The State of Manufacturing Technology
by Bob Bengel, NWIRC President/CEO

A recent article in Forbes highlighted a survey conducted by Plex Systems, a Troy, Michigan based provider of ERP and manufacturing automation solutions, examining the use of technology by more than 130 leading manufacturers. The survey focused on the companies’ current and planned adoption of Big Data, cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT) and, mobile technologies.

The resulting study, The State of Manufacturing Technology, was released in May 2015 and finds a host of emerging technologies converging on the shop floor to transform how things are made, track products across a global supply chain, streamline materials handling, and improve shop safety and product quality.

Key findings of the study include:

- Cloud technologies power innovation: Forty percent of respondents drew a direct correlation between cloud technologies and their ability to drive innovation in their own products over the next five years.
- Cloud solutions improve manufacturing operations: Not only is the cloud proven for delivering enterprise software more efficiently and cost effectively, it is now demonstrating real improvements in manufacturing operations. After deploying cloud systems: 66 percent of respondents saw improvements in plant productivity; 74 percent achieved operating process improvements; and 61 percent achieved better quality in their own products.

Rogers Brothers - Long Term Success with ERP Software

By Joe Kloecker,
Lakeview Consulting Service

If you happen to see a large piece of construction equipment being hauled down the highway, there is a good chance it is riding on a “lowbed” trailer manufactured by Rogers Brothers Corporation (Rogers), located in Albion PA. Since 1905, the company has built over 44,000 trailers for use in the construction and mining industries along with trailers designed for other dedicated uses. You can find their logo on trailers throughout the 50 states and across 65 countries.

With a heritage as bridge builders, Rogers continues to focus on quality and long term performance in their manufacturing process and end product. A key ingredient in the company’s attention to detail is their historical use of technology. Lawrence Kulyk, Board Chairman, represents the third generation of family management at Rogers.
Long-Term Success with ERP Software
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He has witnessed the ongoing advancement of technology, including information systems used within the company. A computer-aided design (CAD) system was introduced in the 1970's, along with accounting systems written in RPG II (report program generated, an IBM programming language). In later years, a company database using packaged software from IBM was developed. Initially titled MMAS (materials management and accounting systems), the package later grew into MAPICS (manufacturing accounting and production information control systems). In 2005, MAPICS was acquired by the international software company Infor and renamed Infor XA. Today, almost 40 years later, these software modules are still operating and evolving at Rogers.

From his position, Kulyk recognizes that manufacturing information systems have enabled them to develop an institutional memory containing many years of detailed product data. “This information is the starting point for everything we do,” he said. “It has cut down design time, engineering time, and time to quote.”

David Hough, Production Control Manager, also relies heavily on their IT systems. Since the average trailer requires an overall 8-12 week build cycle with a 10-12 week level bill of material, David counts on the systems to improve feedback and overall communication throughout the company’s operations.

Several key ingredients have led to the success of Rogers’ enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems throughout the past 15 years:
- acquisition of software designed specifically for manufacturing;
- development of a local relationship with Moldrich Solutions, a MAPICS knowledgeable consultant;
- daily work processes were merged into software system functionality, and vice versa;
- trusted information contained in their MAPICS database.

The past generations of Rogers’ management created several successful advertising slogans to represent their company. One of them, “Designed to Perform…Built to Last”, is also representative of their commitment to using their information systems.

To learn more about planning or transitioning ERP systems, please contact your NWIRC Business Advisor for information on IT assistance services. Pre-ERP Planning will be the topic of the NWIRC Morning Huddle on October 6 from 8:30-10:00am at Knowledge Center. Watch for more details about this no-charge session at www.nwirc.com.

Launching the new “Training Season”

NWIRC now has the 2015/2016 schedule available for advanced manufacturing training. This schedule will enable companies to plan for their employee training needs and allot time for their development. Special requests for additional training dates or topics are always welcome, and personalized training on location can also be accommodated. Examples of training topics include:

- Advanced OSHA Compliance
- HACCP Certification
- ISO 9001:2015 Audit
- AS 9100 Audit
- Lean Six Sigma
- Calibration Workshop
- Job Boss ERP Software

WEDnet Resources May Help with Advanced Manufacturing Training

Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC) offers many advanced manufacturing training programs throughout the year that may qualify for funding.

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Launching 2015/2016 Training Season (Continued from page 2)

opportunities offered by the Workforce and Economic Development Network of Pennsylvania (WEDnetPA). WEDnetPA was created to make companies across the Commonwealth more competitive locally, nationally, and internationally by updating and improving the skills of their employees to meet specific company needs.

WEDnet offers two categories of training subjects, Essential Skills Training and Advanced Technology Training, both of which provide instruction in a variety of skills needed to be successful in the workplace. Last year, WEDnetPA revamped its guidelines to better address the higher-technology training needs of PA companies that are incorporating sophisticated technology into their operations—requiring workers with more advanced skill sets.

Essential Skills Training includes the areas of business operations, computers, quality assurance, and workplace health and safety. Advanced Technology Training covers computer programming, network administration, advanced machine operations and others.

The NWIRC offers classroom and onsite training covering elements which fall under the WEDnet categories, such as Principles of Lean, Value Stream Mapping, ISO Auditor Training, Advanced OSHA Compliance, Root Cause Analysis, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), and ARC Flash to name a few. Specific NWIRC training course offerings can be found at nwirc.org.

Visit WEDnetPA.com for more information, a WEDnet contact for your region, and to see if your company qualifies for reimbursement of training expenses.

NWIRC Introduces New Program Coordinator

Gretchen Reinard joined NWIRC as the Program Coordinator for the Advanced Manufacturing Apprentice Program (AMAP). She will manage and coordinate apprenticeships that connect client Northwest PA manufacturers with regional Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) University and technical school students for the purpose of developing or implementing manufacturing technology. Gretchen will act as the liaison between manufacturers and students, will be a regional expert on faculty capabilities and collegiate resources, and simplify the process for manufacturers in finding high-quality candidates to meet technology, operations, and innovation needs. She will attend upcoming university and college career fairs to promote available Advanced Manufacturing Apprentice positions in the region and expand our database of qualified students for work on new or existing manufacturing technology acceleration projects. Aside from apprenticeship matchmaking services, the Apprentice Program benefits manufacturers with wage savings of up to 40% for qualified apprentice projects lasting 3 to 6 months.

Gretchen was previously the Student Services Director at the Erie Business Center where she was responsible for job and internship placement, as well as maintaining relationships with area employers. She is a graduate of Clarion University.

Please contact Gretchen at 814-898-6887 or greinard@nwirc.org and welcome her to our team.

Manufacturing Day

Manufacturing Day is Friday, October 2, 2015. Register your tours and special events at www.mfgday.com. Also, mark your calendars for October 1st which will be a kick-off to this celebration hosted by the Manufacturers and Business Association at the Erie Bayfront Convention Center. NWIRC is a sponsor of the event, so be sure to stop by our informative exhibit.

Gretchen Reinard, Program Coordinator for the Advanced Manufacturing Apprentice Program
YOUR STRATEGIC BUSINESS ADVISORS

If you have questions, or would like to speak with someone from NWIRC about services, please contact your Strategic Business Advisor:

Tom Weible  
814.590.5202  
Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Elk  
Jefferson, McKean & Potter Counties

Susan Hileman  
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Crawford, Forest, Mercer & Venango Counties

Ed Barthelmes  
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NORTH CENTRAL OFFICE  
3 SOUTH BRADY ST, #205  
DUBOIS, PA 15801

NORTHWEST OFFICE  
764 BESSEMER ST, #105  
MEADVILLE, PA 16335

ERIE OFFICE  
5340 FRYLING ROAD, #202  
ERIE, PA 16510

UPCOMING EVENTS

Advanced OSHA Compliance  
September 17 / 23 / 29  
Locations: Erie / Franklin / St. Marys

Become educated on preparing your facility to complete a successful regulatory inspection. Learn how to tabulate injury impact to the bottom line, and establish an effective risk management program.

Morning Huddle: Supply Chain Management Best Practices  
October 13 / 27 / November 12  
Location: Erie / Hermitage / St. Marys

Learn critical factors to optimize your supply chain, the value of regionalizing, and elements to consider when making your sourcing decisions.

Lean Champion Certification  
October 27, Nov 3, 10, 17  
Location: Corry

Hands-on training and one-on-one assignments specific to your manufacturing business. The program is presented once a week for 4 weeks. Principles of Lean and Value Stream Mapping (the first two sessions) can be taken as stand-alone training.

Arc Flash  
October 28  
Location: St. Marys

This half-day program will cover OSHA regulations pertaining to NFPA 70E, arc flash hazard assessments, electrical hazards and potential injury, safety-related maintenance requirements, protective equipment, employee responsibilities, and more.

For more information or to register for training, visit www.nwirc.org