

## An American-made marketing mindset

By Roger Simmermaker

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It's not often that American-made intersects with American theater and the result brings a new brick-and-mortar store to life, but oddly enough that's exactly what happened in Barrington, Illinois. And it's part of the story of how the possibly first ever brick-and-mortar store in America to sell only American goods got its start. Barrington is just a few miles northwest of Chicago, and Chicago is home to the Steppenwolf Theater Company. In 2003, they staged an adaptation of Barbara Ehrenreich's book, "Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America." Playing the role of Ehrenreich was a talented actress named Deborah Leydig, and during that time Deborah started realizing how much of American manufacturing had gravitated to offshore locations. And so Deborah did the same thing many Americans do once they have their patriotic "made in America" moment, she started researching and making a list of what she could find that *is* made in the USA. One day, while still compiling that list of American-made items, Deborah found herself driving past a familiar building in Barrington – an old livery barn - that had just gone up for sale. Right then she was struck with an idea: why not take that American-made list, and whatever might be added to it in the future, and offer all those products in a store that sold only American-made goods? Flash forward to just six months later. Deborah's purchased the old livery barn, she and her brother have done much of the fixing-up and cleaning, and she's just opened Norton's USA. The rest, as they say, is history. The store started with just 80 items in 2007 and has now swelled to almost 2,000. And although owner Deborah Leydig knows foreign goods can tend to be cheaper since they're produced in lower-cost labor countries, she notes, "My customers really want to buy American, so they will pay more if they have to, and of course they get the American-made quality as well." Statistics certainly support the idea that more Americans want to buy American. According to Perception Research Services International, 72 percent of consumers between the ages of 50 through 64 say that the "Made in the USA" label greatly influences their purchasing decisions. The same survey found 81 percent of people in the same age group buy American because they believe it helps our economy. So what might you find while browsing Norton's USA's store filled with American-made items? From accessories, baby products, cleaning products, clothing for kids, men and women, flags and patriotic décor (of course), food, candy, gardening products, home goods, housewares, pet supplies, soaps, lotions, stationery, tools, and toys, there's quite a lot to be found. When I went online to [www.NortonsUSA.com](http://www.NortonsUSA.com), one of the first things that caught my eye was a product I own and am a big fan of: the Original World's Thinnest Wallet. I'm happy to personally suggest you give this product a long, hard look. It's great, and so is the company that created it. Since they recently brought their manufacturing *back* from China to the United States, it's a company American-made advocates like me like hearing about. The wallet's a great product to own, and a great place to get it is on the [www.NortonsUSA.com](http://www.NortonsUSA.com) website (or pick one up at their brick-and-mortar store if you live in, or happen to be in, the area). If you're into gardening, get your green thumb into gear with the no less than 26 American-made gardening tools and accessories from Norton's USA. Another category that caught my eye was their sensational selection of American-made Halloween items. These holiday items aren't easy to find produced domestically, but Norton's USA has them, and they're all made in the USA. Finding American-made products at brick-and-mortar stores is becoming more common as these stores spring up across the nation. But big kudos go to Norton's USA, as they were an early pioneer in what is becoming one of today's national trends.

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