



GREAT PLAINS

TECHNOLOGY & MANUFACTURING CLUSTER

FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

Member Spotlight



This month's member spotlight is Curtis Machine Company from Dodge City, Kansas. The company is a certified, woman-owned small business that designs and manufactures gearboxes and precision machined parts for the military, agricultural, petroleum, food processing and other industries.

In 1946, Curtis Machine was founded with a lathe, milling machine and welder at the Curtis family home, where its first contracted job was to manufacture a gearbox. Today, in a 56,000 square foot facility, the company continues to stick to its roots, and has become one of the largest manufacturers in North America of right-angle and off-angle bevel gearboxes, reverse engineered units, and a variety of gears. Throughout these years, Curtis has achieved many awards, including the WKMA New Product of the Year award in 2017 for their Stainless Steel 1:1 Spiral Bevel Gearbox, as well as a GSA Schedule Contract.

The company's 76 years of technical and engineering experience allow them to design various gearboxes in custom ratios and dimensions. A feature that makes their products stand out is its unique straddle mounted bearings design, which allows the gearboxes to have more horsepower capacity per unit, as well as better lubrication, symmetry, and compactness. With over 6000 assemblies and ISO 9001:2015 and AS9100D certifications, Curtis Machine is well-known by many OEMs and is capable of creating customized products to meet their needs.



Curtis Machine facility in Dodge City, Kansas.

To continue to meet demands and increase capabilities, Curtis Machine is adding members to its team by working with the Great Plains TMC's Talent Search Program and creating new marketing efforts. The company is also interested in developing new relationships with customers, suppliers and distributors throughout the region. If you are interested in the company's services and products, please view their video at <https://streamable.com/f3lz58> or website at www.curtismachine.com.

Curtis Machine Dodge City, Kansas

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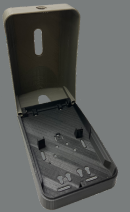


Owner Janie Curtis, and President John Curtis with their Gleason Phoenix bevel gear generator.

Members in the News

Circle B Manufacturing in Junction City, Kansas received design assistance from the K-State Technology Development Institute to create new hand sanitizer dispensers. The company is producing commercial bottles and seeking to expand its production for new customers. Check out their news release at

<https://www.ksal.com/ksu-students-help-company-with-product-design/>



Did You Know...

...61% of B2B transactions start online? - ThomasNet.com. Businesses without an online presence will miss out on opportunities to connect with new customers.

GPTMC members are able to utilize our [Website Creation Program](#) to have a new and/or updated website at no cost! Email us at info@greatplainstmc.org to get started!



KDA Workforce Needs Assessment

The Kansas Department of Agriculture is seeking agricultural companies to participate in their 2022 Workforce Needs Assessment Survey. This survey will help KDA create future discussions and identify solutions for positive changes in the agricultural economy.

KDA asks businesses to complete the survey to help KDA identify the number and types of jobs in the state's agriculture industry, and the specific skills required for those jobs. The survey can be completed online on KDA's website -

agriculture.ks.gov/workforce.

The survey will be open until April 8th, 2022 and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

KDA anticipates results to be available at the 2022 Ag Growth Summit this summer. Contact Russell Plaschka - Agribusiness Development Director at Russell.Plaschka@ks.gov for questions.



Upcoming Partner Events

- 3/8- Social Media Marketing - Kansas SBDC
- 3/31 - Creating and Implementing a Strategic Plan - NCRPC

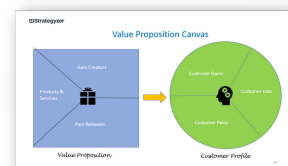
How to Understand Your Value Proposition Webinar



Go Topeka hosted a webinar about "How to Understand Your Value Proposition for New Tech Ventures" for Topeka's Plug and Play Tech Center. The webinar provided attendees with details about how to articulate value proposition to stakeholders and the initial steps to take to engage in customer discovery, value proposition refinement, and business model development.

Presenters of the webinar included Laurie Pieper, Go Topeka VP of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, and Bret Lanz, K-State Technology Development Institute Commercialization Director. With several years of technology and commercialization experience, Laurie and Bret presented about topics including:

- best practices/pitfalls in value proposition and business model development
- key concepts, and how they relate to one another
- commercialization
- market research



The GPTMC plans to support Go Topeka's small business efforts and upcoming events on Research Grant Opportunities through USDA SBIRs, Export Compliance Plans, and Regulatory Agencies. Visit www.gotopeka.com for more information.

USDA Rural Entrepreneurship Resource Guide



The USDA-RD has launched [Resources for Rural Entrepreneurs](#) to assist individuals in rural areas start and grow businesses, create good paying jobs, and strengthen the economy. This guide will enhance competitiveness and equip rural manufacturers with the tools they need to be successful. Other informational tools in the guide will help entrepreneurs to:

- expand their access to capital to create small business incubators
- create value-added agricultural products
- access high-speed internet to connect their businesses to national and global markets
- cut energy costs
- access health care resource to enhance the quality of life for employees
- access workforce development and training opportunities to improve their skills, products and services and more.

In addition, the USDA also has a [Rural Workforce Development Guide](#) that provides information for communities to start and expand employment opportunities and create a sustainable workforce. To learn more about USDA opportunities in Kansas, please visit <https://www.rd.usda.gov/ks>

April Website Development Workshops

The Great Plains TMC and Kansas SBDC at FHSU will be hosting 2 website development workshops in the North Central Kansas region in April. These workshops are part of the free training opportunities from the North Central Regional Planning Commission, where they were awarded CARES Act Recovery funds to provide no-cost business and technical trainings for individuals and businesses in their 12 county region.

These workshops will give individuals the opportunity to learn the basics of building and owning a website. The class will walk attendees through the process of:

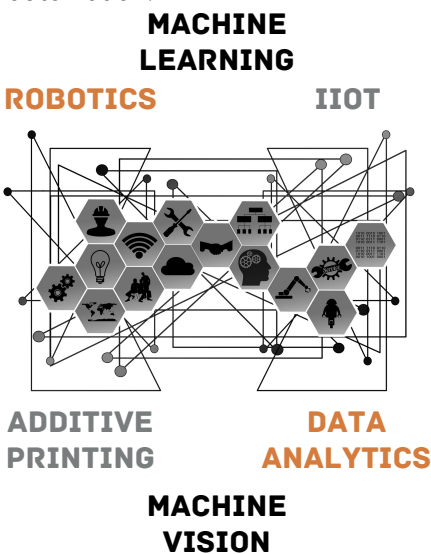
- How to build a website through GoDaddy
- How to organize sitemap information
- Designing the website
- Do's and Don'ts
- Launching the website live
- Domain information



There will be two half-day morning workshops in Concordia (Date TBD) and Salina on April 28th, 2022. Please stay tuned for more information about dates, times and registration links www.greatplainsstmc.org.

Are You Ready for Industry 4.0? - Blog

It's happening all across the manufacturing industry, from chemical plants to machine shops, from injection molders and extruders to assemblers. Manufacturers are adopting smart technologies that can provide significant advancements in operations, including minimization of scrap, downtime, and worker safety incidents. These "Industry 4.0" technologies - also called "digital technologies" or "smart technologies" - are believed to be taking production efficiency and quality to new levels, similar to the advancements created by steam power, electricity, and automation.



So what are the technologies of Industry 4.0? Well, to name a few: robotics, machine vision, data analytics, machine learning, Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and additive printing.

Who's doing it? Lots of businesses! A survey by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) found that, over the 3 year period from 2018 to 2020, the percentage of manufacturers currently implementing digital technologies increased from 27% to 84%, while the number who remained uninterested in these technologies fell from 55% to 12%! Quite a change!

[Login](#) to the membership to read the rest of the blog and find out more about digitalization!

Encountering Innovation

The Kansas SBDC's Encountering Innovation event this year is June 6th-9th at Johnson County Community College. The event provides opportunities for innovators, manufacturer and tech scouts to connect for commercialization purposes. Attendees will be able to attend breakout sessions, pitch ideas to scouts, network with prime contractors such as Northrop Grumman and Honeywell, and listen to keynote speaker, U.S. Senator Jerry Moran.

The Kansas SBDC is encouraging innovators with commercial ready ideas and manufacturers interested in expanding their product line to register now for the event, especially if their innovation can assist the federal government in medical, health, cyber, electronics, construction and operations industries. Participants will receive training before the event through Friday "Lunch and Learns" to learn how to work and engage with tech scouts and primes, discover their needs and informative panel discussions.

For more information about the event, trainings, and matchmaking opportunities, please visit www.encounteringinnovation.com or contact Alan Badgley, Director at badgley@ksbdc.net.

