



# PROTOLABS®

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## Global Lighthouse Network Recognizes Protolabs as Fourth Industrial Revolution Leader

September 27, 2021

*The digital manufacturer becomes one of only 10 U.S. companies honored by the World Economic Forum for industry advancements through manufacturing technology*

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Sep. 27, 2021-- Global digital manufacturing company, [Protolabs](#), was inducted into the World Economic Forum's [Global Lighthouse Network](#) today, recognizing its industry leading efforts to implement Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies at its Plymouth, Minn., injection molding facility.

Protolabs is one of two North American companies entering the Lighthouse Network in 2021 that have showcased the global benefit of more sustainable and efficient solutions made possible through 4IR capabilities. The digital manufacturer's Plymouth facility becomes only the 10<sup>th</sup> *Lighthouse* based in the United States. Protolabs shares this honor with 24 Global Fortune 500 companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Proctor & Gamble, and Unilever, as members of this exclusive network.

The World Economic Forum, in collaboration with McKinsey & Company, established the Global Lighthouse Network in 2018 in response to the global manufacturing community lagging in the adoption of 4IR technologies. The Lighthouse Network serves as a platform for manufacturers showing leadership in using 4IR technologies to share and learn from best practices, support new partnerships and help other manufacturers deploy technology, adopt sustainable solutions, and transform their workforces. With its latest round of inductees, the Global Lighthouse Network sits at nearly 90 manufacturing sites around the world.

Through its induction into the Global Lighthouse Network, Protolabs' injection molding facility was recognized for its transformation as a prototype provider to now a full production provider through the implementation of 4IR technologies connecting its e-commerce experience to the shop floor. Its end-to-end connection—termed *thedigital thread*—enables the technology-driven manufacturer to provide production lead times in as fast as one day, instead of two to three months with traditional manufacturers.

"Protolabs was founded over 20 years ago with a digital mindset, and we have never stopped working towards our mission of offering the fastest and most comprehensive digital manufacturing service in the world, serving our customers' needs for high-quality prototyping and production using the most advanced manufacturing processes in the world," explained Protolabs' President and CEO, Rob Bodor. "We are honored to have these efforts recognized as part of the Lighthouse Network, and I look forward to exchanging learnings with our peers as Industry 4.0 continues to advance by leaps and bounds."

The 4IR technologies recognized by the World Economic Forum include Protolabs' interactive e-commerce quoting system with automated design for manufacturability (DFM) analysis, its automated mold design and toolpathing programs, and its digital process controls and inspections. The prevailing theme with those technologies is the overall reduction in manual processes—both for Protolabs and its customer—due to strategic implementation of automation. That automation then drives significant customer value like product innovation, speed to market, supply chain risk reduction, and a multitude of other benefits.

By implementing manufacturing automation and Industrial IoT technologies like this, Protolabs is able to unlock new levels of sustainability and efficiency for itself and its customers. More information on the 2021 inductees and the mission of the global community to accelerate Fourth Industrial Revolution adoption is available in the newly published report, [Global Lighthouse Network: Unlocking Sustainability Through 4IR](#).

"Lighthouses have achieved a sustainability breakthrough: companies no longer have to choose competitiveness or sustainability because smart manufacturing lets them achieve both," said Enno de Boer, Partner, McKinsey & Company and Global Lead of its manufacturing work.

### About Protolabs

Protolabs is the world's leading provider of digital manufacturing services. The e-commerce-based company offers injection molding, CNC machining, 3D printing, and sheet metal fabrication to product developers, engineers, and supply chain teams across the globe. Protolabs serves customers using in-house production capabilities that bring unprecedented speed in tandem with [Hubs, a Protolabs Company](#), which serves customers through its network of premium manufacturing partners. Together, they help companies bring new ideas to market with the fastest and most comprehensive digital manufacturing service in the world. Visit [protolabs.com](#) for more information.

## About the Global Lighthouse Network

The Global Lighthouse Network is a community of production sites and value chains that are world leaders in the adoption and integration of the cutting-edge technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Lighthouses apply 4IR technologies such as artificial intelligence, 3D-printing and big data analytics to maximize efficiency and competitiveness at scale, transform business models and drive economic growth, while augmenting the workforce, protecting the environment and contributing to a learning journey for all-sized manufacturers across all geographies and industries. The Global Lighthouse Network is a World Economic Forum project in collaboration with McKinsey & Co, factories and value chains that join the Network are designated by an independent panel of experts.

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Protolabs  
Brent Renneke, 701-741-7292  
PR and Media Strategist  
[brent.renneke@protolabs.com](mailto:brent.renneke@protolabs.com)

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