At a glance, over the past decade we see that the average salary in Manufacturing is indeed on the rise. We also see wages in Manufacturing growing faster than some industries, particularly Transportation. This is depicted by the increasing margin between the lines representing each industry. All is well in Manufacturing employment, right?

When we compare the mean of annual salaries to the median of the same data, we start to see a more telling tale. On the Median line, near 2012, we see the data flattening. The Median is nearly unchanged for a 2-year period. Growth continues but has decelerated noticeably. The gap between Median and Mean in the year 2017 can be interpreted as grand loss for the lower level jobs in this industry. I venture to guess that automation has displaced jobs to a new classification of unskilled work. Whereas some tool and die skill may have been well compensated in the past, automation is simplifying the functionality and devaluing an archaic skill set.

If this were not enough indication, we have compared the Median Wage Growth to Inflation. The median salary in Manufacturing is not even keeping pace with inflation. These workers are effectively losing money in the low end of the industry. Upper management is realizing a comfortable gain, due to increasing productivity and decreasing labor cost.