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## Why Mid-Size Manufacturers Should Care About the Fourth Industrial Revolution

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Good, bad or otherwise, disruption is inevitable. At least, that is what we've come to expect. In the modern age, we've experienced three industrial revolutions to-date – steam and water power, electricity and assembly lines, and computerization. Yet, another is coming. Are you ready for what's next?

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will be a fusion of technology that blends physical, digital, and biological systems. Essentially, knowledge is becoming available to accelerate innovation in all fields. As in past revolutions, many legacy approaches and investments will be de-valued or completely displaced.

No one truly knows what impact 4IR will have, but experts believe it will be far-reaching and life-changing. It has the power to transform the way we live, work, and interact with the world. Among others, the connection between the physical and digital world will likely affect manufacturer's productivity, quality, and needed skills within the labor force.

What we do know is 4IR will be rocket fuel to those who embrace innovation. Leaders will be pushed to abandon traditional ways of thinking and, instead, move towards the path of disruption. It's not just about reacting to day-to-day responsibilities, but thinking strategically about the future. In short, opportunity lies in a fundamental shift of perspective. For those who can identify connections between market needs and emerging technologies, success is up for the taking.

### Technology: So Many Choices, So Many Questions

Determining which technologies to use and how best to employ them is both a gift and a concern. With more choices come more questions. Technology breakthroughs including robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, fifth-generation wireless technologies (5G), additive manufacturing/3D printing and fully autonomous vehicles will compete for attention.

This increased capability begs the question: where do you begin? How much automation is right? What should be measured and what is the data used for? How can workers find a path to new skills and remain relevant? How does one qualify and prioritize investments for the coming revolution?

To answer these questions, manufacturers must not lose sight of what's truly important. Technology is no doubt a driver into the future, but only as it enhances key sources of value creation in business:

1. **People** – Are you creating spaces where people want to work, and will thrive? If you haven't done so already, it's time to put your people first. Out of all the technologies at our fingertips, people will continue to be your greatest asset. Empower them.
2. **Structure** – Is your building, production lines and processes efficient and effective? Infrastructure is going to play a major role in the success or failure of your business. Smart, connected manufacturing facilities will have a clear advantage over less sophisticated competitors.
3. **Supply Chain** – Do you connect with suppliers and customers in a meaningful way? As the collaboration between stakeholders becomes a necessity for creating transparency, it will become critical to analyze how 4IR impacts the supply chain.

**PIVOT  
POINT**

### EVENT BREAKS DOWN 4IR FOR MID-SIZE MANUFACTURERS

A local event in Grand Rapids aims to help mid-size manufacturers prepare for the coming changes by providing actionable takeaways that can be applied the same day. Called PivotPoint, the event will be organized around the theme of "Capitalizing on the Fourth Industrial Revolution." Covering a range of topics – from the changing dynamics of talent attraction to planning for organizational growth – the event will highlight every-day pain points with real-life examples and preparation tips for the coming changes of 4IR. Rather than talk about high-level concepts, each presenter will share real-life examples and actionable takeaways that can help improve organizational performance for attendees.

Speakers include:

**Steve Brenneman, CEO, ATC Trailers** - *Too Small to be Big, Too Big to be Small-A Personal Look at Guiding a Growing Business*

**Andrew Galardi, Vice President Commercial Banking, Bank of America Merrill Lynch** - *The Pros and Cons of Buying vs. Leasing a Facility. What's Right for You?*

**John Tucker, Director of Human Resources and Michigan Manufacturing Association's 2018 Talent Champion Award Winner, PTM Corporation** - *Talent Requirements are Changing. What Can You do to Plan for the Future?*

**David Shull, Industrial Practice Leader, Progressive AE** - *Master planning for Success in the Face of Uncertainty*

**David Carlson, Manufacturing and Automotive Practice Leader, Marsh** - *Turning Risk into Opportunity*

**Gordon Stannis, Partner, TwistThink** - *A Time to Innovate*

PivotPoint will take place on Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at the Goei Center, 818 Butterworth Street. Tickets can be purchased for \$35 by visiting [progressiveae.com](http://progressiveae.com) or by calling 616.361.2664.