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'Think in an entrepreneurial way': Ethan Allen CEO talks about U.S. manufacturing

11/14/2011

by Karen Brune Mathis, Managing Editor

U.S. manufacturing faces challenges, as the chairman, president and CEO of Connecticut-based Ethan Allen Interiors Inc. well knows.

Farooq Kathwari, president of the interior furnishings company since 1985 and chairman and CEO since 1988, shared his views Tuesday with the World Affairs Council of Jacksonville and The Gate Governors Club at a joint gathering at The River Club Downtown.

His topic was "The Future of U.S. Manufacturing."

Kathwari told the almost 100 members attending that the relatively higher cost of labor, higher cost of energy, the U.S. tax rate and health care costs for employees were some of the factors affecting manufacturers' decision whether to remain in the country.

"These are all the challenges we're faced with," he said.

Kathwari said Ethan Allen, with 4,800 employees and six plants in the United States and one in Mexico, adjusted to the challenges through innovation, including determining the relevance of its products, messaging, structure, technology and more.

"We had to take bold steps," he said. "We had to think in an entrepreneurial way in all areas."

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Keynote speaker Farooq Kathwari, chairman, president and CEO of Ethan Allen Interiors Inc., was the keynote speaker at the World Affairs Council of Jacksonville and The Gate Governors Club lunch.

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