

MARLIN



Sheet Metal Fabrication

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[Manufacturer Goes Global](#)



Drew Greenblatt '88's winning strategy featured in The Atlantic

by Michelle Simmons

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As small-business owners continue to hunker down and await better economic forecasts before injecting cash into their companies, Drew Greenblatt '88 is forging ahead.

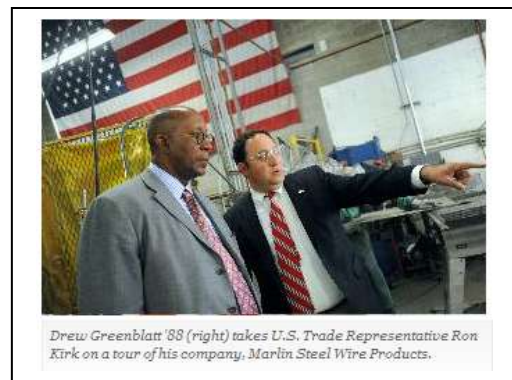
An article in the October issue of *The Atlantic* titled "[The Bright Side](#)" features his manufacturing firm, [Marlin Steel Wire Products](#), as an example of how industry can reinvigorate the economy through a blend of [21st-century technology](#) and old-fashioned investment in workers.

"Small businesses have become a bellwether for the condition of the American economy," writes author Megan McArdle, business and economics editor for *The Atlantic*. "America truly could not survive without operations like Marlin Steel Products."

Rapid turnaround

Greenblatt's passion for [rebuilding America's manufacturing base](#) was evident from the day he bought Marlin Steel 12 years ago. The company, based in Brooklyn at the time, was using equipment from the 1950s and minimum-wage employees to make wire baskets for bagels.

Greenblatt moved operations to Baltimore, updated the equipment and sought out global markets. Today, the cutting-edge manufacturer crafts custom-[steel products for clients such as Toyota and Boeing](#) and employs highly skilled—and highly educated—technicians to operate its robotic machinery and export to more than 30 countries.



Drew Greenblatt '88 (right) takes U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk on a tour of his company, Marlin Steel Wire Products.

"I'm paying my employees \$15 to \$25 per hour," he says. "We need people who can read calipers, who know what a radius is, who can read a blueprint."

In 2007, [Marlin Steel was named Baltimore's Regional Employer of the Year](#). The company saw its most profitable year to date in 2009, and Greenblatt is making room for two new engineers and more machinery in 2010.

In a [global economy where currency manipulation and trade imbalance is too often the norm](#), Greenblatt focuses on ingenuity and quality. “I can’t in general offer prices lower than Chinese manufacturers. The only way I can prevail and pay my employees well is by offering the best delivery and highest quality in the industry,” he explains. “So you need the technology. If it’s my guys operating robots, they’re much more productive in ways the Chinese can’t touch.”

Persuasive skills

The former political-science major credits Dickinson not only for instilling in him a global outlook, but with teaching the writing skills he needed to compete in a tight marketplace. “Writing is critical for what I do, in communicating with clients, with employees,” he says. “Talking in a persuasive manner is intrinsic to my success.”

Greenblatt, who earned an MBA from the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University, also writes opinion pieces for [The Baltimore Sun](#) and [Baltimore Business Journal](#) and gives speeches regularly in his role as chairman of the [Regional Manufacturing Institute](#).

An executive board member of the [National Association of Manufacturers](#), past president of the [Wire Fabricators Association](#) and member of the Governor’s International Advisory Council, Greenblatt has appeared on [National Public Radio](#), [Fox News](#) and [CNN](#) to advocate for trade policies that encourage investment in American manufacturing. He recently testified before the Regulatory Reform and Oversight Subcommittee of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Small Business.

Marlin Steel’s high-profile turnaround has drawn the attention of Patrick Gallagher, director of the National Institute of Standards in Technology (NIST), and [Ron Kirk, United States trade representative](#). [Both recently toured the factory, and the NIST is collaborating with Greenblatt on next-wave robotic technology.](#)

“You have to create a society or a culture where it makes sense to build factories in Baltimore,” he says. “You create American jobs and you improve your balance of trade. I just want to grow the company, hire more people. We’re single-handedly trying to turn around this economy.”

Read [“The Bright Side”](#) in The Atlantic’s October 2010 issue or watch Greenblatt discuss how he turned [Marlin Steel into a globally competitive manufacturer](#).

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