

PURPOSE, PRODUCTIVITY, AND PRIDE AT PEORIA PRODUCTION SOLUTIONS

On any given weekday morning, buses and vans arrive from across the Peoria area, delivering employees to Peoria Production Solutions (PPS), an industrial contract packager. For nearly 200 people, PPS is a place of purpose. It's where work, dignity, and community intersect in ways that are deeply felt across this central Illinois region.

FOUNDED WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY MISSION

Founded in 1941, PPS began with a simple but radical idea: People shut out of the workforce deserve a chance to contribute. The organization's roots trace to Dr. Maxim Pollock, a physician who noticed that patients cured of tuberculosis were still being excluded from jobs because of fear and stigma. He created a business (initially sewing protective gear for Caterpillar, Inc.'s employees) that prioritized employment over exclusion. A decade later, PPS formally became a nonprofit, and as tuberculosis faded, its mission evolved to focus on individuals with developmental and physical disabilities.

Today, that mission is alive on the 130,000-square-foot factory floor. Sixty-four percent of PPS's workforce live with some form of disability, including autism, intellectual, and developmental disabilities; visual or hearing impairments; and mobility challenges. For these employees, work at PPS is not just about production quotas or contracts, it is about belonging.

"I've always believed that when people are engaged and accountable, they thrive," said Andrea Martin, Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) regional manager. "This is a disciplined operation built on clear expectations and personal responsibility. Everyone understands their role and takes ownership of the outcomes, which creates a culture of reliability and excellence."

"This is more than a job," said Dan LaTurno, president of PPS. "For many of our employees, this is their primary social interaction during the week. They come here to see their friends, to be challenged, and to feel proud of what they do."

That sense of pride shows up in the numbers. PPS is best in class with its low turnover rate, and nearly half of its employees achieve perfect attendance every quarter.



EMBRACING VARIOUS TALENTS

Manufacturing's impact extends far beyond the products that leave a plant. Through the *Made in My Hometown* series, you'll meet manufacturers strengthening the communities they call home.

Peoria Production Solutions is an outstanding example. The company has built a culture for individuals who might otherwise be excluded from the workforce. By embracing various talents and perspectives, Peoria Production Solutions has developed best-in-class procedures, exceptional customer service, and a highly engaged workforce. Its story illustrates how embracing employing people outside of the usual channels can benefit the organization, customers, and the broader community.

Thank you for reading about Peoria Production Solutions and exploring the positive impact manufacturing continues to make across Illinois.

Regards,

Mary Hallock
IMEC
Director of Special Initiatives



MEANINGFUL RESULTS FOR CATERPILLAR AND BIG RETAIL BRANDS

PPS operates like a for-profit manufacturer, even though it is a nonprofit. The organization does not rely on donations or fundraising campaigns. Instead, it competes for business, manages budgets, and delivers results for customers, including its largest customer, Caterpillar.

The relationship with Caterpillar is both practical and personal. As its contract packager, PPS handles light assembly and sub-assemblies for industrial components that support heavy equipment used in 191 countries around the world.¹

PPS also packages products like soaps, cosmetics, hardware, food, and beverages for big box stores. For employees, seeing their work translate into real products is a powerful motivator.

"When our employees see displays that they packaged for Menards, Lowe's or Walmart, they light up," LaTurno said. "They take pictures. They tell everyone, 'I helped build that.' That connection to the end-product matters."

Customers notice the difference as well. Caterpillar representatives have consistently expressed support for PPS not only because of its mission, but because the work is reliable. Low turnover, disciplined quality systems, and consistent output make PPS a dependable manufacturing partner.

"That's the key," LaTurno said. "It's a feel-good story, yes. But we still have to solve our customers' problems. Once they see our capabilities, our quality, and our competitiveness, the mission becomes the icing on the cake."



ABOUT PPS

- ✓ **200** employees
- ✓ **64%** of employees have some form of disability
- ✓ Factory is 135,000 square feet
- ✓ Industrial contract packaging services include: sub-assembly, fulfillment, secondary packaging, kitting, sewing, rework, and finishing



"They come here to see their friends, to be challenged, and to feel proud of what they do."

¹ <https://www.caterpillar.com/en/investors/financial-information/proxy-materials/annual-report-to-shareholders.html>



STRENGTHENING THE OPERATIONS WITH IMEC

Behind PPS's ability to compete at a high level is a long-standing relationship with IMEC. LaTurno has worked with IMEC for more than 20 years, both in prior roles and throughout his tenure at PPS.

"Success for PPS isn't about the IMEC mission. It's about supporting PPS's mission," said **Martin**. "Our role is to help put more structure, training, and systems behind what already makes PPS work."

The collaborative work between IMEC and PPS touches nearly every part of the operation, LaTurno says, from safety and quality systems to lean manufacturing and workforce engagement. Early on, IMEC conducted OSHA-style walkthroughs and safety assessments, helping PPS formalize its safety culture. The results are tangible. They proudly claim more than 700 consecutive days without a lost-time accident.

"That's going to matter when our workers' compensation renewals come up," LaTurno said. "It's hard to put an exact dollar figure on it, but the savings are real."

IMEC also guided PPS through lean manufacturing initiatives, including value stream mapping and a recent 5S implementation. The visual structure of 5S includes clearly marked workspaces, walking lanes, and material locations.

"Our employees are very visual," LaTurno said. "Once they understand the 'why,' they become the strongest champions of the system. They hold everyone accountable and that includes me. In fact, one time I was walking outside of the designated lanes and an employee called me out on it. That's how seriously we take our 5S."

IMEC helps PPS translate its values into repeatable systems, whether that's 5S, safety practices, or line leader training. "That's how you protect the culture while improving performance," said Martin. Quality systems were another turning point. Through the support of IMEC, PPS implemented QT9 quality management software, improving traceability, speeding corrective actions, and strengthening customer confidence.

"Our responses are faster and more thorough," LaTurno said. "That professionalism builds trust."

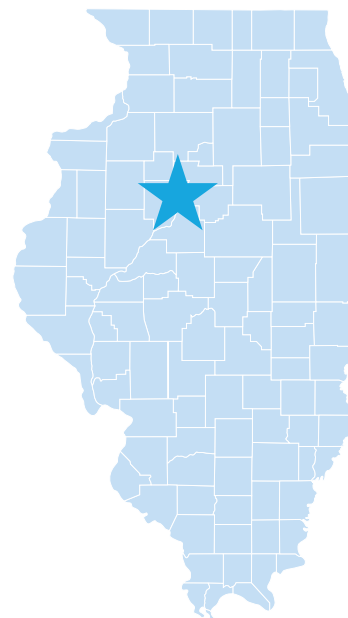


"These are real jobs, with real wages, and real pride attached to them."



PEORIA PRODUCTION SOLUTIONS

2029 West Townline Road Peoria, IL &
5703 West Smithville Road Bartonville, IL



A HOMETOWN WIN

Manufacturing remains vital to communities like Peoria. It creates jobs that stick, supply chains that don't break, and opportunities for families to build better futures. For PPS, that impact lends a greater purpose to its workforce.

Employees earn competitive wages, receive strong benefits, and gain financial independence. During COVID, some PPS employees could have earned more staying home on benefits, and they chose to come to work. "That tells you these are real jobs, with real wages, and real pride attached to them," said Martin.

Many employees live independently, contribute to the local tax base, and participate more fully in community life. "This only works because the entire community is aligned from the caregivers, transportation providers, and county agencies," said Martin. "They work together so people can succeed every day. And families and caregivers benefit from reliable schedules, safe working conditions, and coordinated transportation partnerships with Peoria County."

In 2025, IMEC had more than 3,500 engagements with Illinois manufacturers helping them pursue what it calls Repeatable Excellence™. When a manufacturer succeeds, it strengthens not only the business, but the entire hometown.

For Peoria, PPS is proof that purpose, production, and pride impact an entire community. With customers like Caterpillar, support from IMEC, and a workforce that takes pride in every box packed and pallet shipped, PPS is not just made in Peoria. It is part of what makes Peoria strong.

IMEC PROJECT IMPACT

 **\$18,085,708**
AGGREGATE IMPACT

 **\$1.5 MILLION**
NEW SALES
GENERATED

 **\$750,000**
RETAINED SALES

 **\$50,000**
COST SAVINGS

 **\$85,000**
TOTAL PROJECT
INVESTMENT

MADE IN MY HOMETOWN SERIES

In every Illinois hometown, manufacturing impacts families, community, state, and country – and IMEC is there. We're the first stop to taking small and midsize manufacturers from status quo to unstoppable. You bring the can-do spirit, we bring the know-how to scale your goals.

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