



GREAT PLAINS

TECHNOLOGY & MANUFACTURING CLUSTER

NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Member Spotlight

SmartGunz LLC
Baldwin City, KS



Our member spotlight this month is SmartGunz, LLC in Baldwin City, Kansas. The company is developing the next generation of personal security through the integration of RFID technology with firearms. The technology is designed to prevent unauthorized users from firing the weapon as well as reduce the possibility of an accidental discharge event.

The company states "Our sole purpose for launching SmartGunz, LLC is to save both law enforcement and civilian lives - full stop." In an effort to accomplish this, the company uses a patent pending lock-out technology that is integrated with an RFID reader that is installed in the firearm. The smart gun is supplied with an RFID tag that can be placed in a ring or glove that is worn by the individual authorized to use the firearm. When the tag is in close proximity to the firearm, the lock-out mechanism disengages and the firearm operates in a traditional manner.



SmartGunz, LLC has worked with a number of Kansas resources to both validate the market opportunity and develop the technology inside the firearm. These critical business partners include the KU Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the K-State Technology Development Institute. The company was recently awarded a Proof of Concept Grant through the Kansas Department of Commerce to complete its electronics board designs and move them into commercial production. The product is in its final development stages and plans to begin beta testing in January 2022.



The company is currently taking pre-orders for the smart gun through their e-commerce website and seeking to expand sales and growth through the creation of a distribution network across North America and worldwide. If you are interested in learning more about the company or its innovative technology, please visit their website at <https://smartgunz.co/>.

Did you Know...

...that 63% of manufacturers have plans to upgrade their website this year? - [Thomas.Net](#).



Marketing is a crucial part of a business, and it's important to be visible online to your customers.

If your business is part of the 37% that doesn't have plans to update their website, then your business could be missing out on many opportunities to grow and be successful. The GPTMC team is here to help with your website development needs! One of the benefits of being a GPTMC member is that we can help develop a new or update an existing website for your business at no charge! We truly see how important it is to have your business online as many customers research companies before making a purchase. Contact us today to get started!



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PPI Metal Fabrication Webinar and Internship

The K-State Pollution Prevention Institute (PPI) is hosting a webinar on Friday, January 21st at 9:00am about pollution prevention for metal fabrication and finishing companies and manufacturers. This webinar will review findings from the P2 summer 2021 students that had internships at metal-finishing-type industries and other pollution prevention strategies for these types of companies. To register, visit <https://www.sbeap.org/node/258>

In addition, PPI is accepting businesses that would like to hire an engineering and/or environmental science student through PPI's Pollution Prevention Intern Program. The interns will work on dedicated pollution prevention projects that reduce environmental impacts and costs. The deadline to apply for an intern for your facility is January 31st. For more information about the P2 Intern Program, please visit <https://www.sbeap.org/p2/intern-program>



Upcoming Partner Events

- 12/1 - Make Your Accounting Quick w/ QuickBooks - NCRPC
- 12/8 - How to Hire Your First Employee - Kansas SBDC

KSU Center for Entrepreneurship



The Entrepreneurship & Innovation (E&I) Internship Program is a pilot program hosted by K-State's Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship. The objective of this program is two-fold: (1) to provide students the opportunity to hone their entrepreneurial skills and expertise through an immersive and impactful internship experience, and (2) to provide entrepreneurially-minded businesses in our region with business assistance and access to K-State's emerging talent, at a fraction of the cost of a traditional internship program.

The program consists of a competitive, paid internship and looks forward to developing and collecting longer-term metrics to ensure that the impact of this program lasts for both the interns and the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

If you are an entrepreneurially-minded business in the region looking for a summer intern, please visit <https://cba.k-state.edu/academics/departments/center-advancement-entrepreneurship/wildcat-consulting.html>.

Kansas Dept of Commerce Receives Export Award

The Kansas Department of Commerce's International Division (KDC) was awarded \$160,000+ from the SBA through the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). The STEP program is funded by the SBA and administered by KDC to assist small Kansas



businesses with the beginning stages of exporting and to help existing exporters to expand into additional foreign markets. This grant will help KDC's ongoing efforts to grow exporting in the state, create more jobs, and build a resilient economy.

Funds in the STEP program can be used to support eligible businesses that are interested in entering new markets, attending international trade shows, seeking potential international partners, marketing to international customers, and more. Since the start of the program in 2012, more than 200 Kansas businesses have participated, which resulted in more than \$43 million in actual export sales.

For Kansas businesses that are interested in assistance with exporting and comply with SBA size standards, eligibility requirements include:

- The company's product must be produced or value-added in Kansas
- The company may not be an export service provider
- Company may not be debarred, suspended, proposed for disbarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in the transaction by any federal department
- The company must have been in business for at least one year
- Must be an export-ready US company seeking export goods of US origin or have at least 50% US content.

For more information and to apply, please visit

<https://www.kansascommerce.gov/program/business-incentives-and-services/step/>

October Ag Equipment Manufacturing Event



In partnership with the Kansas Dept of Ag (KDA), K-State TDI, and Kansas Manufacturing Solutions (KMS), we had another successful virtual event for ag equipment manufacturers. This event focused on collaborative partnerships and had presentations from the "Trifecta", which includes Daniel Rauchholz - Farmada, Nicholas Bowles - SureFire Ag, and Mike Bergmeier - ShieldAg. The Trifecta talked about how they partnered to develop an agricultural toolbar package for farmers that consists of Farmada's toolbar, SureFire's anhydrous electronic systems, and ShieldAg's row unit parts. Through their collaborative efforts, knowledge, and experience, they have successfully accessed international markets and developed a product that is completely made of parts from Kansas manufacturers. Other presenters of the event included Jeff Tucker - K-State TDI and Tiffany Stovall - KMS, where they talked about their programs and services for manufacturers in the region.

Key Takeaways

How can this type of collaboration help companies even if they aren't ready to go into international markets?

- You don't have to go overseas to be successful like the Trifecta. It is all about how you can collaborate and work with other partners and companies. Discover your needs and work with partners that can fulfill those needs.

What were some of the growing pains or hurdles that the Trifecta had to overcome?

- The Trifecta understood and identified what barriers they might face before they got to them. By working with other companies and resources that had experience with these hurdles, they were able to avoid these issues.

How did the Trifecta discover each other? How do companies start those collaborative conversations?

- Trade shows, events, and conferences are great opportunities to meet other companies and start collaborative conversations. It is important to build trust and personal connections to create these partnerships. If possible, meet with new partners in person rather than zoom/phone calls!



The Great Plains TMC, KDA, TDI, and KMS plan to have these networking events on a quarterly basis. For more details about this event, please [sign up](#) or [log in](#) to the membership. Stay tuned for emails and announcements of our next event!

Supply Chain Issues - Blog

Every manufacturer and company throughout every industry is being impacted by issues in the supply chain, especially with the impacts of COVID-19. They struggle with low inventories, have to find new suppliers, and cannot operate at normal capacities.



This next blog series will talk about what is causing some of these supply chain issues, and what manufacturers can do about them! Learn more and read the blog [here!](#)

Talent Search Program is Live!

Our Talent Search Program is live in the GPTMC Membership! This program helps companies and manufacturers search for qualified candidates to fill job positions through the deep insights of the LinkedIn network. It saves companies time and money by avoiding and filtering out candidates that don't meet the requirements for the job.

Ready to fill those open positions at your company? [Sign up](#) for GPTMC membership or [login](#) to your account to learn more! Email us at info@greatplainstmc.org with your questions!