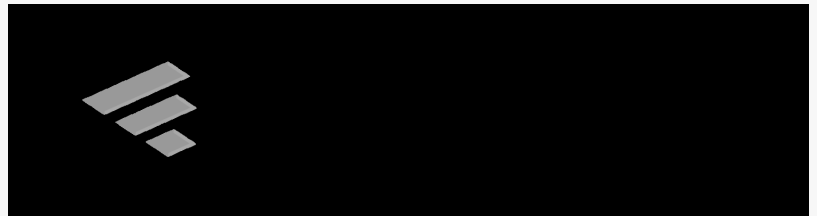


As Skilled Workers Retire, FABTECH 2026 Builds Up the Next Generation

This year's conference program pairs 180+ sessions across 12 tracks with dedicated programming for the next generation of manufacturing talent



LAS VEGAS, NV, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [FABTECH](#),

North America's largest metal forming, fabricating, welding, and finishing event, will host an expansive education program Oct. 21-23 at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, featuring 180+ expert-led sessions across 12 tracks focused on modernization and workforce development. The program gives attendees practical tools and strategies to solve today's manufacturing challenges.

FABTECH brings together the technologies, approaches, and insights manufacturers need to thrive in the AI-driven era, covering automation, smart factories, workforce transformation, and real-world business results.

As manufacturers adopt new technologies, developing the workforce needed to support that transformation remains a critical challenge. "As retirements continue to outpace the number of people entering the trade, upskilling our current workforce has never been more critical," said Tracy Garcia, CEM, FABTECH group director at SME. "This year's program is built to invest in every generation of manufacturing talent, making it easy for someone brand new to the industry and a 20-year veteran alike to find sessions that move their career, and their business, forward."

CONFERENCE PROGRAM DELIVERS FOCUSED LEARNING ACROSS DEDICATED TRACKS

This year's tracks put two challenges at the center of nearly every session: how shops modernize without breaking what already works, and how they build a workforce that can run what they build. Key themes include:

- AI & Smart Manufacturing Transformation: industrial AI strategy, shop-floor intelligence, digital twins, and connected factory ecosystems
- Automation, Robotics & the Autonomous Factory: adoption roadmaps, collaborative robotics,

and real-world ROI

- Operational Excellence & Cost Optimization: reducing downtime, lean practices, and predictive maintenance
- Workforce Development & Leadership Evolution: upskilling, career pathing, and closing the labor gap
- Digital Transformation & Connected Factory: ERP modernization, real-time data, and cybersecurity for digital shops
- Advanced Fabrication Technologies: laser, forming, and finishing innovations
- Business Growth & Competitive Advantage: capital investment, scaling, and regional supply chain strategy

Attendees can customize their learning path across the full program, with sessions led by industry veterans, innovators, and thought leaders sharing real-world case studies and expertise. The speaker lineup includes leaders from manufacturing companies, technology providers, educational institutions, consulting firms, and organizations representing expertise from across the industry's evolving ecosystem.

FABTECH INTRODUCES PREMIUM FAB PASS EXPERIENCE

New for 2026, FABTECH is launching FAB Pass, an exclusive upgrade. FAB Pass includes full access to all conference sessions and keynotes, VIP Lounge access, daily FABTECH Bistro lunch tickets, early entry to special events, jump-the-line privileges for registration and select activities, exclusive FABTECH merchandise benefits, and other premium perks.

"FAB Pass reflects our commitment to delivering more value and flexibility to attendees," said Garcia. "For professionals looking to maximize every minute at FABTECH, it provides a streamlined experience that combines premium access, convenience, and exclusive benefits in one package."

KEYNOTES AND PANELS BRING LEADERSHIP INTO FOCUS

- Keynotes -

FABTECH's keynote lineup this year centers on leadership, both on the shop floor and in the front office.

The New AI Power Shift: Risks, Rewards, & Readiness for 2027 & Beyond with best-selling author and acclaimed podcast host, Amber Mac

Oct. 21: 8:30 – 9:30 AM PT

Championship Culture in Manufacturing: Discipline, Teamwork, and Excellence with NFL legend

Jerry Rice

Oct. 22: 8:30 – 9:30 AM PT

The Creative Edge: How Craftsmanship and Grit Drive Fabrication with Steve Darnell, founder of Welder Up and the creative force behind Vegas Rat Rods

Oct. 23: 10 – 11 AM PT

- Leadership Exchange Panel Series -

FABTECH's Leadership Exchange series puts industry veterans in conversation about the issues shaping the year ahead.

State of the Metal Fabrication Business 2026: Executive Insights on Growth, Risk, and Competitive Advantage

Oct. 21: 12:30 – 1:30 PM PT

Building Tomorrow's Workforce: How to Attract, Train, and Keep Next-Gen Employees

Oct. 22: 12:30 – 1:30 PM PT

Follow the Money: Hidden Funding, Tax Strategies & Profit Levers for Fabricators

Oct. 23: 12:30 – 1:30 PM PT

SPECIAL EVENTS SPOTLIGHT SKILL AND LEADERSHIP

WeldArt World Championship

Oct. 21-23: 9 AM – 5 PM PT

Experience the excitement of the inaugural WeldArt World Championship. Watch the world's top welders compete live in the Round of 16 as they vie for a place in the global finals in Düsseldorf.

Women of FABTECH: Not Who They Had in Mind; Leadership, Manufacturing, and Redefining What a CEO Looks Like with Vanessa Heim, President & CEO, Brenco Industries

Oct. 22: 7:30 – 9 AM PT

Now in its 11th year, Women of FABTECH honors the women who have shaped the industry and continue to pave the way for the generations behind them. Heim will share how she built an unconventional path to the corner office.

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM RETURNS

FABTECH's half-day program runs Oct. 22, 12 – 3 PM PT, giving rising leaders practical tools to grow into their next role.

"The cost of developing an emerging leader is small. The cost of not developing one is enormous," said HR Huntsman, founder and president of Leader's Edge, who is speaking at and sponsoring the program. "The Emerging Leader Program gives high-potential employees practical leadership tools, peer connections, and a clear framework for creating value, so they return to work better prepared to lead projects, influence teams, and contribute at a higher level."

For more information, visit fabtechexpo.com or follow us on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok. To secure a complimentary exhibit hall pass, attend a conference session or upgrade to the new FAB Pass premium experience, [register here](#). Members of the press can register for a [media pass here](#).

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About FABTECH

FABTECH is North America's largest metal forming, fabricating, welding, and finishing event. The event provides a convenient venue where you can meet with world-class suppliers, see the latest industry products and developments, and find the solutions to improve productivity and increase profits. FABTECH is made possible by its five event partners, all of whom represent the varied and diverse makeup of the manufacturing industry. They include the American Welding Society, the Chemical Coaters Association International, the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association International, the Precision Metalforming Association and SME.

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