

Global Sustainability Starts With Heart

Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich leads **ZAGO Manufacturing Co.** in prioritizing people, products, and the planet.



The word “sustainable” has been buzzy in recent years, but Newark-based ZAGO Manufacturing Co. has embraced environmental, social, and governance accountability since its inception in 1993. “We were sustainable before it was cool,” says CEO and cofounder Gail Friedberg Rottenstrich.

What began as a mom-and-pop startup is now a global, woman-owned manufacturer with a 30-person workforce making high-quality sealing fasteners and components. ZAGO hasn’t lost its grassroots grit.

“We believe in continuously improving,” says Rottenstrich. “We think globally and act locally, constantly taking in the landscape of current information to make decisions. We feel a responsibility to continue thriving so that we can keep supporting our workers and their families, as well as our growing customer base.”

Using a three-pronged definition of sustainability—people, product, planet—Rottenstrich leads ZAGO in stewarding its responsibilities with excellence.

People First

When an employee lost three family members to COVID-19, ZAGO was there for her—emotionally and financially. When another employee dreamed of completing her bachelor’s degree before her baby arrived, ZAGO paid her tuition.

“We want to grow so that our employees have more opportunities to advance their careers and achieve vibrant futures,” says Rottenstrich. “We strive to create a positive work environment where everyone is valued and empowered to do their best work.”

Having been a New York City attorney for 10 years before launching ZAGO with her husband, Rottenstrich experienced various work cultures—some better than others—and has intentionally cultivated her own company culture with accountability, encouragement, and high-quality output.

“When challenges arise, it’s never about finding someone to blame. It’s about finding the root cause and working from the facts,” she says.

Reaching Out

Rottenstrich’s community involvement highlights and strengthens her desire to empower female voices in a male-dominated industry. As a former Deputy Mayor of Fair Lawn Borough, current councilmember, and liaison to its Green Team and Planning Board—as well as a member of the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program Board of Trustees—she advocates for strong government-industry relationships. “I believe industry and government can work together to do big things, but only if we’re all rowing our oars in the same direction,” she says.

Through its ZAGO Sustainability 360 community outreach initiative,

ZAGO works with local high schools to educate students about STEM careers. The company even gifts tuition to high school interns who wish to attend charter schools. “One of our former interns is still a part-time employee while she’s in college. Even though she’s pursuing a career in medicine, not manufacturing, we’re still here to support her and provide work when she needs it,” says Rottenstrich.

Eye Toward the Environment

The ZAGO product line—which includes sealing screws, bolts, nuts, and washers—is inherently green, designed to block contaminants from entering or exiting equipment and potentially leaking out and harming the environment. They are critical in industries addressing climate change, including solar and offshore wind farms, electric vehicles and batteries, and LED lighting.

ZAGO sealing fasteners are manufactured with the utmost care for the environment. Water is conserved, metal scraps are recycled, and a 250-panel solar roof generates energy. Other industries that depend on ZAGO sealing fasteners and components include military, aerospace, robotics, drones, medical device, and transportation.

“We never assume we know everything,” concludes Rottenstrich. “We’re constantly learning and evolving to be the best employer, manufacturer, and community member we can be.”



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