



Berco Designs builds amazing furniture in the industrial heartland of St. Louis, Missouri. The Berco Designs and Oasis Berco family of companies is widely known for their series of high-end banquettes, hand-crafted tables and bases, and collection of office privacy solutions. What Berco Designs is really about is manufacturing opportunity. Berco Designs has created many leadership opportunities for women over the years. Some of whom have stayed with the company for over two decades and continue to play an active role in bringing more and more women to the workforce.

Providing top-notch manufacturing jobs to St. Louis after a pandemic takes leadership and a strong sense of pride. These women, several holding executive level positions, have helped make Berco Designs the company it is today, in a traditionally male-led manufacturing industry.

Below, Berco Designs senior level female employees share their thoughts on leadership in the furniture manufacturing industry.

**BERCO DESIGNS:
WOMEN IN THE
INDUSTRY**



Lori Stroehler working with plant manager Dave Dunn.



Lorean Jones working on table bases on the production floor of Berco Designs' St. Louis furniture factory.

Work Toward the Same Goal

Lori Stroehler, Berco Designs' Vice President of Operations, guides all of the craftspeople in production to be in sync with each other.

Workers and their products moving toward the same goal, she believes, is the key to success in manufacturing.

"When I see something needs to be done, I make sure it gets done," she said. "I've learned you don't always have to have all the answers, but you have to ask the right questions."

Stroehler has made it a point to be self driven at Berco, by being direct and not letting the traditionally male dominated manufacturing industry hold her back.

"It's a man's world—especially in manufacturing," she said. "To remove that stigma, I demand equal respect and give equal respect to everyone."

It's All About Process

Lorean Jones' talents go beyond her expertise as a painter at Berco Designs for 22 years. She enjoys painting at home and has always had a natural passion for her skilled trade.

"I enjoy it. When I paint, it's in the process itself," Jones said. "After the pieces come out of the oven, I'm like wow! I did that!"

Using bright colors, she paints a few things around the shop to catch the eye and entice people to ask questions.

"It's pretty cool to see the modern colors and textures," she said. "I like the Wasabi high-gloss finish I just did for Oasis Berco."

Jones likes to stay informed by communicating about incoming orders with her surrounding departments.

"Nothing in life is perfect, but I want to try to get as close as I possibly can," she said.

"To keep it smooth, you have to stay coordinated and be a people person."

**BERCO DESIGNS:
WOMEN IN THE
INDUSTRY**



"The downtime from covid was a short time for us because we're an essential business," said Angie Balencie.



Joetta Pingel working with shipping manager, Jacob Childers.

Comradery in the Workplace

This executive enjoys the connection with the workers in the 130,000-square-foot manufacturing facility. Although Angie Balencie, the Vice President of Human Resources of 24 years, is located in the front office and showroom to welcome new talent, she regularly hosts workplace parties for the production team and strives to gain a close and personal connection with everyone who works at Berco Designs.

"I make that first connection during personal orientation," Balencie said. "Then I get to know everyone more and more as things come up in their personal life. I get to know when everyone's kids are graduating, getting married, or going on vacation."

Though the pandemic stifled the gatherings Balencie loves to organize for workers, she's excited to do more and more every year.

"Comradery in the workplace is so important," she said. Building up a feeling of togetherness allows the employees to thrive.

Be a Motivator

Joetta Pingel has a 27 year history at the St. Louis company as their Quality Control Inspector. Being a motivator and a trainer, she believes, is the key to staying connected to work.

"I'm always watching to see how I can pass on my experience during the manufacturing process," Pingel said. "There are multiple ways to do something that will end in the same result, but I always try to train and involve people from the start."

By including anyone who has hands-on interaction with the products, Pingel has taught valuable skills in quality control. Extending her wisdom to all production departments across multiple disciplines.

"The more involved employees are, the more they feel the connection," Pingel said. "That's when you get the real feeling of importance."

Playing a leading role in the manufacturing industry is not just about quality control, it's about encouraging people to live quality lives. The dedicated women in leadership at Berco Designs have fostered a positive environment and mentored many over the years.



Berco Designs is a nationwide, American design company and manufacturer. All Berco Designs and Oasis Berco products are made with U.S. parts.

Mickey Cash is the Marketing Coordinator for Fairway Holdings, the Berco Designs family of furniture design companies including: Berco Designs, Oasis Berco, and One Source Retail & Hospitality.