

Oakland Tech News

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Deadline: Thursday 5:00 p.m.
for the next edition of Monday.

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and interim news editor;
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Springer Publishing Co., Inc.
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Defense Industry How-To Seminar

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The seminar will be held from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Thursday, Feb. 28, in the offices of Automation Alley, 2675 Bellingham in Troy.

The cost is free for Automation Alley members, \$10 for non-members. Pre-registration ends on Feb. 26 at the close of business. The cost at the door for non-members is \$20.

For more information, call 1-800-427-5100, or email at info@automationalley.com.

Cicco: Re-Shoring U.S. Jobs

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"But that's not the only reason robotics manufacturers enjoyed a record year in 2012."

Industry is coming back to North America, Burnstein said. All things being nearly equal, companies have come to the realization that it's better to have manufacturing facilities close to the customer base. For example, color televisions are now being manufactured in Detroit under the brand name Element.

Burnstein said sales are up in other industries besides automotive. He cited the metal working industries, life sciences and pharmaceuticals as industries that use robots in the manufacturing process and that have increased their orders for robots.

"I think 2013 will continue the upward trend," Burnstein said. "I can't say that it will be a record, but I see the long-term trend as going up."

Another factor contributing to the trend, Burnstein said, is the size of the businesses automating. It wasn't too long ago that it was the large corporations that were buying robots. But now he's seeing medium and small companies automating.

He said that Marlin Steel, a company that started out making metal wire baskets for bagel shops as the perfect example of a

small company automating and seeing its business grow.

Burnstein said Marlin Steel was getting killed by Chinese imports. The company's president Drew Greenblatt decided to automate. This allowed him to improve quality and increase the volume of production so the cost of an individual basket was now competitive with imports. Additionally, Burnstein said, that while bagel shop owners didn't care about the improved quality other industries, such as defense and aerospace, did. They needed high quality metal wire baskets for their production and Marlin Steel was able to provide them with what they needed.

Now, Burnstein said, the company has increased the number of workers and they make \$30 an hour with benefits.

Michael Cicco, general manager, North American Distribution for FANUC Robotics, said that he's heard about the Marlin Steel story and can proudly say the company is a customer of FANUC.

"There are a thousand people like Mr. Greenblatt," Cicco said. "He's been very outspoken to the media about what can be done and is a great example of what is known as reshoring - bringing industry back to the United States."

FANUC has its North American headquarters in Auburn Hills, Cicco said. But they have people "all



Improved robotics systems are bringing manufacturing back to the U.S.

over the place." And they are promoting the idea that with automation, factories can be here instead of overseas and these factories can be safe places where workers are empowered and enjoy coming to work, instead of being places that require mindless repetition from low-skilled workers.

Improved technology has also made it possible for companies like FANUC to place machines in businesses that it previously couldn't.

"We made it possible to sterilize robots," Cicco said. "That's actually a big deal because robots can be used more in food processing plants where being

sterile is really important."

Cicco also described how robots can now be used in "palletizing" boxes of different sizes on one pallet. The company has also developed a sensor that makes it possible for robots to pick parts out of a bin and place them where they need to go. In the past, people had to take the parts out of the bin and direct them to the robot.

"Overall, the use of automation will continue to increase," Cicco said. "It's going to get more expensive to do things in China and India. People are looking to bringing industry back here, and we can help them."

Social Media Classes Set at M-TEC Auburn Hills Campus

Social media is here to stay, and small and independent business owners shouldn't fear it, they should embrace it, Oakland Community College officials say.

To that end, OCC's Continuing Education Department will offer a new series that introduces participants to the various media platforms - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and many

more. Students will learn which media can benefit their business and bring them closer to their target markets.

A two-hour introductory course on March 27 will teach participants about the various platforms. Tuition is \$39.

Follow-up, in-depth courses in Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, each lasting six hours, will be of-

fered in April, May and June to teach participants how to start posting content and connect with their target markets. Tuition for each is \$69.

All classes are conducted at the M-TEC facility on OCC's Auburn Hills Campus.

For more information, go to the Continuing Education website at www.oaklandcc.edu/ce.

Robotics Team Seeks Championship

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"It's very valuable having the Chrysler support . . . Chrysler has a Foundation that is donating financial resources, so we've got that every year, and that's our biggest single contributor, but also we have some Chrysler engineers who come and work with students," McIntyre said.

"They help us develop strategies, develop design ideas. We've got one who is a programmer, and he's a very skilled programmer, and that's what he does at Chrysler, they program the robots that are on the assembly line."

"So it's great having that real cutting-edge technology available to kids, and over the years they've taken our kids on many field trips through Chrysler facilities."

"We've gotten to see automated assembly lines, we got to see how they develop the robots that are making the cars, so every year or so we get a nice tour of another of the Chrysler facilities and that's a perk of having Chrysler as your sponsor."

McIntyre noted students tend to get a lot of recognition if

they're on a sports team or in the school play, but there aren't a lot of opportunities to celebrate students who excel academically.

"The real value of it from my point of view is that all of the stuff that you teach in your daily science and technology and engineering and mathematics type classes comes to life . . . It takes it out of the textbook and makes it come to life, plus they get to think about it in terms of their long-term career goals."

He noted that the benefit of working side-by-side with engineers and other professionals is students get to see that this is something they can do, because they're actually doing it on a smaller scale.

McIntyre added building a robot from scratch is true engineering, because students face the same challenges, such as adhering to timelines, staying within a budget and working in cooperation with each other.

"There's a phrase they use at FIRST called, 'Beyond the 'Bot,' which means we're not just teaching them how to build a robot, we're teaching them life skills."

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