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Apple Manufacturing Academy brings together hundreds of U.S. manufacturers to accelerate AI use in American supply chains

Block Imaging, an Apple Manufacturing Academy participant, hosts forum attendees at its facility for an interactive tour where they can see firsthand how the company has applied learnings from the program.

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The Apple Manufacturing Academy hosted hundreds of manufacturers at its inaugural Spring Forum in East Lansing, Michigan. The academy's largest event to date brought together U.S. manufacturers, industry leaders, and academics at Michigan State University (MSU) and put a spotlight on one of the program's most tangible results: how American businesses are using what they've learned at the Apple Manufacturing Academy to transform their operations.

At Block Imaging — a Michigan-based company that services and refurbishes medical imaging equipment, including CT scanners and MRI machines that keep healthcare providers running across the country — that transformation is already underway. An Apple Manufacturing Academy participant, Block Imaging hosted forum attendees at its facility for an interactive tour where they could see firsthand how the company has applied learnings from the program to modernize its operations and improve efficiency on the factory floor.

"We created the Apple Manufacturing Academy with Michigan State because we wanted to bring advanced manufacturing techniques to American manufacturers," Priya Balasubramaniam, Apple's vice president of Product Operations, told attendees during the forum. "Our goal was to create real-world applications that help companies enhance their productivity and efficiency. We're very excited about Block Imaging and other participating companies that are now making use of what they're learning in the academy to deliver great results."

“We were proud to host attendees from the Spring Forum at our facility and share what we’ve been building here,” said Katie Runyon, Block Imaging’s director of Technical Training. “The Apple Manufacturing Academy has had a direct impact on how we operate. The training we’ve received from Apple engineers and Michigan State experts has given our team practical tools and techniques we’ve been able to apply immediately on the floor, improving the way we work and the quality of what we deliver to healthcare providers. We keep coming back because the program continues to push us forward.”

Block Imaging was one of four stops on offsite tours that also included the MSU Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, Peckham, and the MSU Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center. Those visits reflected themes that ran throughout the forum’s first day on MSU’s campus, where speakers from McKinsey, Magna, LightGuide, Medtronic, and other industry leaders addressed topics ranging from the role of physical AI on the factory floor to overcoming the challenges of implementing AI solutions at scale. The day closed with a poster session featuring MSU students and small- and medium-sized business participants, offering a look at the next generation of manufacturing innovators.

The forum also featured a fireside chat between Balasubramaniam and Kevin M. Guskiewicz, Michigan State University’s president. The conversation touched on how AI is transforming day-to-day manufacturing operations, the skills workers and students will need to thrive in an AI-enabled economy, and why the partnership between Apple and Michigan State is central to preparing the next generation of American manufacturers.

Launched last year as part of Apple's $600 billion commitment to the United States, the Apple Manufacturing Academy is a free program that pairs Apple engineers and MSU experts with small- and medium-sized U.S. businesses to help them implement AI and smart manufacturing techniques. It is the only manufacturing academy in North America and is open to businesses nationwide. To date, the academy has supported more than 150 American businesses through dozens of free in-person training sessions, and recently launched virtual programming to extend that support even further.

To learn more about the Apple Manufacturing Academy, or to enroll in virtual programming, businesses can visit manufacturingacademy.msu.edu.

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