

A LEGACY IN INK AND INTEGRITY: THREE Z PRINTING AN ANCHOR IN TEUTOPOLIS

In Teutopolis, manufacturing is a cornerstone of daily life. Shift changes shape local routines, paychecks circulate through small businesses, and generations grow up understanding the dignity of steady work. At the center of that ecosystem is Three Z Printing. Its ability to thrive in a rapidly changing manufacturing landscape has increasingly been shaped by a strategic partnership with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC).

“Instead of trying to solve everything internally, we rely on the experience of IMEC to help us make better decisions faster,” said Neil Zerrusen, who along with brothers Matt and Chad are managing the company.

For more than three years, **IMEC** has worked alongside **Three Z** to strengthen operations, develop leaders, and position the company for long-term competitiveness. That partnership has touched nearly every layer of the business, from frontline supervisors to plant-wide safety systems, all while allowing Three Z to preserve the culture that defines it.

“They’re not just delivering training,” Zerrusen said. “IMEC understands manufacturing, understands people, and helps us think long-term about how we grow without losing who we are.”



WELCOME TO OUR 2026 MADE IN MY HOMETOWN SERIES

Three Z Printing is a centerpiece of the manufacturing and economic ecosystem in Teutopolis. Its success, and others you’ll meet through this series, impacts the entire region including employee families, supply chain partners, customers, and neighboring businesses.

That’s why IMEC is highlighting manufacturing companies like Three Z Printing in the *Made in My Hometown* Series. We want the world to see how manufacturing touches many lives.

When a manufacturer succeeds, the ripple effect runs deep: a stronger job market, a stronger community and state economy, a stronger national defense, and a stronger foothold for made-in-USA innovation on a global scale.

Cheers,

David Boulay, Ph.D.
President

Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center



BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND OPERATIONAL DEPTH

Like many midsize manufacturers, **Three Z** reached a point where growth demanded more structure, stronger leadership pipelines, and a broader base of internal expertise. That need became especially clear as the company expanded its footprint to more than 500,000 square feet and continued operating a multi-shift environment serving national customers.

“Before IMEC, we didn’t have the depth of leadership development we needed,” Zerrusen said. “Now we’re building stronger supervisors and managers, and that’s changing how our teams work together.”

Through IMEC, Three Z has completed more than a dozen initiatives, including Lean manufacturing simulations, automation training, safety audits, arc flash compliance, employee engagement surveys, and structured leadership development. The work has helped improve production flow, strengthen safety culture across shifts, modernize electrical documentation in a large and complex facility, and equip frontline leaders to manage a multi-generational workforce.

IMEC Regional Manager **Noah Brandenburger** describes Three Z as a company willing to invest in people as deliberately as it invests in equipment.

“IMEC helps companies like Three Z think long-term,” Brandenburger said. “It’s not just about solving today’s problem. It’s about building systems, skills, and leadership capacity that support growth five and 10 years down the road. That includes how they invest in their workforce, how they adapt to new technologies, and how they stay rooted in their communities.”

That long-term lens has also delivered measurable financial benefits.

“IMEC opened doors we didn’t even know existed,” Zerrusen said. “Between training reimbursements and grant support, the savings have easily reached six figures. We’ve been able to reinvest that back into our people.”

Importantly, Zerrusen notes, the return on investment hasn’t come from cost-cutting at the expense of employees.

“The return is about gaining knowledge, improving awareness, and making smarter operational decisions across the business,” Zerrusen said.

Or, as he summarizes more simply. “IMEC helps us lead better and operate better.”



IMEC opened doors we didn’t even know existed.

ABOUT THREE Z PRINTING

- ✓ Family-owned and operated since 1978
- ✓ Employs 350 people in its 500,000-square-foot printing plant
- ✓ Operates 15 web presses, 4 digital presses, with a full line of bindery and finishing equipment including USPS and mailing services, running 24 hours a day, 5 days a week
- ✓ Handles complex commercial offset print jobs
- ✓ Specializes in inserts, direct mail, and ads

FAMILY FOUNDATION DEDICATED TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

The James & Lorraine Zerrusen Family Foundation extends the values that have guided Three Z Printing for decades into philanthropic work across Illinois and beyond. Established in honor of company founders Lorraine Zerrusen and her husband James, the private family foundation was established after Bill took over the company. It supports faith-based, educational, and community-focused initiatives.

Governed entirely by members of the Zerrusen family, all serving in volunteer roles, the foundation reflects a stewardship mindset rooted in service rather than visibility. Recent grants have supported organizations such as Newman Connection, a national Catholic campus ministry network, as well as regional nonprofits focused on education and community well-being.

Rather than operating as a public grant maker, the foundation works primarily with long-standing partners aligned with the family’s values. Together, its giving reinforces a belief long held at Three Z Printing: that success carries a commitment and responsibility to people, community, and future generations.



A COMPANY SHAPED BY VALUES

To understand why continuous improvement resonates at Three Z, it helps to understand the company's origins. Three Z Printing was co-founded in 1978 by Lorraine Zerrusen, who graduated as valedictorian from Teutopolis High School in 1951 and built her career at a local print shop before deciding to start her own. She, along with her entire family help run the business, while Dan, Bill and Kurt were the original members. Dan and Kurt retired in 2015.



Lorraine became far more than a founder. She served as financial steward, human resources leader, and moral compass for the company. Her influence remains visible today. In the front foyer of the facility, a Bible rests open to one of her favorite verses. It's an understated but intentional signal that faith and work are deeply connected at Three Z.

Passages are displayed throughout the plant as reminders of principles Lorraine lived by: stewardship, dignity of work, and care for others.

Under the direction of Bill's three sons and Lorraine's grandsons, Three Z operates a five-day/24-hour commercial printing operation with advanced presses and national customers across industries including financial services, retail, and consumer goods. That's a significant evolution from its early days producing magazine ticket inserts (the postcard size pieces that would fall out of a magazine).

MANUFACTURING'S RIPPLE EFFECT IN A SMALL TOWN

Consistency is important in a town of 1,600 residents, where Three Z employs about 350 people and is one of the largest employers in the region. Roughly one-third of its workforce has been with the company for 25 years or longer, and many employees grew up in Teutopolis or nearby communities.

The economic impact extends well beyond the plant.

"Manufacturing is a very important part of our livelihood," said Dan Burke, owner of Wessel's Grocery Store in Teutopolis. "We literally base our hours off of Three Z's shifts. We open early and add staff before and after their night shifts to accommodate them."

Burke estimates that Three Z employees spend between \$2,000 and \$3,000 each week on fuel, food, beverages, and household essentials at his store alone. That steady activity supports local jobs and provides stability.

"Three Z and the other manufacturers provide a lifeline to us and our employees," Burke said. "They are a very important part of our success as well."

That interdependence reflects the broader manufacturing mindset of Teutopolis, where residents grow up understanding the rhythm of shift work and the pride that comes with producing something tangible. Besides Three Z, Teutopolis is home to other large manufacturers like Stevens Industries, Siemer Milling, and Farmweld.

"The Three Z family has been in town forever," Burke added. "They have deep roots here. They've treated the community well, and the community reciprocates that."

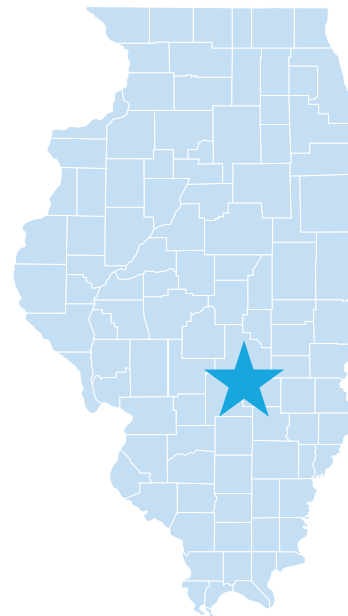


Three Z and the other manufacturers provide a lifeline to us and our employees.



THREE Z PRINTING

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FAITH, STEWARDSHIP, AND GIVING BACK

Teutopolis is anchored by St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, which sits prominently at the center of town. Even for those who may not attend regularly, shared values of trust, accountability, and responsibility shape everyday interactions.

"It's the values, morality, and mentality that people practice here," Burke said. "It's friendly. It's safe. There's a comfort level and a lot of trust."

"Manufacturing is critical to this community," said the Rev. Joe Carlos, longtime pastor of St. Francis. "It allows families to stay here, to raise kids here, and to support the parish, the school, and local organizations."



That sense of responsibility extends beyond payroll. The James & Lorraine Zerrusen Foundation supports charitable initiatives across Illinois and beyond. Governed by family members, including grandson Neil Zerrusen, all serving voluntarily. The foundation reflects the same stewardship mindset Lorraine embodied.

Faith for the Zerrusen family, has never been performative. Lorraine was very devout and deeply involved in church life and daily prayer. Her son Bill remains active in parish and campus ministry. That continuity reinforces a culture where business decisions are measured not just by margins, but by impact.

A MODEL FOR MANUFACTURING

Three Z Printing is a customer, neighbor, parishioner, and stabilizing force for a community that, in turn, sustains Three Z with a workforce shaped by shared values.

Retaining Three Z's authentic, faith-driven self in the image of its founder is extremely important to the company's leadership and future. Yet, in a world where technology, workforce dynamics, and supply chain complexities are in a constant state of change, the company also needed an outside-in perspective to grow without losing its identity.

MADE IN MY HOMETOWN SERIES

In every Illinois hometown, manufacturing impacts families, community, state, and country - and IMEC is there. We're the first step 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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IMEC PROJECT IMPACT

-  **30** PARTICIPATED IN THREE DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING SESSIONS
-  **20** TRAINED ON NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION 70E ELECTRICAL SAFETY
-  **45** TRAINED ON AND DISC® ASSESSMENT AND COACHING CERTIFICATION
-  **4** ELECTRICAL SINGLE LINE DIAGRAMS UPDATED
-  **COMPANY-WIDE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY**
-  **4** RECEIVED 2-DAY ROBOTIC OFF-SITE TRAINING AND EIGHT RECEIVED ON-SITE ROBOTIC CASE ERECTOR TRAINING
-  **20** PARTICIPATED IN THE LEAN 101 TRAINING

"Manufacturing is critical to this community."



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