

TECHNO EXPO KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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“Welcome to the TCBM Tech Expo. Those of you who have started, grown, or moved your technology business to the Twin Cities have chosen what Popular Science magazine recently proclaimed “the top tech city in the United States.” The magazine calls the Twin Cities “unassuming yet consistently innovative” with a “broad-based showing of tech savvy that sets [us] apart from the competition.” The article says we are world leaders in medical devices, and, again, supercomputers; have created cutting-edge storage devices, communications protocols, computer applications, and chemical compounds; and aggressively pursue the biosciences with medical, food, and industrial applications.

“Technology businesses fuel the economy, accounting for nearly half of Minnesota’s exports, with wages 50 percent higher than average, and an annual payroll of \$8.4 billion. The article calls the region a truly great tech city—messy, organic, evolving—defined by our people and ideas.

“As the next generation of leaders takes the helm, our fate in the global economy will be sealed. Will these emerging leaders embody the spirit and wisdom to operate in what Michael Wright, Entegris president and COO, calls “the new business normal” in his forthcoming book of the same name? The book includes projections that within 10 years, 90 percent of the world’s scientists will come from Asia at the same time many American scientists will retire. Are we making the investments today that will allow us to remain competitive well into the 21st century?”



“The answers depend on our collective investment decisions in education, encouragement of tech business start-up and growth, and support for next-generation leaders. Let me share a few stories about companies and individuals who are shaping our global, tech-based economy.

“IBM Rochester, with energetic young leaders such as Samuel Prabhakar, director of worldwide systems in the company’s medical practice, is on the cutting edge of innovation. Prabhakar, who hails from India and has interests as diverse as technology, playing the drums, and being a magician, brings a fresh perspective to technology convergence and collaboration with other global giants including the Mayo Clinic, Medtronic, Guidant, and Honeywell.

“IBM’s Blue Gene supercomputer was recently named the fastest in the world by Top500 project, an independent group of university computer scientists who release supercomputer rankings every six months. Originally conceived to perform genomics and life science research, Blue Gene will be installed at Lawrence Livermore National Labs to study the nation’s nuclear stockpile. Blue Gene is one-quarter of its planned size, yet has been clocked at 70.72 trillion calculations per second. The system will ultimately contain 130,000 processors with a speed of 360 trillion calculations per second.

“The Twin Cities also is home to entrepreneurs, such as Tom Brust, chairman and CEO of Enova Medical. Brust has helped design, develop, and launch more than 50 medical devices. He learned entrepreneurial tactics and to trust his instincts from his late father-in-law, H. David Dalquist, who invented and sold 50 million Bundt pans. Brust recently signed a worldwide licensing agreement to manufacture and distribute surgical headlamp technology that he hopes will be the global leader in three years.

“Bruce Lach is an entrepreneur who has learned through

success as well as failure. Just months after closing his technology consulting business last year, Lach had the courage to share with 500 attendees of an MHTA conference the difficult lessons he’d learned. Lach now serves as interim CEO of Tech Logic, a company that was on the verge of bankruptcy. Already the company is installing leading-edge RFID (radio frequency identification) library systems worldwide and poised for infusion of funds and possible new ownership with a global reach.

“Minnesota is attracting innovative new businesses and leaders. Take Emily de Rotstein, for example. While at Dow Chemical in Michigan, the University of Minnesota graduate helped spin off a new company called Aveso, which manufactures flexible, printed electronic displays one-quarter the thickness of a credit card. Aveso wanted to expand, and needed to find a location that could support its growth. Executives looked at high-tech centers across the nation including Raleigh, North Carolina, Austin, Texas, and Madison, Wisconsin; then chose the Twin Cities. According to de Rotstein, the company’s vice president of marketing and operations, the Twin Cities outpaced the others in manufacturing capacity as well as demonstrated appetite for partnering with organizations such as hers.

“We have the brainpower, but we need the help of government and educational institutions to compete globally. Higher education and university research have long been indicators of a region’s success.

“Let’s hope that with bright new leaders, continuous innovation, and the support of government and education partners, we’ll see headlines that do not merely refer to the Twin Cities as “the best area for technology in the United States, but rather, “the best in the world.”

“Thank you for coming today. Please enjoy the show.”
(Applause.) ■