The Center to Advance Manufacturing Monthly News

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Behind every successful manufacturing operation is a network of transportation providers, infrastructure assets, and supply chain partners working together to keep materials and products moving efficiently. In Northwest Ohio, this logistics ecosystem plays a critical role in supporting manufacturers' ability to remain competitive, manage costs, and respond to changing customer demand.

Our region benefits from a strong logistics foundation, including rail connectivity, interstate access, port activity on the Great Lakes, and a growing network of distribution and warehousing operations. These assets not only help manufacturers move products to market, but also influence site selection decisions, supply chain strategies, and long-term economic development opportunities. As global supply chains continue to evolve, regional coordination and awareness of these resources become increasingly important.

At the same time, manufacturers are navigating new pressures related to workforce availability, customer expectations, and shifting trade dynamics. Strengthening connections between logistics providers, manufacturers, and education partners can help organizations better anticipate challenges and identify opportunities for innovation and growth.

To help explore these dynamics, the Center is hosting an upcoming webinar, "How Logistics Powers Manufacturing in Northwest Ohio," on April 29. The session will feature perspectives from transportation providers, industry partners, and higher education, with a focus on regional freight movement, supply chain infrastructure, and practical insights for manufacturers navigating today's logistics environment.

We invite you to join us for this timely conversation - *Click the graphic below to register today.*

Virtual Reality Lab Expands Advanced Manufacturing Experiential Learning Opportunities at Bowling Green State University

The Center recently supported the purchase of Virtual Reality (VR) lab equipment at Bowling Green State University, expanding capacity for hands-on training and future credentialing opportunities in advanced manufacturing, automation, and artificial intelligence. The investment aligns with feedback from manufacturers who identified immersive, technology-enabled training as an emerging need for workforce development and upskilling.

Industry demand for advanced manufacturing technologies was highlighted through multiple Center-led engagements, including the Center's Annual Manufacturing Summit, a regional webinar on intelligent automation, and a follow-up deep-dive session with manufacturers. Across these conversations, employers highlighted the importance of experiential learning tools and modern training technologies, with virtual and mixed reality identified as promising approaches for aligning student training with evolving industrial environments.

The VR Lab is intended to support BGSU's ability to integrate immersive training into academic programs, microcredentials, and workforce-focused offerings related to advanced manufacturing, automation, and emerging technologies. By creating simulated manufacturing environments, the lab is expected to expand experiential learning opportunities while complementing broader student engagement efforts, including site visits, internships, and co-op opportunities supported through regional partnerships.

"This AI/VR Lab at BGSU represents the future of engineering education. By integrating artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and mixed reality into our curriculum, we are creating learning experiences that are immersive, engaging, and deeply impactful. Our faculty can teach complex topics in ways that were not possible before, and our students gain the skills and confidence needed to thrive in a technology-driven economy."
— MD Sarder, Director of Engineering, Bowling Green State University

The VR Lab reflects the Center's commitment to strengthening advanced manufacturing education and workforce development across Northwest Ohio.

Photos: Representatives from Actual Reality Technologies and Honda experience BGSU's new virtual reality training environment during recent campus visits, highlighting the growing role of immersive technology in advanced manufacturing workforce preparation.

Strengthening Workplace Communication

Corporate English Partnership Program
University of Findlay

The University of Findlay is exploring a partnership with local international companies to provide practical English communication training for employees.

01

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

Improve English for meetings, teamwork, and daily communication in professional environments.

02

SAFETY & TECHNICAL ENGLISH

Support clear communication for safety procedures, production instructions, and technical discussions.

03

BUSINESS & PRESENTATION SKILLS

Build confidence in presentations, meetings, and cross-cultural workplace communication.

04

FLEXIBLE TRAINING OPTIONS

Classes can be offered at your company, at the University of Findlay, or in shared sessions with other international companies.

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Talent Ready Grant Opportunities at Owens Community College

Owens Community College is offering Talent Ready Grants to help eligible Ohio residents pursue short-term training that leads to in-demand careers. The grant can provide up to $2,000 toward a short-term certificate or industry-recognized credential, helping offset the cost of programs such as commercial truck driving (CDL), among others. Designed to strengthen workforce readiness, the initiative supports non-credit pathways aligned with regional industry needs.

OWENS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Owens' next CDL/Truck Driving class is scheduled to begin April 27, 2026 at the Toledo-area campus.

Click **here** for full grant eligibility and application details.

Understanding TechTypes to Support Technology Adoption in Manufacturing

What are TechTypes?

Individuals all have unique personality characteristics that make them who they are. These different personality characteristics also play a role with technology integration in someone's life (both personally and professionally). Understanding someone's unique technology personality characteristics can be helpful when trying to determine professional development opportunities and anticipate needs for businesses.

A TechType is a classification system that was developed based on the Diffusion of Innovation theory by Everett Rogers[1,2]. This theory suggests that individuals generally fall on a continuum of early adopters to laggards when adopting technology into a project or more generally into a system. The authors of this article have used this theory to develop a classification system called TechTypes based on a personality assessment that helps explore an individual's characteristics and suggest a corresponding personality type (aka TechType).

There are five main TechTypes that describe most individuals and they are Expert, Budding Guru, Adventurer, Cautious Optimist, and Techy Turtle. Individual characteristics are noted in the table below. Understanding these various TechTypes can be helpful when trying to plan for workforce needs in the future to ensure that change management processes are effective. There are pros and cons to each TechType and no TechType is better than another.

Table 1. Overview of TechTypes[2]

TechType	Strengths	Challenges	Summary Statement
Expert	• Skilled • Able to solve complex technology problems	• Runs out of new ideas or doesn't feel challenged anymore	I have easily conquered everything on your list
Budding Guru	• Enthusiastic • Likes to experiment with new tools and technologies	• Runs out of new ideas or doesn't feel challenged anymore	I enjoy experimenting with new tech tools
Adventurer	• Willing to try new ideas • Comes up with solutions to identified problems	• May jump in too deep and be more prone to hiccups in implementation	I am spontaneous and imaginative, and therefore will try anything
Cautious Optimist	• Caution helps prevent failures of technology • Provides careful consider-ation of technology	• Holds back creative potential and/or only partially employs the new tool or feature	I see potential, but don't like to take unnecessary technology risks.
Techy Turtle	• Consistent and deliberative • Helps prevent technology adoption for the wrong or not well thought out reasons	• Lags behind on some technological innovations	I will implement new technology when the benefits clearly outweigh the risks.

Relationship to Manufacturing and Workforce Development using an AI Case

Understanding an individual's TechType may help when thinking about changes to business processes or business needs going forward. For example, many organizations have begun incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) platforms into their organization to help increase efficiencies of processes. Understanding the various TechTypes of individuals in an organization can help anticipate needs and opportunities for a smoother rollout of technologies like AI.

Let's take a case where an automotive plant is implementing an AI-based quality system to check for product defects or anomalies. If the majority of the individuals at the plant fall into the Cautious Optimist TechType then additional training and beta-testing of technologies and processes may be helpful to generate buy in and help prevent failures. Otherwise, the rollout may be ineffective and a lack of buy in may prevent the full return on the AI investment. However, if the majority of individuals in the plant are the Adventurer TechType then identifying possible roadblocks and logistical hurdles in advance is needed to help reduce the risk of ineffective rollouts, because Adventurers may be more willing to try to technology, but not anticipate possible pain points. Anticipating these needs can help improve the change management process by identifying challenges and risks.

Additionally, tailoring training on new innovative technology at an organization is important to ensure that each TechType receives the training that they need to be successful in their role and use of the technology. For example, if a new manufacturing line is going to use AI to detect product defects, it is important for the individual reviewing those reports to have training on interpreting the results. If an individual is a Budding Guru, the technology training may be more complex and detailed than another individual who may need additional support when incorporating the new system.

TechTypes may also be useful to help anticipate professional development needs in the future. Identifying an individual's own TechType can help them identify training or growth opportunities that could be used to help them develop their own skills either by improving on an area of weakness or leveraging a strength. This research is still being conducted to determine how TechTypes may offer opportunities for tailoring professional development.

Summary

TechTypes help to identify an individual's unique personality with technology integration and adoption. Identifying someone's TechType may be helpful to identify strengths and barriers for incorporating innovative technology into business processes. TechTypes may also help develop the current workforce by identifying specific training that may be tailored to individuals.

Dr. Guy is a tenured Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice at the University of Findlay in Findlay, Ohio. He has extensive expertise in drug information, pharmacogenomics, educational technology, and innovative teaching methods. Dr. Guy's presentations offer educators, businesses, and healthcare professionals cutting-edge insights into the integration of technology in education, effective mentorship, personalized medicine through pharmacogenomics, and game-based learning strategies. Dr. Guy has over 20+ publications and numerous national conference presentations to his credit.

For more information on TechTypes or to take our free TechTypes survey please visit our website at www.drgoinsights.com.

References

1. *Rogers, E. Diffusion of Innovations, 5th ed.; Free Press (Simon and Schuster): New York, NY, USA, 2003.*
2. *Oestreich J, Guy J. Technology Personalities in the Classroom: A New Classification System of TechTypes from Experts to Techy Turtle. Pharmacy. 2023; 11(3): 91. https://doi.org/10.3390/pharmacy11030091*

Lake Erie West Regional Council CEDS Summit

Center staff recently participated in the Lake Erie West Regional Council's inaugural Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Summit, which brought together regional leaders to discuss priorities shaping the future of Northwest Ohio's economy. Center Director Kassie Cooper moderated the Workforce Development & Talent panel, contributing to a conversation focused on strengthening talent pipelines through collaboration among industry, education, and workforce partners. The Summit provided an opportunity to align regional efforts and highlight the importance of coordinated strategies that support long-term economic growth and workforce readiness.

Wood County Career Premiere

Regional employers, educators, and workforce partners came together at the OhioMeansJobs Wood County Career Premiere to showcase in-demand career pathways for local students. Center Workforce Coordinator Jeri Steinbrook volunteered at the event, connecting with students and partners who are working to strengthen awareness of skilled trades and career opportunities across Northwest Ohio. Events like Career Premiere play an important role in helping students explore future possibilities while supporting long-term workforce development efforts in the region.

Regional Growth Partnership Annual Meeting

Regional leaders recently gathered for the Regional Growth Partnership's Annual Meeting to highlight continued economic momentum across Northwest Ohio. A key takeaway was the strength of the region's manufacturing sector, with 60 projects announced in 2025 across all 17 counties — representing 2,528 new jobs and approximately $1.8 billion in investment. These results reinforce the value of strong collaboration between industry, higher education, and economic development partners as the region works to build talent pipelines and support long-term growth.

Global Partnerships Highlighted at University of Findlay Reception

Kassie Cooper recently joined regional leaders in Findlay for a reception welcoming Hajime "Jimmy" Kishimori, Consul General of Japan in Detroit. Hosted by the University of Findlay, the event underscored the value of strong international relationships and cross-sector collaboration in advancing workforce development initiatives and supporting long-term economic vitality across Northwest Ohio.

Celebrating Leadership at Women's Leadership Event

Center staff recently attended the Findlay-Hancock County Chamber of Commerce Women's Leadership event. During the program, University of Findlay President Katherine Fell shared meaningful reflections on the importance of building and sustaining strong personal and professional relationships, drawing on experiences from her own leadership journey. The event provided an opportunity for the Center team to connect with regional partners, gain valuable insights, and celebrate leadership across the Northwest Ohio community.

Tatsuya Kitagawa
University of Findlay | Masters of Business Administration

Tatsuya Kitagawa is pursuing his MBA at the University of Findlay while serving as a public official with the Fukui Prefectural Government in Japan. His work focuses on regional development initiatives and exploring how international best practices can support business attraction, workforce growth, and long-term economic sustainability.

Fukui is known for its strong manufacturing base, particularly in textiles and machinery, and several companies from the region have established operations in Ohio. Through his graduate studies, Tatsuya is strengthening his skills in strategic planning, analytical thinking, and project coordination, competencies he hopes to use to connect Fukui's industrial strengths with opportunities across manufacturing and other key economic sectors in Northwest Ohio.

His experiences have expanded his understanding of how regional governments, educational institutions, and industry partners can work together to support talent pipelines and global economic competitiveness. Looking ahead, Tatsuya hopes to apply his education and professional experience to support policies and partnerships that encourage innovation, strengthen manufacturing ecosystems, and build lasting connections between Japan and Ohio. He encourages fellow students to stay curious, seek out diverse perspectives, and prioritize relationship-building as a foundation for future career opportunities.

Nathan Riggleman
University of Findlay | Environment, Health, Safety & Sustainability Major
EHS Intern, Owens Corning

Nathan Riggleman gained hands-on experience in manufacturing through his internship with Owens Corning, where he supported environmental health and safety efforts in their molded pipe insulation facility. He served as a safety leader in a production area of the facility, working to reduce risk and support a safer workplace environment.

A highlight of the experience was building relationships with operators and seeing how safety improvements could make their jobs safer and easier. Nathan learned the importance of listening to employees' perspectives and communicating clearly when introducing changes.

The internship confirmed his goal of pursuing a career in manufacturing safety leadership and working toward professional certifications such as the Certified Safety Professional (CSP). He says developing strong communication and relationship-building skills was one of the most valuable takeaways.

Nathan encourages other students to stay open to new experiences, continue developing their skills, and focus on making a meaningful impact in their roles.

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