JETRO
Japan External Trade Organization

The Future of Business in Pittsburgh

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First-Of–Its-Kind "Robotics Factory" Opens in Pittsburgh

Innovation Works (IW) has joined forces with the Pittsburgh Robotics Network and other regional partners to announce the launch of the Robotics Factory, which will create, accelerate and scale robotics startups in the Pittsburgh region. The initiative is part of a $63 million federal grant which enables southwestern Pennsylvania to expand the regional robotics and autonomy cluster – a sector for which Pittsburgh's expertise and leadership are globally recognized.

The Robotics Factory comprises the following three programs:
The Robotics Factory – Create program will drive innovation to meet industry demands by bringing entrepreneurs, technology experts, and researchers together with specific industry experts to define existing and emerging problems and identify solutions together.

The Robotics Factory will create, accelerate, and scale Pittsburgh robotics startups.

Accelerate: The Robotics Factory – Accelerate program is an opportunity for robotics startups to receive up to $100,000 in funding from IW, mentorship, and resources to take their company to the next stage of growth. Similar to IW's nationally ranked AlphaLab accelerators, the Robotics Factory accelerator is an intensive, seven-month program, during which companies will move into the Robotics Factory's co-working space, have access to manufacturing and robotics resources including a production-grade prototype shop and robot lab, and receive coaching and support tailored to their specific business needs. The participants will also have access to mentorship opportunities with other Pittsburgh-based robotics companies and national and global industrial partners via the Pittsburgh Robotics Network.

Scale: The Robotics Factory – Scale program provides expertise in product prototypes and services to help startups develop production-ready products. The program provides in-house design for manufacturing, supply chain management, prototyping assistance, and access to the region's expansive manufacturing resources. The Robotics Factory includes a production-grade prototype shop with in-house staff to support product development and low-rate production, as well as focusing on the production of complex physical products.

Learn more at https://www.roboticsfactory.org/

TDK to Acquire Qeexo to Enable Complete Smart Edge Platforms

Tokyo-based TDK Corporation, a world leader in electronic solutions, has announced that they are acquiring Qeexo, a venture-backed company spun out of Carnegie Mellon University engaged in the automation of end-to-end machine learning for edge devices. As a result of the acquisition, Qeexo will become a wholly owned subsidiary of TDK.

"Qeexo brings together a unique combination of expertise in automating machine learning application development and deployment for those without ML expertise, high volume shipment of ML applications and understanding of sensors to accelerate the deployment of smart edge solutions," stated Jim Tran, CEO, TDK USA Corporation. "Their expertise combined with TDK's leadership positions in sensors, batteries and other critical components will enable the creation of system level solutions addressing a broad range of applications and industries."

Qeexo, a spinout from Carnegie Mellon University, will become a wholly owned subsidiary of TDK.

Qeexo is the first company to automate end-to-end machine learning for edge devices. Their fully-automated Qeexo AutoML platform allows customers to leverage sensor data to rapidly build machine learning solutions for highly constrained environments with applications in industrial, IoT, wearables, automotive, mobile, and more. It enables a no-code environment, enabling data collection and training of 18 (and expanding) different machine learning algorithms, including both neural networks and non-neural-networks, to the same dataset, while generating metrics for each (accuracy, memory size, latency), so that users can pick the model that best fits their unique requirements.

"Our platform is an outgrowth of our own history of high-volume ML application development and deployment enabling those with domain expertise but not ML expertise to solve real world problems quickly and efficiently," continued Sang Lee, CEO, Qeexo. "We see our AutoML tool as a natural partner to the smarter sensor systems that TDK is building."

Pittsburgh Business News and Updates

- Bosch, Gridwise Partner on Connected Smart Camera for Ride-Share Drivers (https://techcrunch.com/2023/01/03/bosch-is-rolling-out-a-security-dashcam-designed-for-rideshare-drivers/)
- Huge $224.65M Q4 investment in Pittsburgh tech firms (https://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/news/2023/01/12/pittsburgh-tech-sector-big-vc-infusion.html)
- Bloomfield Robotics Grows Relationship with Kubota (https://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/inno/stories/fundings/2023/01/16/bloomfield-robotics-raises-over-4-million.html)
- CleanRobotics Plans Expansion in 2023 (https://technical.ly/startups/cleanrobotics-growth-plans-2023/)
- Pittsburgh's AI expertise may give rise to an already growing startup market (https://techcrunch.com/2023/01/12/pittsburghs-ai-expertise-may-give-rise-to-an-already-growing-startup-market/)

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, and also works with the Pittsburgh Robotics Network. 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.