REAL APPLICATIONS. REAL MANUFACTURERS. REAL IMPACT.

NEXTGEN MANUFACTURING AI SUMMIT

NOV 12, 2026 | DOWNERS GROVE, IL

IMEC

Plan. Implement. Excel.

REAL APPLICATIONS.
REAL MANUFACTURERS.
REAL IMPACT.

Manufacturers have always been at the forefront of innovation, turning new ideas and technologies into better ways to work, compete, and grow. Today, AI is opening the door to another exciting era for manufacturing.

AI is helping make possible what once seemed impossible. It gives manufacturers new ways to solve problems, strengthen their operations, empower their people, and take continuous improvement to an entirely new level.

We've all heard about the potential of AI. But the real question is: How can you put it to work in your business? With so many possibilities, knowing where to begin can feel overwhelming. That is exactly why we're here today.

Throughout this summit, you'll see how manufacturers are moving beyond the possibilities of AI and putting it into practice. Manufacturers from across Illinois have done the experimenting, learned what works, and are here to share those experiences so you can identify where AI can create the greatest value for your organization.

My hope is that you leave today with more than ideas. I hope you leave with a clearer direction for your AI journey, the confidence to take that next step, and the inspiration to challenge what is possible for your organization.

The future of manufacturing is not something we simply wait for. It is something we build. And by being here today, you are helping shape what comes next for manufacturing in Illinois.

Thank you for joining us, for embracing what's possible, and for continuing to push Illinois manufacturing forward.

Michael Cabonargi
President & CEO
IMEC

Morning Sessions

7:30 AM – 8:45 AM
Check-In ..... **Lobby**
Breakfast ..... **Atrium Grove**
Interactive Demonstrations ..... **Expo Room**

8:45 AM – 9:15 AM
Main Stage Kickoff ..... **Grand Ballroom**
Remarks from Michael Cabonargi (President & CEO, IMEC), Paul Tedford (CEO, WM Synergy), Eric Lin (Acting Associate Director for Innovation and Industry Services, NIST MEP)

9:15 AM – 10:00 AM
Opening Keynote ..... **Grand Ballroom**
From Experimentation to Execution: Scaling AI in Manufacturing

10:00 AM – 10:45 AM
Morning Manufacturer Panel ..... **Grand Ballroom**
Real Manufacturers, Real Gains: Practical AI Adoption Across the Business

10:45 AM – 11:30 AM
Expo ..... **Expo Room**

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM
Power Hour Networking Lunch ..... **Atrium Grove**

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM | Block 1

Breakout Session A ..... **Grand Ballroom**
From the Machine to the Answer: How AI Helps Me Run My Shop Floor

Breakout Session B ..... **Forum B**
Beyond the Shop Floor: Putting AI to Work on the Business Side of Manufacturing

Breakout Session C ..... **Pine Room**
Building a Manufacturing "Brand Brain": Aligning AI Marketing, Brand Culture, and Change Management

Breakout Session D ..... **Willow Room**
Why Your AI Pilot Stalled: A Working Session on the Data Underneath

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM | Block 2

Breakout Session A ..... **Grand Ballroom**
Pilot, Prove, Scale: A Manufacturer's Playbook for Putting AI to Work

Breakout Session B ..... **Forum B**
Systems First, Then AI: A Practical Path From Your ERP to Real AI Value

Breakout Session C ..... **Pine Room**
Will AI Shortlist You? How Manufacturers Get Found When Buyers Research with AI

Breakout Session D ..... **Willow Room**
From Quote to Cash: Embedding AI Across Manufacturing ERP Workflows

Closing Session

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM
Closing Remarks & Keynote ..... **Grand Ballroom**
Leading Through Transformation: Adaptability Science and Change Management on the Shop Floor

4:30 PM – 5:00 PM
Expo & Adjournment ..... **Expo Room**

The Grand Ballroom and Forum B are on the main level. Pine Room and Willow Room are on the second level.

9:15 AM – 10:00 AM | Grand Ballroom

Opening Keynote

From Experimentation to Execution: Scaling AI in Manufacturing: How People, Data, Copilots and AI Agents are Transforming the Industrial Enterprise

Tim Dickson
Chief Digital and Information Officer

10:00 AM – 10:45 AM | Grand Ballroom

Morning Manufacturer Panel

Real Manufacturers, Real Gains: Practical AI Adoption Across the Business

Hear directly from Illinois manufacturers putting AI to work across their businesses and seeing tangible results. This panel will explore real-world applications ranging from shop-floor productivity and automation to data governance, safety, training, and business operations.

Maddie Prasun
Data & AI Specialist
IMEC

Robert "Bob" Sieger
Carus, LLC

Jeremy Dawson
Dawson Fabrication, Inc.

Luis Mar-Silva
World's Finest Chocolate Co.

Throughout the Summit | Expo Room

Interactive Demonstrations

Experience the power of AI technology firsthand during these interactive demonstrations.

Humanoid Robotics in Action

Live interactive demonstration of "Skye," an AI-powered humanoid robot built by Metropolis Robotics.

Extended Reality (AR/VR) Shop-Floor Simulation

Interactive AR headset testing from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Parasol Lab (ERUPT Project).

Live Quality Inspection Vision AI

Hands-on visual defect inspection and AI model training demonstration by BCD iLabs.

7:30 AM – 9:00 AM & 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM | Expo Room

AI Innovations Lab

New Charter Technologies will be offering self-scheduled 10-minute 1-on-1 consultations directly out of their exhibit table.

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM | Block 1

BREAKOUT SESSION A

From the Machine to the Answer: How AI Helps Me Run My Shop Floor

Learn how making your machine data visible, including data from older equipment, lets your team ask AI practical questions about performance, troubleshooting, and production, while the people on the shop floor stay in control of decisions.

Presenter: Chris Misztur (Founder, MR. IIoT) & Rob Wienhoff (Chicago Coding Systems)

GRAND BALLROOM

BREAKOUT SESSION B

Beyond the Shop Floor: Putting AI to Work on the Business Side of Manufacturing

Go beyond the production floor and learn how small and mid-size manufacturers can unify their CRM, ERP, MES, payroll, and spreadsheet data, then use generative and agentic AI for inventory, labor forecasting, and financial analysis to expand their team's capacity, and leave with practical first steps to take back to the office.

Presenter: Michael Bigda (Vice President of Business Development, QX Impact)

FORUM B

BREAKOUT SESSION C

Building a Manufacturing "Brand Brain": Aligning AI Marketing, Brand Culture, and Change Management

Learn how to build a shared source of truth for your company's story so your people and AI tools communicate consistently across sales, RFQ responses, marketing, and AI search, turning AI into a lasting growth engine.

Presenters: Jason Abrahams (Founder, Next Play Marketing) & Mark James (Partner, LIMA Partners)

PINE ROOM

BREAKOUT SESSION D

Why Your AI Pilot Stalled: A Working Session on the Data Underneath

Bring your stalled AI project to this hands-on working session, where Ken Scales of Scalesology and Robert Muller of Mahoney Environmental will help you find the data problems holding it back and leave with a clear, prioritized list of what to fix first.

Presenters: Ken Scales (Founder & CEO, Scalesology) & Robert Muller (Director of Programs, Mahoney Environmental)

WILLOW ROOM

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM | Block 2

BREAKOUT SESSION A

Pilot, Prove, Scale: A Manufacturer's Playbook for Putting AI to Work

Fuzzitech and its customer Diesel Forward will share a practical framework for taking AI from pilot to scale, from picking the right first use case to sustaining it with data governance and change management, using Diesel Forward's own move from a demand dashboard to AI-driven forecasting as an example.

Presenters: Rizwan Khan (Founder, Fuzzitech) & Paul Connolly (Diesel Forward)

GRAND BALLROOM

BREAKOUT SESSION B

Systems First, Then AI: A Practical Path From Your ERP to Real AI Value

Before you dive into AI, make sure your systems can support it. Learn how to check your foundation, pick the problems worth solving first, and decide what to buy versus build. Leave with a practical next step for your operation.

Presenters: Paul Tedford (CEO, WM Synergy) & Kyle Barda (IT & Facility Manager, Modern Process Equipment Corporation)

FORUM B

BREAKOUT SESSION C

Will AI Shortlist You? How Manufacturers Get Found When Buyers Research with AI

Buyers increasingly use AI assistants to find suppliers, so learn how these tools choose sources, why many manufacturer websites go unseen, and leave with a practical checklist your marketing team can start using right away, with no new budget required.

Presenter: Jill Golden (Founder, Simple Machines Marketing)

PINE ROOM

BREAKOUT SESSION D

From Quote to Cash: Embedding AI Across Manufacturing ERP Workflows

Trevor Bollers of Letter B Global Technologies will share real examples of how ERP, integration, automation, and AI can connect quoting, production, inventory, shipping, and billing, then lead a discussion to help you find where work gets stuck and choose a manageable first project with a clear business outcome.

Presenter: Trevor Bollers (President and Owner, Letter B Global Technologies)

WILLOW ROOM

CLOSING SESSION OVERVIEW

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM | Grand Ballroom

Closing Keynote

Leading Through Transformation: Adaptability Science and Change Management on the Shop Floor

After a day of hearing what AI can do, Erin Ramirez will help you decide which AI project to take on first, and you'll leave with a simple approach for identifying what's worth exploring, choosing your next step, and bringing your people along from the owner's office to the plant floor.

Erin Ramirez
CEO

Real Change Studio

SPEAKERS, PANELISTS, AND FACILITATORS

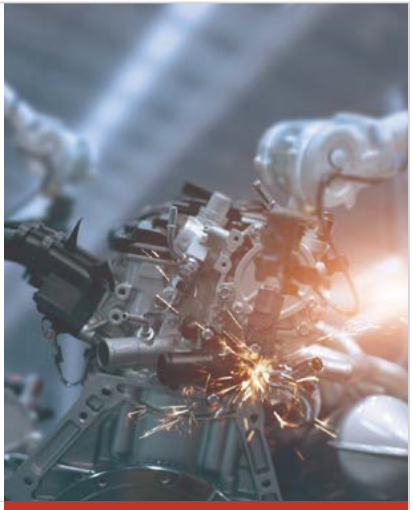
Scan this QR code to learn more about the speakers, panelists, and facilitators.

SURVEY

We value your feedback! Scan the QR code to provide feedback.

Systems first. **Then AI.**

AI that works because your **ERP** does.



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IMA ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Friday, December 11, 2026
Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk

THE GENESIS MISSION: TURNING VISION INTO ACTION
A Leadership Conversation with NVIDIA and Argonne National Laboratory

Moderator:
BRAD HENDERSON
Chief Executive Officer
P33 Chicago

Panelist:
JOHN JOSEPHAKIS
Global VP HPC/AI/ Supercomputing
NVIDIA

Panelist:
PAUL KEARNS
Laboratory Director
Argonne National Laboratory

Register today at ima-net.org or scan here:

AI changes what's possible.

Leaders determine what happens next.

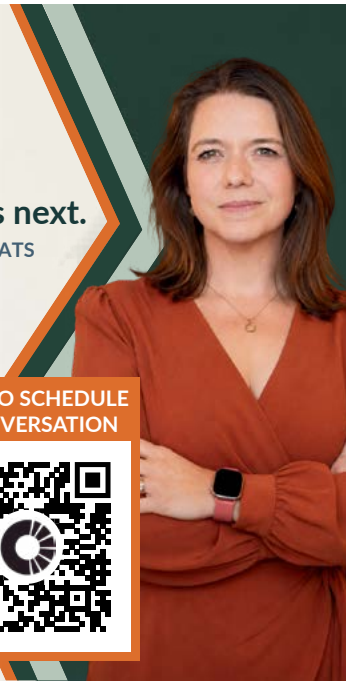
EXECUTIVE COACHING · LEADERSHIP TEAM RETREATS

Have a leader or team in mind? Let's talk.

Meet Erin at the Real Change Studio table.

CLOSING KEYNOTE · 3:30 PM

SCAN TO SCHEDULE A CONVERSATION



Erin Ramirez
EXECUTIVE COACH & SPEAKER
Real Change Studio
www.realchangestudio.com

MEP National Network™

IMEC serves as the state's U.S. Department of Commerce NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership center. The MEP National Network is a unique public-private partnership that delivers comprehensive, proven solutions to U.S. manufacturers, fueling growth and advancing U.S. manufacturing.

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imec.org info@imec.org 888-806-4632