Executive Summary

Maker Pro Newsletter Survey

Conducted by Karlin Research

on behalf of Maker Media

August 2014

Why are we interested in this?

It’s been a weekly ritual during the last year and a half: immediately after the Maker Pro Newsletter is launched, while I’m still on the newsletter software site, I check the number of new subscribers since the previous edition. Sometimes, I admit, I hit “refresh” just to make sure I don’t miss any late arrivals.

The number is always in the hundreds.

The rising number doesn’t tell us who these subscribers are, of course, but the audience has always felt new: a mix of professional makers and avocational makers that has never been seen before.

That’s exciting.

But last summer, after more than 70 editions, we decided to flip our output switch to input, listen, and try to learn something about our readers.

The results: still exciting.

I’m not going to summarize the Executive Summary, below, but just check Exhibit 1: a top-level pie chart of respondents that’s cut nearly right down the middle, between “Professional Makers” and “Avocational Makers.” That’s quite a spread.

Or look at Exhibit 15, which shows that 71 percent of professional makers learned their skills through “trial and error.” That’s what happens when so much is brand new.

One more: Exhibit 17, showing that over three quarters of professional makers feel that it’s important to manufacture locally. The White House, which hosted a large group of professional makers last summer at the first White House Maker Faire, would be pleased.

But now I’m doing what I said I wouldn’t: summarizing the summary.

So check it out for yourself and draw your own conclusions. Whatever insights you tease out of the survey results, I’m confident that you’ll conclude, as I did, that this is a cohort you’ll find nowhere else.

Best,

DC Denison

DC Denison
Editor
Maker Pro Newsletter

Introduction

Despite their common interests, Maker Pro Newsletter subscribers are a diverse group, driven by different motivations and goals. This survey defines and contrasts the professional maker segment with avocational makers, then highlights the professional segment at different phases in their path to market.

The report covers the following areas:

- Professional vs. Avocational Makers
  - Incidence
  - Relationship of making to job
  - Experience and age
  - Actively developing products and services
- Professional Makers
  - Composition
  - Challenges to maker goals
  - Importance of educational outreach
- Products and service segments
  - Needs addressed
  - Company organization (number of employees, current revenue/projections)
  - Outside processes
  - Acquisition of skills
  - Incidence of local manufacturing
  - Importance of local manufacturing

Methodology

Maker Pro Newsletter subscribers received an invitation to take a survey instead of their regular Thursday edition on July 31, 2014. The invitation, a letter from the editor, DC Denison, asked for their input "to find out more about you, so that we can better design future Maker Pro Newsletters and keep improving our MakerCon conferences."

Two incentives were offered to those completing the survey: "The Impact of the Maker Movement" white paper and a summary of the survey results.

The survey closed for tabulation on August 14, 2014 with 496 qualified respondents, age 18 or over.

Karlin Associates, an independent market research consulting firm, was responsible for all survey operations. Procedures followed established market research standards.

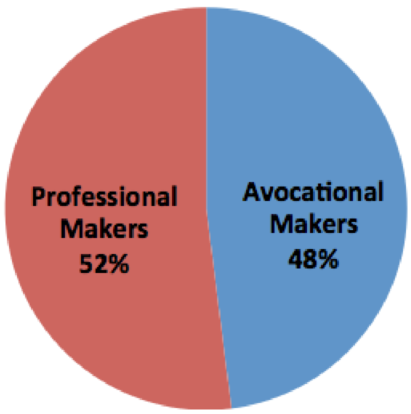
Executive Summary

Professional vs. Avocational Makers

Even though Maker Pro Newsletter subscribers have a common interest in professional making, not all of them are "professional makers": while over half (52%) are "professional makers," "avocational" makers make up the balance (48%).

Exhibit 1. **Maker Segments**

Base: Total respondents (n=496)



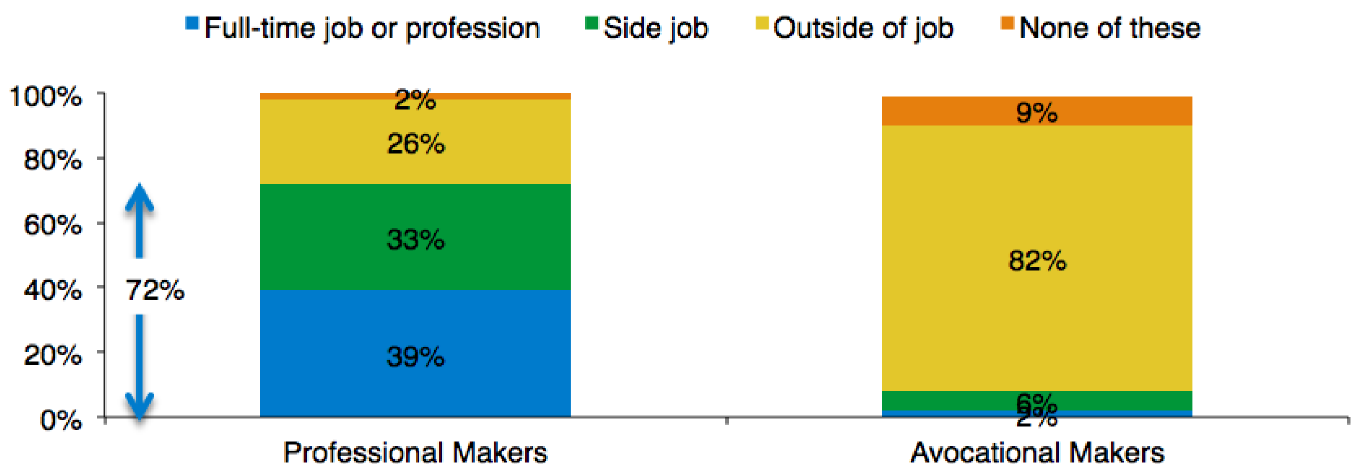
> *"I make money both for design and 3D printing, and have developed a few items that I hope to sell locally."*

Relationship to job. Whether someone considers himself or herself a maker is not always related to their formal job title, even among professional makers.

- Making is at least part of the formal job activity for the vast majority of professional makers (72%): 39% have full-time jobs as makers and 33% have part-time jobs.
- Making is "outside the job" of most avocational makers (82%) as it is for one in four (26%) professional makers.

Exhibit 2. **Relationship of making to job**

Base: Professional Makers (n=257), Avocational Makers (n=239)



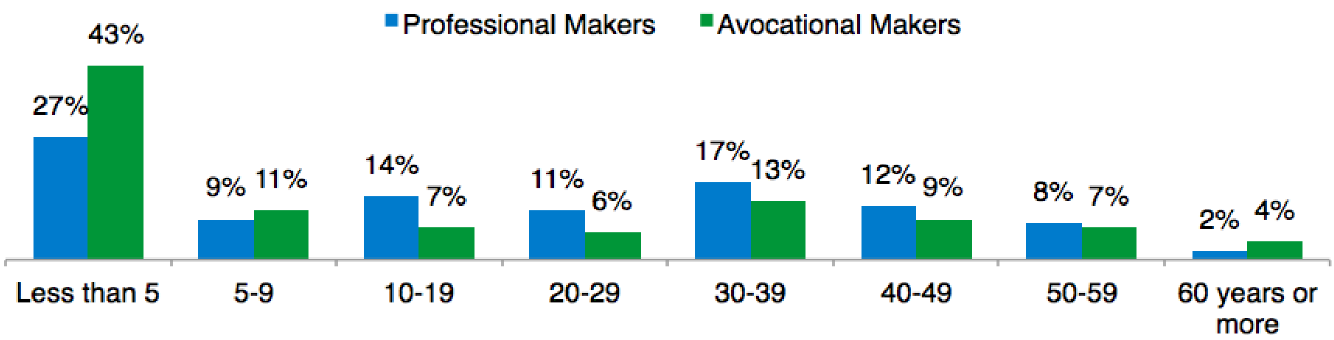
Experience and age. Professional makers have more experience as makers:

> Half (50%) have been involved in making 20 or more years

> Over half (53%) of avocational makers have been involved in making under 10 years

Exhibit 3. **How long have you been a maker?**

Base: Professional Maker (n=256), Avocational Makers (n=238)



Despite their experience, professional makers tend to be younger than avocational makers:

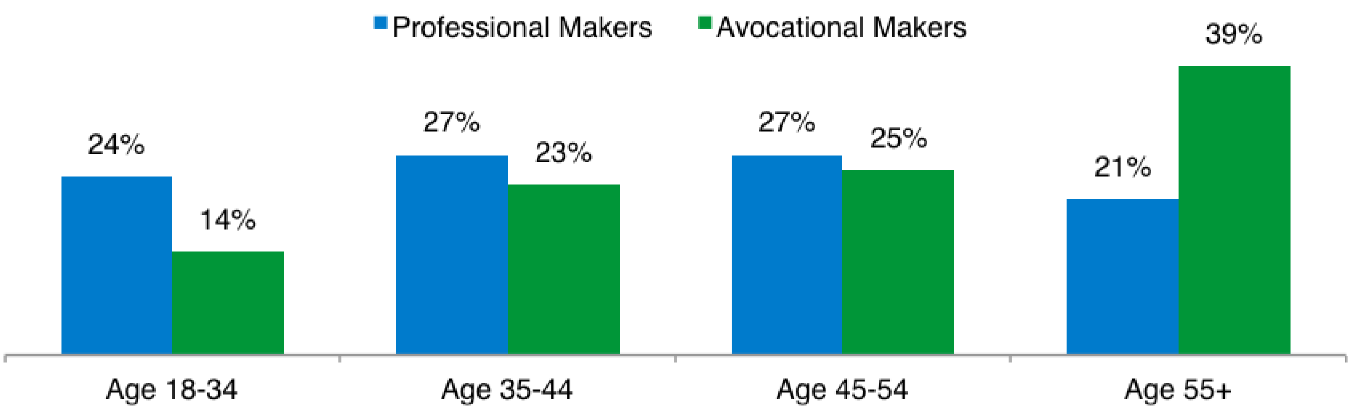
> Professional makers are over 1.7 times more likely to be age 18-34

> Avocational makers are 1.9 times more likely to be age 55 year old or older

"As I segued into retirement, my business sense has gotten better. Learned a LOT participating at Maker Faire"

Exhibit 4. **What is your age?**

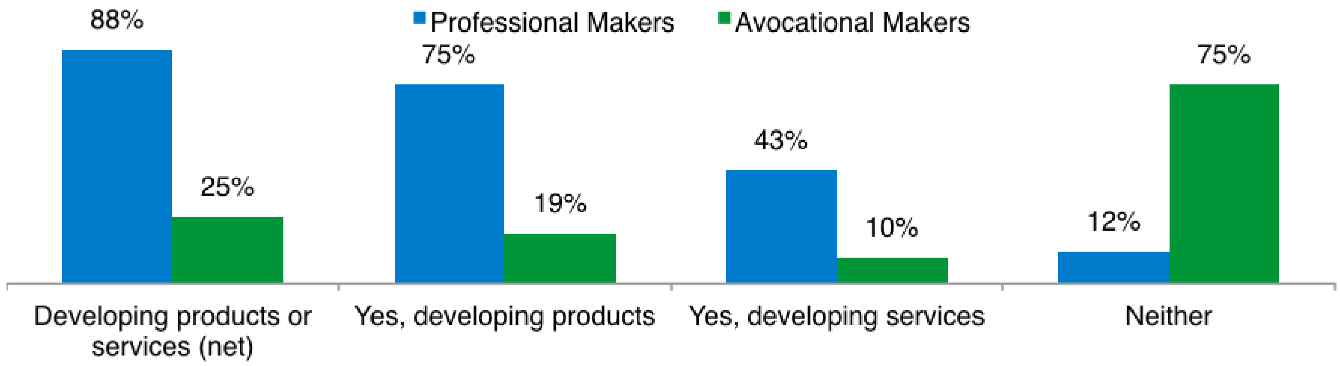
Base: Professional Maker (n=252), Avocational Makers (n=236)



Actively developing products and services. Most professional makers (88%) are actively engaged in developing products and services while only one in four (25%) of avocational makers are.

Exhibit 5. **Are you currently involved in developing any products or services as part of your maker activity?**

Base: Professional Maker (n=257), Avocational Makers (n=239)



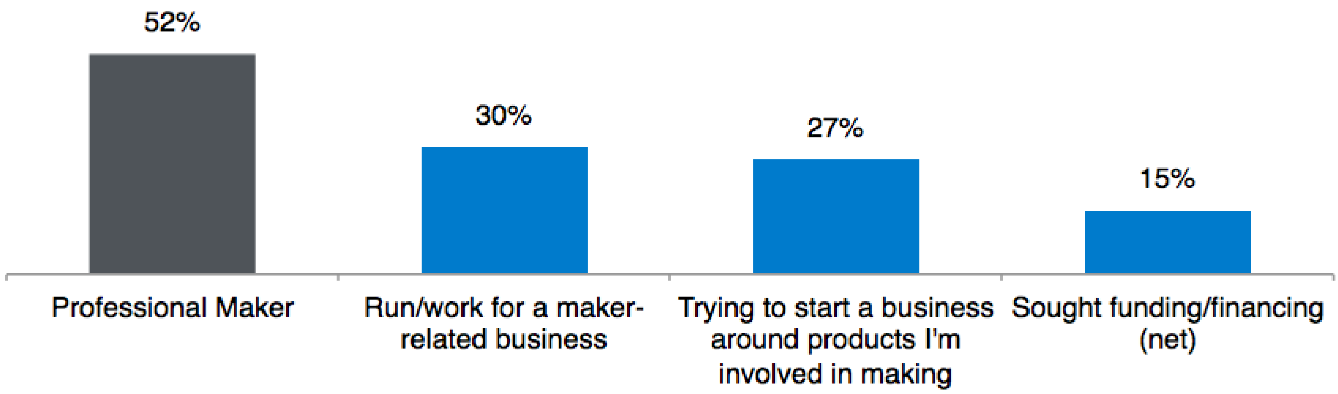
Professional Makers

Over half (52%) the respondents were categorized as "professional makers."

Respondents were professional makers if they run or work for a maker-related business (30%); are in the process of starting a business around their products (27%); and/or sought funding through crowdfunding or through banks, investors, or business partners (15%).

Exhibit 6. **Composition**

Base: Total respondents (n=496)



Challenges to maker goals. Sales/distribution is clearly the number one challenge to maker goals, followed by marketing, and manufacturing.

Exhibit 7. **Which areas do you personally find most challenging to your maker goals? Please rank them where 1 would be the most challenging and 5 the least.**

Base: Professional Makers (n=257)

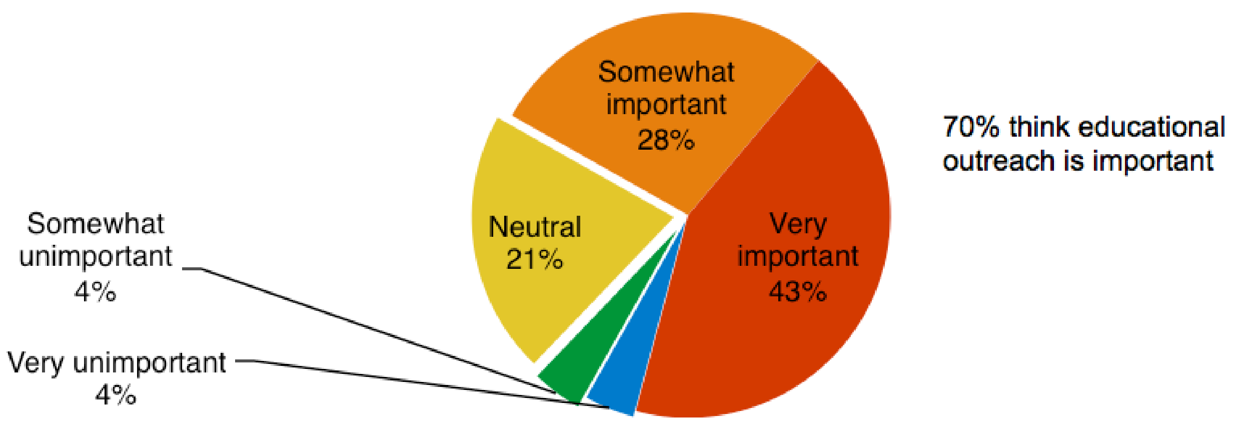
	Score*	Overall Rank
Sales/Distribution	831	1
Marketing	733	2
Manufacturing	708	3
Engineering	536	4
Product Design	511	5

* Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is the sum of all weighted rank counts.

Importance of educational outreach. Seven in ten (70%) feel that sharing their knowledge and expertise with others makers through educational outreach is "important"; 43% feel it is very important.

Exhibit 8. **How important is sharing your knowledge and expertise with other makers by leading workshops, conducting classes, or other types of educational outreach?**

Base: Professional Makers (n=257)



"I run tech camps, including Rapid Prototyping camps, in Europe."

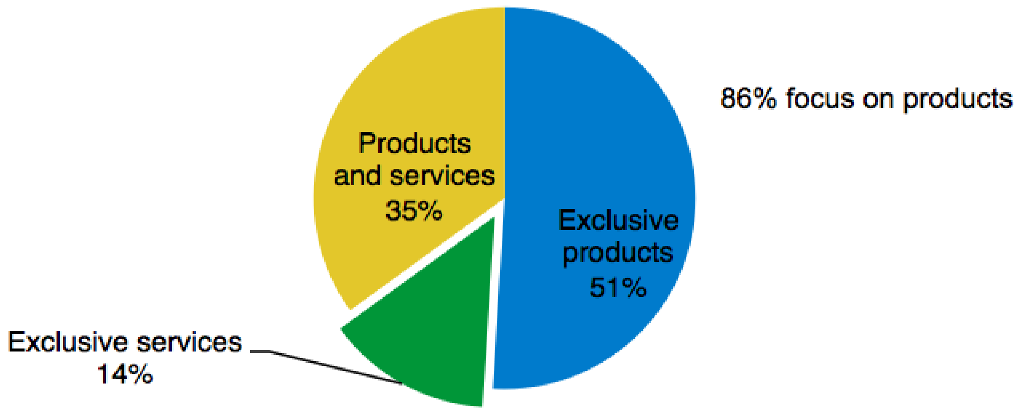
Product and service segments. Most (86%) professional makers current development is focused on products:

> The majority (51%) is exclusively developing products while 35% worked on both products and services

> A small group (14%) is exclusively working on services.

Exhibit 9. **Product and Service Segments**

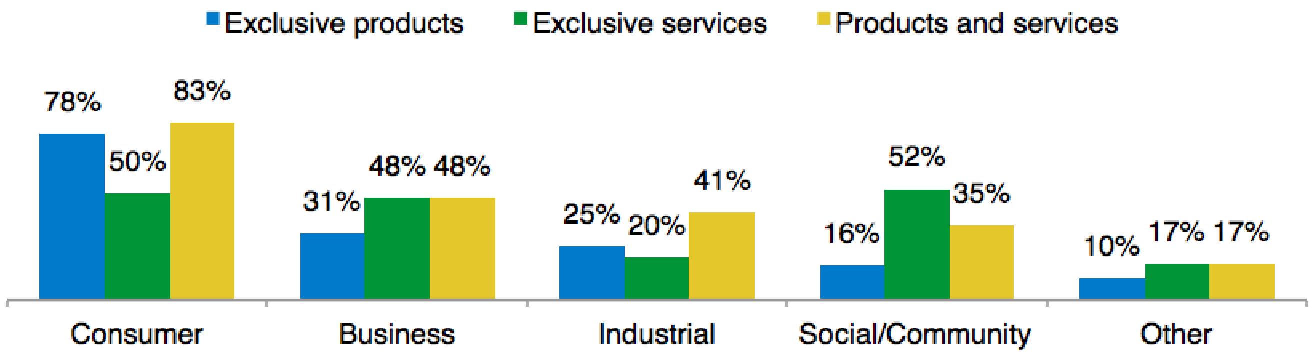
Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=225)



Needs addressed by products and services. Regardless of products or services, developers are focused on "consumer needs" more than any other. Makers developing services are more likely to focus on "business needs" and "social/ community" than makers developing products.

Exhibit 10. **What needs do the products or services you're developing address?**

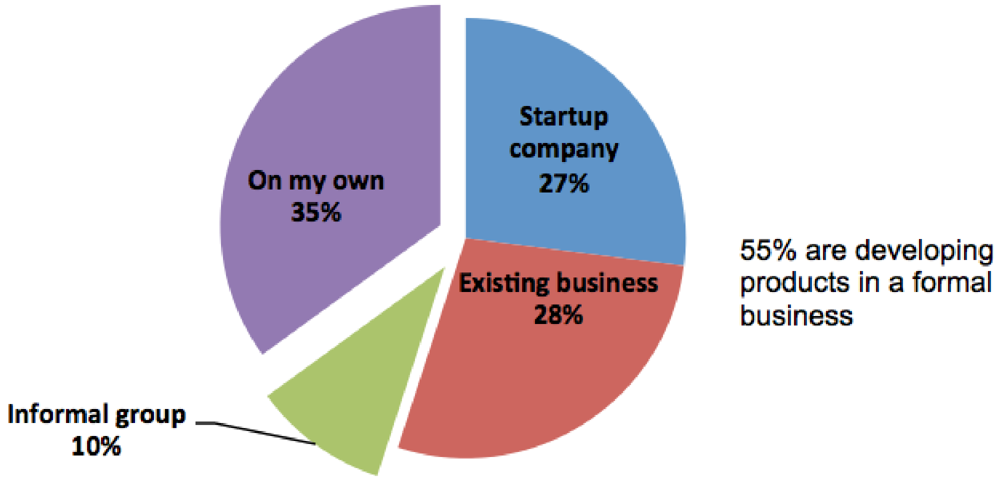
Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=225)



Company organization. Over half (55%) are working on their products in a formal company either a startup (27%) or existing business (28%).

Exhibit 11. **Are you working on these products as part of a startup company or existing business, an informal group, or on your own right now?**

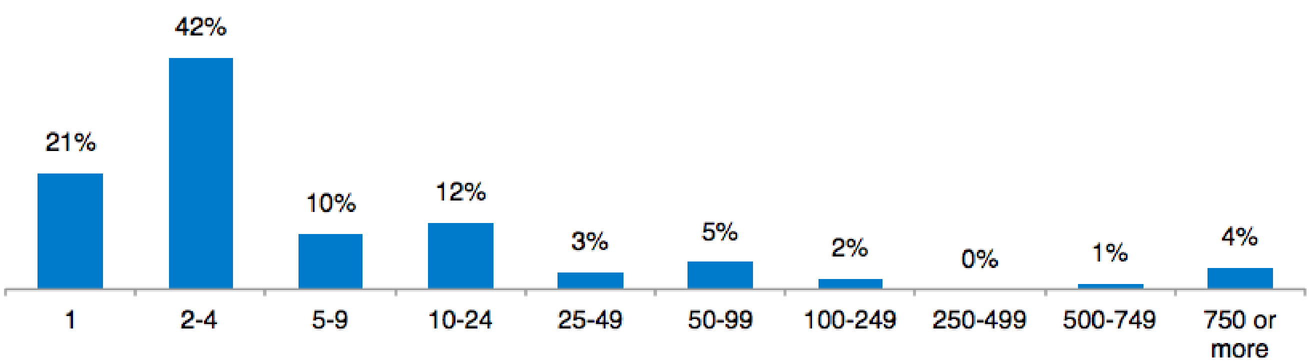
Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=225)



Single and small firms predominate: one in five (21%) work in single person companies; half (52%) work in small companies with 2-9 employees.

Exhibit 12. **Including yourself, how many people work at your company right now?**

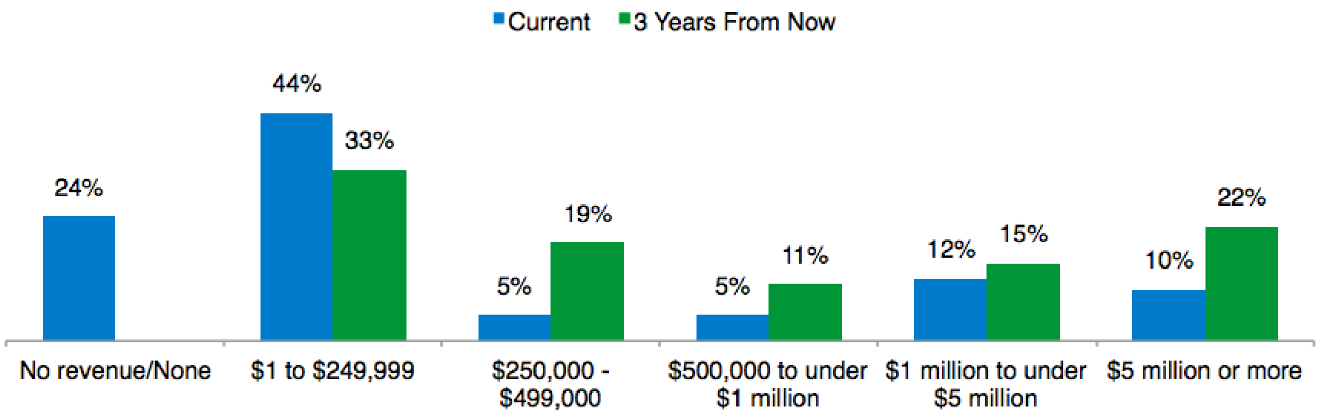
Base: Professional Makers, Developing products/services in formal company (124)



Revenue Outlook. Over two in three (69%) expect no or low revenue from their products at the present time. Three years from now the figure falls by half, to 33%. (The survey did not allow a none/no choice for projected revenue.)

Exhibit 13. **Current and Future Revenue Projections**

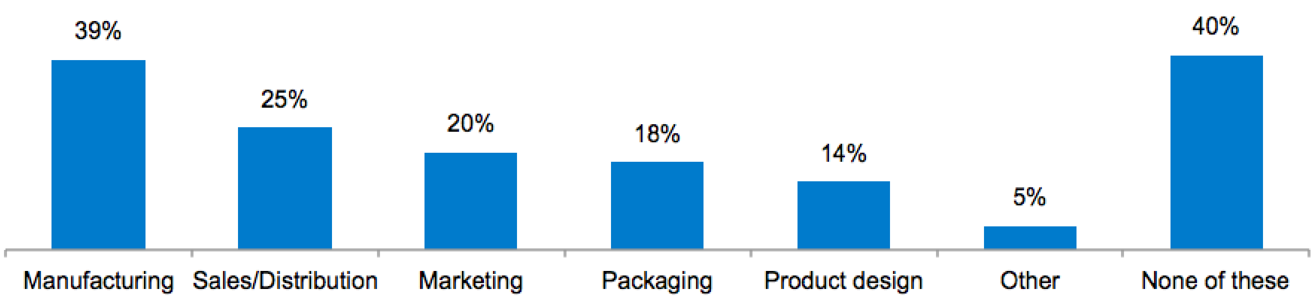
Base: Professional Makers, Developing products/services in formal company (121)



Outside Processes. Professional makers rely on outside manufacturing processes more than any other.

Exhibit 14. **Which, if any, of the following outside services does your business rely on?**

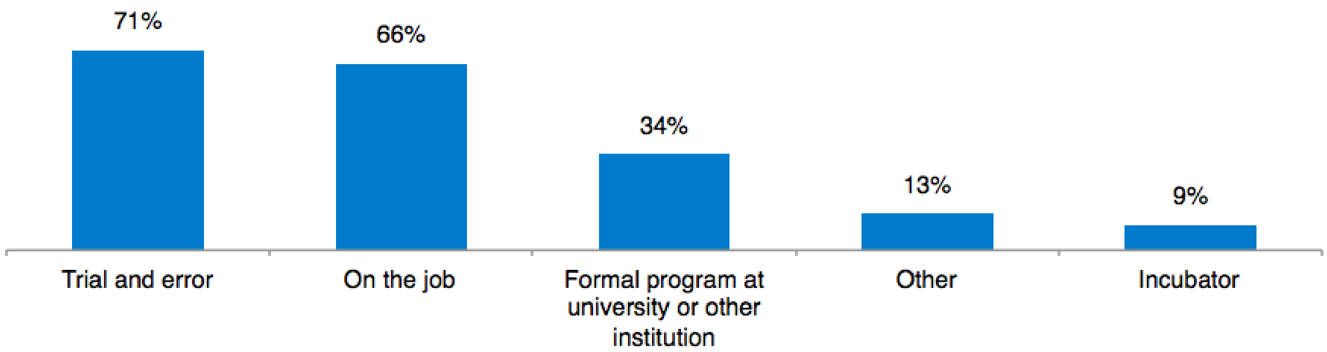
Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=225)



Acquisition of skills. "Trial and error" is the most common way makers learn skills (71%), followed by "on the job" (66%). Over one in three (34%) learned their skills at a formal program at a university or other institution.

Exhibit 15. **How did you learn your skills to start and operate your maker business?**

Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=225)

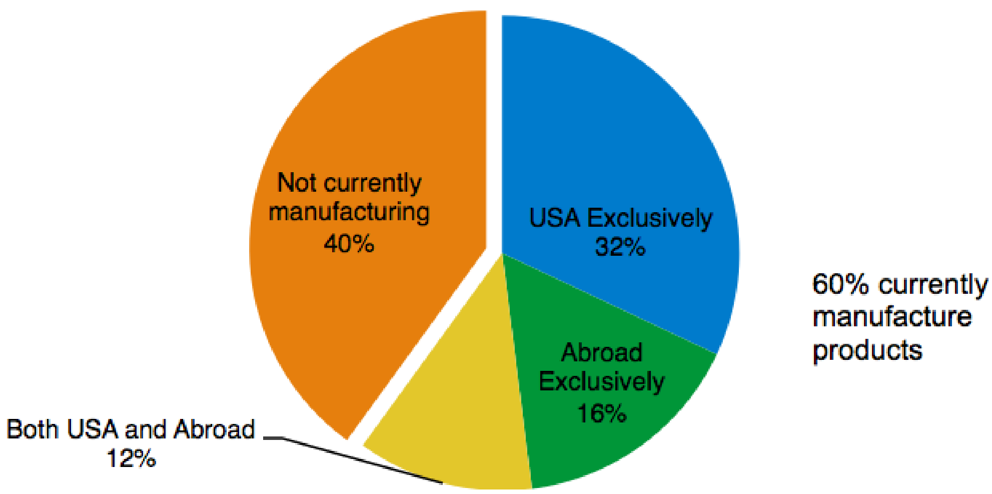


I want to stay abreast of the Maker Movement for my work - I work for the economic development of a major city.

Incidence/Importance of local manufacturing. Over half (60%) are currently manufacturing products, either in the US (42%) or abroad (24%). Those currently manufacturing exclusively in the US account for the largest group followed by those manufacturing exclusively abroad. Relatively fewer, 12%, manufacture both locally and abroad.

Exhibit 16. **Manufacturing Segments Among Professional Makers**

Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=225)



Asked for their view about manufacturing locally vs. abroad, professional makers strongly favored manufacturing locally: over three quarters (78%) thought it was "important", either "very important" (47%) or "somewhat important" (31%).

Exhibit 17. **How important is domestic-local manufacturing in your business strategy?**

Base: Professional Makers, Currently developing products/services (n=220)