

# The Future of Business in Pittsburgh

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## Agility Robotics Partners with ANA for Robotic Avatars

Agility Robotics was founded in 2015 with a focus on legged mobility, creating bipedal robots that can walk. Their goal is for their robots to make a positive difference in the world and improve the quality of life for all, and they are designed for multiple use cases including logistics and package delivery, in-home use, and keeping humans out of harm's way in dangerous situations.

Agility's roots stretch back to Carnegie Mellon University, where co-founders Jonathan Hurst and Damion Shelton met in the early 2000s. They have two office locations - one on the west coast of the United States in Oregon, and an east coast location in Pittsburgh.

In 2019, Agility signed a memorandum of understanding with ANA HOLDINGS INC. to work together to "develop a new line of Avatars that is more rugged, resilient and suitable for outdoor use." This is an example of the types of relationships and partnerships that Japanese companies can make with Pittsburgh-area companies.

In October of 2020 Agility announced that they had raised \$20 million of investment led by DCVC and Playground Global, and joined by MFV Partners, TDK Ventures, ITIC, Sony Innovation Fund, and Safar Partners.

Agility's latest product, Digit, was brought to market in mid-2020. It features the ability to walk and run, climb stairs, and autonomously navigate environments. It addresses the mobility limitations of traditional robots so that machines can work in environments designed for humans. Major features include integrated sensing, 4-DOF arms, 2-DOF feet, custom payload integration, and sealed joints for all-weather outdoor operation. Digit is available now.



## Pittsburgh Tech Council Connects Pittsburgh to the World

One great resource for businesses interested in exploring doing business in Pittsburgh is the Pittsburgh Technology Council (PTC). The PTC exists to help its member companies reach new customers, build partnerships, and secure funding, and they are able to facilitate business introductions to help develop sales leads, investment opportunities, and much more through their extensive network of relationships and connections.



They also host more than 100 events every year for networking and knowledge building, and they regularly lead business missions to introduce member companies to investors. A number of their events highlight international markets and opportunities for expansion.

Additionally, the PTC is a premier source of news and information regarding the Pittsburgh business environment. Their award-winning publications, radio and podcast programming, and digital channels highlight startups as well as established companies, profile business leaders, and cover local tech news. JETRO New York is a member of the Pittsburgh Technology Council and has been making use of their services to connect Japanese companies with opportunities in Pittsburgh. These are services that could be of interest to other Japanese businesses as well.

## Pittsburgh Business News and Updates

- Duolingo, a language-learning app which was valued at \$2.4 billion as of November 2020, has been named to the 2021 TIMES100 list of Most Influential Companies. (<https://www.duolingo.com/>)
- Approximately 300 firms from around the world invested in Pittsburgh companies in the last five years, according to a new report analyzing investment and exit activity in the Pittsburgh region from 2011 to 2020. (<http://bit.ly/2020PghInvestment>)
- Pennsylvania has announced up to \$2 million in funding for 412 Venture Fund, which seeks to invest in early-stage Pittsburgh companies. (<https://www.412venturefund.com/>)
- AvaDynamics has been named a semifinalist in the \$10 Million Avatar XPRIZE competition, which is sponsored by All Nippon Airways (ANA) and hopes to result in a robotic avatar system capable of transporting a human's senses, actions, and presence to a remote location in real time. (<https://www.xprize.org/prizes/avatar/articles/38-semifinalist-teams-from-16-countries-aim-to-create-an-avatar-system>)
- Recently launched Black Tech Nation Ventures is seeking to raise \$50 million for investment in Black-led startups. (<http://btn.vc/>)



### About Ryan

Ryan O'Shea is a JETRO Investment Advisor focused on connecting Japanese companies to opportunities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is the host of Future Grind, a podcast that explores the ethics and impact of emerging science and technology. In 2017, Ryan co-founded an artificial intelligence startup that was named a Top 10 team in the IBM Watson AI XPRIZE. Ryan has represented NASA and CalTech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory as a Solar System Ambassador and serves both as a World Economic Forum Global Shaper and an ambassador for Pittsburgh AI. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh & serves on the boards of multiple non-profit organizations. He can be reached at [Ryan@futuregrind.org](mailto:Ryan@futuregrind.org).