

# PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

2 June 2016 || Page 1 | 3

## FUTURE WORK LAB MAKES THE FUTURE TANGIBLE

Innovation lab for work, people and technology opens in Stuttgart-Vaihingen

**With the Future Work Lab, the Fraunhofer Institutes IAO and IPA are opening a center that will let visitors experience the future of manufacturing. The center will offer tangible demonstrators, expertise development and training programs as well as a platform for scientific exchange, and targets industry, employee associations, politics, science – and future production workers.**

Digitalization is not only revolutionizing work on the factory floor. New technologies are also transforming processes and other indirectly related activities – and raising new questions. In what direction will our work develop? Will intelligent machines tell us what to do and set the pace in the future? Or will people determine the workflow, with machines giving them optimum support? The division of labor isn't the only area where completely new ways of organizing work are emerging. Another example is how shift workers are reaching for their smartphones to coordinate processes, as already demonstrated in the "KapaflexCy" project. At the same time, companies need to find new ways to both qualify their staff for the digital work environment and put the full potential of these technologies to best use. Not only do they offer the possibility to speed up and improve production in a way that motivates production workers; in many cases they also prompt disruptive innovations and totally new business models. This is illustrated for instance by "Virtual Fort Knox", a cloud-based IT platform that makes production data and IT services available for any type of device via app. In this dynamic market environment, only those who systematically harness and strategically integrate innovation processes will be able to survive in the long term.

### Source of ideas for industry, associations, trade unions and politics

Headed by the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO, the Future Work Lab – an innovation laboratory for work, people and technology – is therefore being established at the research campus in Stuttgart-Vaihingen. For this project, the Fraunhofer Institutes IAO and IPA are consolidating their expertise in the area of industry 4.0 in order to offer industrial companies and their employees a point of contact for questions related to the digital factory.

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#### Press and Public Relations

**Jörg-Dieter Walz** | Phone +49 711 970-1667 | [presse@ipa.fraunhofer.de](mailto:presse@ipa.fraunhofer.de)

Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation IPA | Nobelstrasse 12 | 70569 Stuttgart | [www.ipa.fraunhofer.de](http://www.ipa.fraunhofer.de)

**Juliane Segedi** | Phone +49 711 970-2124 | [presse@iao.fraunhofer.de](mailto:presse@iao.fraunhofer.de) | Fraunhofer IAO | Nobelstrasse 12 | 70569 Stuttgart | [www.iao.fraunhofer.de](http://www.iao.fraunhofer.de)

“We want the Future Work Lab to be a source of ideas for what work in industrial companies might look like in the future,” summarizes Prof. Wilhelm Bauer, director of Fraunhofer IAO. “With this, we are directly targeting employees and managers in companies, as well as associations, trade unions, politics and research,” Bauer explains. The director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation IPA, Prof. Thomas Bauernhansl, is convinced: “The digitalization of our value creation will radically change the role of employees. Many indirect tasks are now being automated and factory workers are becoming conductors of production. With the Future Work Lab we are responding to this change.”

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**PRESS RELEASE**

2 June 2016 || Page 2 | 3

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Companies can utilize the Future Work Lab in three ways:

At the **Demonstration Center, three circuits illustrating the future of work** show technologies and applications that are already available today, along with possible scenarios of the future division of labor between people and technology. The initiators’ aim is to demonstrate tomorrow’s industrial work from different angles. “On these three circuits, companies can directly experience and identify what industrial work will look like in the future,” says Dr. Moritz Hämmerle from Fraunhofer IAO, who is director of the Future Work Lab. At the same time, they have the possibility to establish direct contact with potential partners and to benefit from their experience.

Future work will demand totally different skills from today. The **“Fit for Future Work” expertise development and consulting center** therefore offers seminars, workshops and training options for employees of manufacturing companies. Collaborating with corporate partners, the center’s experts also develop special individual training concepts for industry 4.0.

The **“Work in progress” ideas center for work research** is a central platform for promoting scientific dialog and further research into production work. By setting it up directly in the Future Work Lab, the project partners want to guarantee rapid transfer from academia into practice. “The goal of the ideas center is to strengthen networking relations with the national and international research community. In this context, the Future Work Lab serves on the one hand as a point of contact for external partners and research centers, while on the other providing a basis for completely new research projects,” explains Thilo Zimmermann, who will coordinate the project for Fraunhofer IPA.

The project is being funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The official opening will probably be in fall 2016.

**PRESS RELEASE**

2 June 2016 || Page 3 | 3

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(Source: Fraunhofer IAO, photo: Ludmilla Parsyak)

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**Contact Partners**

**Dr.-Ing. Moritz Hämmeler** | Phone +49 711 970-2284 | [moritz.haemmerle@iao.fraunhofer.de](mailto:moritz.haemmerle@iao.fraunhofer.de) | Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation IPA | [www.ipa.fraunhofer.de](http://www.ipa.fraunhofer.de)

**Thilo Zimmermann** | Phone +49 711 970-5542 | [thilo.zimmermann@ipa.fraunhofer.de](mailto:thilo.zimmermann@ipa.fraunhofer.de) | Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation IPA | [www.ipa.fraunhofer.de](http://www.ipa.fraunhofer.de)

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