales because of inquiries that come either through a trade show or through a Website and they're doing business in Canada and they may or may not consider that to be foreign. We do. It is still foreign country, friendly as it is.

And so, oftentimes many companies already have accounts receivables, that if we can just get insurance on those receivables, become collateral, collateral the bank now can lend against.

So these are just a couple of examples of our services that EXIM Bank offers. If we go to the next slide. But again, we are just a phone call or a Teams call away. We have representatives all over the United States. And we work closely with our SBA as well as Department of Commerce colleagues. So if you reach out to us and maybe we're not the solution, we'll get you to the right place.

And on that note, I'm going to turn over to my colleague Pam at the Department of Commerce.

Pam Plagens: I'm Pam Plagens, Advanced Manufacturing Team Leader for the U.S. Commercial Service, the trade and investment promotion arm of the U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration. I'm pleased to
join you as we celebrate Manufacturing Day 2021 and kick off a month of celebrating manufacturing.

Next slide, please. The U.S. Commercial Service has a network of over a hundred offices across the United States and locations in more than 75 international markets. Our mission is to strengthen the U.S. economy and help create jobs by expanding U.S. exports, and by facilitating inward investment into the United States via the Select USA program.

The vast majority of our exporting clients are small and medium-sized companies. And we're also focused on assisting businesses in traditionally underserved communities. In fiscal year 2020, we assisted nearly 40,000 export and investment clients, facilitating $104 billion in U.S. exports and inbound investment.

The Commercial Service office near you coordinates closely with our other federal partners here today, as well as your local economic development ecosystem. Our export promotion services focus on actionable market intelligence, counseling, B2B engagement, business matchmaking, and more.

U.S. companies can tap up-to-the-minute Market intelligence developed by our Industry Specialists and Consulates around the world. We stay up to date with rapidly evolving business landscape at home and abroad through our work with industry partners and trade groups and by supporting trade events globally.

We offer counseling and virtual services through our local trade specialists across the United States and through our industry specialists around the world. And B2B introductions between U.S. suppliers and potential foreign buyers.
For example, our **GOLD KEY MATCHING SERVICES** provides matchmaking appointments with prospective buyers or partners.

These and other services are also available at some of the numerous events we attend, including Hanover Messe in Germany, and IMTS in Chicago, or through our signature Discover Global Markets.

Next slide, please. **Trade Winds Middle East and North Africa** is launching in Dubai, UAE, March 6th through 8th, 2022. Consider joining us in Dubai for the largest biennial U.S. government led trade mission and business development forum.

Organized by the U.S. Commercial Service, Trade Winds will feature meetings with U.S. commercial diplomats from over 20 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa, with plenty of networking opportunities. Qualified U.S. businesses may customize their experience with optional business-to-business matchmaking. Meetings with partners from across the region.

We also offer Commercial Diplomacy and Advocacy to help remove market access barriers and coordinate U.S. government wide advocacy efforts for U.S. companies competing for foreign government contracts.

Next slide, please. In 2020, U.S. exports of manufactured goods totaled 1.17 trillion, with nearly half of that amount going to U.S. Free Trade Agreement country partners. With 95% of the world's consumers outside the United States, exporting helps boost your bottom line while helping you weather changes in domestic and world economy. Moreover, a business is never too small to export. In fact, 97% of all U.S. exporters are small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 500 employees.
And there's plenty of help available through trade.gov, the federal government's exporting portal. It offers Free Online Resources and provides a wealth of educational market and industry information on exporting and inbound foreign direct investment. And of course, details on Commercial Service events and office locations.

Thank you. Now I'm going to hand it over to my colleague John with Census.

John Darr: Thanks, Pam, and thanks for teeing me up on those free resources. My name is John Darr. I'm a program analyst in the Economic Indicators Division of the U.S. Census Bureau.

We can be a great resource for manufacturing. We even had a trade helpline, and that number is at the bottom of the slide. It can help you with things like Schedule B classifications.

Our division collects and processes data from thousands of businesses across the United States. And our monthly, quarterly and annual releases are the basis for a lot of the media stories you might see on the health of the economy or even a specific industry. As Pam said, we have a lot of resources to share, and I'm here to share with you two online tools that we maintain that a lot of manufacturers utilize daily.

USA Trade Online is a dynamic tool that gives users access to current and cumulative U.S. export and import data, between the HS and NAICS codes. USA Trade Online offers the most detailed international trade data, with more than 17,000 import commodity codes and more than 9000 export commodity codes. As a user, you can really zero in on the imports and exports you care about by state, by district, by port, or even by time.
USA Trade Online pulls data from forms fields from virtually all U.S. exports and imports, and we even can sort data by commodities, multiple measures like dollar value, quantity, unit value, even air and vessel. And you can even dial in the country source, geographic region, trade agreement, and international organization.

Here's what that homepage looks like. You'll need to create an account, but it's free. Just click on the sign-up button now.

With USA Trade Online, you can create a large variety of charts and graphs to help make sense of what international trade matters to you. And here are a couple of examples that you can create.

Another great tool we offer is Global Market Finder, and this is free as well. It's an interactive data tool that paints a picture of the export market for a particular commodity. As a user, you just need to click on the Schedule B you're interested in and the tool will display all the countries that the United States exports to and will show the value and method of transportation and unit price. As a user, you can really drill down on specific countries and download the export data that really, really matter most to you.

Again, both of these tools are free and our team is here to help via the trade help line if you have any questions. Thanks for your help today. And thanks. Back to you, Antwaun.

Wendy Peebles: So I think we're ready for questions. That wraps up all the presentations and federal agency reports. Pam, you can start with the questions.
Pam Plagens: All right. I'm in charge of questions, folks. You put some good ones into the chat, so I'm going to start off with a question for Jonathan.

Jonathan, and this actually piqued my interest as well, how long did it take to upgrade your Web site to a global international Web site? And as part of that, do you take a - do you handle e-commerce products and ordering, do you have that as a feature?

Jonathan Szucs: So it didn't take us very long. We thought it was going to take us, you know, six months to a year. We rolled out a new Web site in less than two months. We found a partner to work with that was very good at international Web sites. If you had a state - if you have a state trade expansion program partner, like Terry mentioned earlier, the SBTDC in North Carolina or EDPNC in North Carolina, actually had a company they were partnering with that does globalize Web sites.

The key is, you know your product and you would be amazed at how much stuff you actually have for your Web site that you didn't even think you had -- pictures of your product, customer testimonials, stuff like that. So it really only took us a couple of months, because these people really, this is what they do, was a great product.

We do not have an e-commerce as of right now. We're looking at possibly adding that. We've been requested to add that in Mexico, because there's a lot of new shops opening up in Mexico where it's just a couple of machines, so they don't need to buy large quantities of our product. And they're just wanting to say, can we buy, you know, one or two of this, one or two of that? So it's something we're definitely looking to in the future.
But you can't just have the Web site. You also need to have a social media marketing platform on that. And that includes, you know, things such as Facebook or LinkedIn Canada. LinkedIn is very successful for us in Mexico. Obviously, Facebook's very successful for us, or even WhatsApp. Most of you that travel internationally know WhatsApp is. So, you know, using those types of social media definitely helps.

And having it in that language. So even if you're doing YouTube videos or anything else, have it in that language of that country. All of our Facebook stuff is done in Spanish, with the correct Spanish for Mexico. So that's another thing I would say to look out for. Make sure that your language, you know, Spanish isn't Spanish everywhere. Spain Spanish is different than Mexico Spanish, and, you know, same thing with Portuguese between Brazil and Portugal. So just make sure you find a good partner, and it doesn't take that long to do.

Pam Plagens: Thank you very much. You know, we, this past year, with help of one of your trade specialists, local trade specialist in North Carolina, launched a digital manufacturing Webinar series. And I heard from some manufacturers that are doing some awesome stuff online to promote and to get more hits on their Web site and to really build that business. So I'll have to take a look at your site.

Next question. This one is for Terry. How do you sell and develop new business? Are you online only or do you work with local partners to promote your products?

Terry Davis: Well, I do have to say, prior to COVID, completely different story. Right now, yes, our Web site, we do sell on that Web site, but, you know, the future of retail is online. You think about it, the number of people that can look at your
product or brand awareness, you know, versus physically having to walk into a store, not saying that that is not important. That is important.

But we have partnered with so many B2C and B2B digital platforms that is major right now. So that is the primary thing that's driving our business growth right now. You have to be online. That level-sets, you know, give you the advantage where, you know, a lot of the larger retailers, you think about it, they closed their doors. There was that long stay-at-home, you know, six months to a year.

So I would say if you don't have a Web site, you really, really, really want to look at getting that. So that that's primarily the biggest increase in business right now that we're doing.

Pam Plagens: Thank you. Thank you. And Terry, stay on camera, because I have another question for you. Did the SBTDC show you reports from IBISWorld? They'd be curious to know the market research that they provided. And you can translate SBTDC for us as well. I presume I know, but I would like - I'm going to throw that out to you.

Terry Davis: Yes. It's Small Business Technology Development Center. Every state has them. They are an SBA-funded program. And all you really have to do is just type that in and then like do a search engine, and it'd come up with their Web site, and just type in your ZIP code and it would give you the closest location to you and you can call up and make an appointment, go in and talk to them. And there would be - they are - they really were amazing to help you get started.

So they actually did, like I say, I'm coming from an engineering background, going into a retail, then the whole nine yards, zero background when I started
this company out. They literally walked my hand and took me through it. They did a lot of the marketing research based upon my knowledge, you know, in terms of, you know, what's the denim size in the USA, what's the denim size worldwide, men, women, etcetera.

They literally - I submitted a set of questions, of course, yes, they did share that with me, but I submitted a specific set of questions that would really help me help our company to determine our business plan. So you definitely want to take advantage of those resources. They were great.

Pam Plagens: Hey, we got an additional note in the chat that the Texas SBTDC is online Webinar today too. So I think I know who I'm going to follow up with in the next week.

All right, you know, the - Terry, thank you so much. The next question is actually directed towards me. I feel very honored. It's actually directed towards me on behalf of my colleagues and I. Can you provide a list of the departments and agencies that - to consider for exporting - or exporting and financing?

And I would say you're in the right place, whoever put that in the chat. Let me kind of start off with, as I noted, we have a hundred offices around the world and we're in 75 plus countries. But we are in - many of our offices are co-located with many of the agencies that are on here today, starting with SBA. And as you heard, you know, in many different manifestations (of the CBC), and SBA has a lot of resources around the country.

We're also - EXIM Bank, again, we're actually a little co-located with the EXIM Bank here in Houston. The MEP National Network, and they're working on the Export Tech program, really drills down for the manufacturers
or early-stage manufacturers. And I was really, really excited to hear Craig's shout-out to the MEP program.

And, you know, I also want to mention the Minority Business Development Agency. They have export centers across the United States. I know in Houston they're just opening up a new one. So pretty excited to learn more about what they are going to be doing. We have been working more with the MBDA in recent years. And so, look forward to ramping that up.

There are - we as a group are part of the TPCC, Trade Promotion and Coordinating Committee, and there are other agencies across the United - across the U.S. government that do provide assistance in exporting. Maybe not - you might not see it per se outwardly, but for example, I know we work with our colleagues at, obviously, the Department of State, that goes without saying. But we promote - we have commercial - we focus on commercial diplomacy and they focus on, you know, the bigger picture of diplomacy.

But also the Department of Energy has an international department. Depending on what your industry sector is, you may find that there's an international office supporting that.

Okay. And another question. This is directed to our panelists. For the businesses, what's the one most important recommendation you have had for a manufacturer considering expanding into the global marketplace?

So I'm going to - let's see, why don't I - let's reverse the order a little bit. We're going to start with Craig.

Craig Carson: Let me start over briefly. I said, I think the best thing to do is to simply take one step forward, whichever seems right. One step will lead to another. In my
case, I started with the Commerce Department. That led to the EXIM Bank. That led in turn to the MEP and SBA. I went in that sequence like that.

You'll find that as you take these steps, it's a journey, okay? Each person will help you along that journey. And as you take that step, you're going to find out where the next step really should be. You'll discover it as well as that other person that's helping you.

So I don't think there's a set path on this matter here. You've got four excellent agencies. I mean, I've mentioned it before, but I really mean it. Pick one, which one is close, somebody that you can talk to, and then follow it.

Pam Plagens: All right. Terry.

Terry Davis: Okay. So I would say the very first thing is just get started. You know, you're not going to know everything. And you got to rely on the support that's out there to really help you.

I would say one of the most important though, I can't emphasize it enough, is get some marketing research done, because that would really help you to focus on prioritizing which countries you want to focus on depending on your product line, the size of the market. It would help you with pricing. It would help you with positioning, you know, your brand.

So I would say, of anything else, yes, definitely get started, and - but start with some really good marketing research, because that is going to be key to help you focus. It would also help you save a lot of frustration, you know, the time, the money, etcetera. So that that would be my recommendation.

Pam Plagens: All right. Jonathan.
Jonathan Szucs: Thank you. So, everybody's kind of said the same thing that I was going to say, is start. But one thing, I'm going to change it up and say, network. And what I mean by network is you have these agencies listed here to reach out to.

But why are you here? You don't only want to hear those agencies. You heard from three great panelists. You got to hear Terry's story, Craig's story, my story. Do you want to hear more stories like that? You need to network to do that.

One good way to do that is that are 61 district export councils across the United States. Not all states have a district export council. Some have four, like California. But the district export councils are made up of manufacturers and service providers, and half of the district export council has to be manufacturers. So, everybody on the call here, manufacturers.

And what we do is we mentor small businesses in how to export their products and services. So, imagine you get to meet somebody in your state, maybe close to you. Terry is only three hours down the road for me, but I know district export council members that are probably 10 minutes from where Terry is at right now, where she could sit down and have a one-on-one conversation and say, "Hey, I want to go into Ghana."

And you would have somebody that maybe has experience in doing business in Ghana and can tell you from a business perspective these are the landmines to sidestep or things that you need to be careful of or things that you should do. And again, it's just another resource for you.

My biggest thing when it comes to exporting is networking. You heard Terry mentioned EDPNC, SBTDC, we see all, you know, U.S. Commerce, EXIM
Bank, stuff like that. And so I always say the district export councils, mainly because I'm on one, but we're also appointed by the U.S. Commerce Secretary.

So these aren't business professionals that just get together. We actually have to go through a vetting process and we have to be reappointed every three years. So, you know, we have to be in good standing, have to remain as exporters. And you also have service providers. So you may reach out to somebody that's an international attorney, you don't have one, or an international accountant that can help you with auditing your distributors to make sure you're in compliance.

Or maybe you're looking just for a freight forwarder. Somebody help you get something from A to B. And as a small business, that's difficult. You know, going to the Post Office isn't the way we do business anymore. You know, you want somebody to show up, pick up the product, get it through customs for you without a problem. How do you do that?

District export councils are a good way, that's a free thing. We do it all for free, do it for the love of exporting. But we complement all these agencies here, and all these other agencies complement each other. So, don't be afraid to reach out to any of them. And chances are if you get with one, they're going to invite you to others.

Yesterday, I introduced Craig to a district export council member in Indiana, which is great. Now he's got a local resource not too far from him. So my biggest thing is networking.

Pam Plagens: And, Jonathan, there is such a huge network and there are so many people out there who want to lend a hand, who want to see you succeed because, you
know, it's not just you, it's your community that succeeds. And I'm really fortunate to work with a great organization and with our partner agencies that, Jonathan, you hit the nail on the head. We all know each other well.

Actually, programs like this help us refresh what everybody is up to today, but we know each other well. We're in your communities. And we are really here to make, you know, to help you help yourself.

On that note, I am going to hand the baton back to my colleague, Wendy, another of my fellow Department of Commerce colleagues, Wendy, with Census. And she's going to wrap things up. Thanks, everybody.

Wendy Peebles: Okay, great. Thank you, Pam. What an excellent Webinar. A lot of great information was shared today.

Once again, certainly want to say special thanks to Alexis Affedt Director, Trade Facilitation Policy, National Association of Manufacturers; our moderator, Antwaun Griffin, Chief of Staff, U.S. Small Business Administration.

And to the businesses that participated on the Manufacturers Roundtable interview, to include Terry Davis, Founder and President. Brilliant You Denim; Jonathan Szucs, President, Advanced Superabrasives Incorporated; and Craig Carson, President and CEO, Jeco Plastic Products.

Also special thanks to the Secretary, sent in a video to share some opening remarks for celebrating Manufacturing Month, as well as our partnership agencies for sharing their services, products and resources.
So, once again, there's been a great wealth of information that has been shared today. Just wanted to remind you, as you exit today, to please complete the evaluation.

And also remember that every Thursday in the month of October, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, we will have Webinars that feature topic in celebrating manufacturers across the country, to help you to grow your businesses.

So, thank you to all the attendees. Thank you for your questions. This completes the Webinar for today. Thank you for joining, and enjoy your afternoon.

Coordinator: Thank you. That concludes today's conference and thank you for participating. You may disconnect.

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