

## Failing Company? Here's Why, Book Offers

If you've ever worked for a struggling company, you know that there are several factors why it might fail. But a new book, *Your Company Sucks: It's Time to Declare War on Yourself*, points to four very specific reasons that organizations flop.

The first, according to author Mark Stevens, is ineffective leadership. Whether the highest levels of the company are missing drive, vision or courage, the problem stems from a lack of direction at the top.

Another problem is the "lust-to-lax syndrome" – going hard after a client or new business, securing the business and

then failing to continue that type of relationship once the papers are signed and the deal is done.

Complacency is the third cause of business failure, Stevens says. When a business reaches a certain amount of success, it's easy to become reactionary instead of innovative, cautious instead of investing wisely and raising the bar.

The last is conventional thinking. Continuing with the status quo of business ideals (particularly those that are harmful or outdated) is a quick way to take a company down.

**Resource:** Mark Stevens at [www.msco.com](http://www.msco.com)

## Online Participation Leads Youth to Community Engagement

It's not uncommon today to see youth tapping away at tiny devices without giving much thought to their surroundings. While this may seem to convey social isolation, research now suggests the opposite is true.

A study released by Youth and Participatory Politics offers that engagement with new media can potentially strengthen youth involvement in politics and community service.

The researchers surveyed over 2,500 young people and followed more than 400 from high schools across California for 3½ years. The three main behaviors studied were politically-driven online participation, online exposure to diverse perspectives and interest-driven online participation.

The findings point to more social and civic engagement by the students. Those who were "plugged in" were more likely to be active in their communities and participate in charitable work.

Not surprisingly, youth who were involved online were more often exposed to different viewpoints (57%). However, a lack of digital literacy led to 34% of young people unexposed to any political viewpoints at all.

The research also highlighted the need for schools and after-school programs to teach a broader understanding of the Internet and digital media as, contrary to popular belief, not all youth immediately understand the digital world.

**Resource:** MacArthur Foundation at [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org)

## Robot Orders Take Off in 2011

Good news for the robotics industry: North American orders were up 41% through September. The Robotics Industries Association reported that the first nine months of 2011 saw 13,616 robots (valued at \$848.5 million) ordered by North American companies.

Jason Zielke, vice president of operations for Indianapolis-based Precise Path Robotics, explains why he's not surprised by the jump in sales. The company manufactures the RG3 robotic greens mower for golf courses.

"I look at it from more of an economic business standpoint; a lot of companies have been conserving cash. This available cash they have, they're now starting to look at, 'How do we deploy this to operations?' One good way to do that is implementation of robotics," he says.

"It brings two things to the table: productivity benefits – they're able to produce more with the same number of workers. Another thing is a level of consistency and quality that is difficult for a human to achieve without some kind of system or check."

The industries responsible for the largest chunk of sales are automotive original equipment manufacturers and component suppliers – accounting for 53% of the orders. Non-automotive industry orders were up 28% in the first nine months of the year, led by metalworking and general industry.

Robotics is an increasing element of the Hoosier workforce, according to Zielke.

"These systems require a very diverse set of skill sets. There are mechanical components, electrical components. All of those pieces have to work really well together and all of those skill sets exist to a very high level of capability in the state," he declares. "We've created a workforce here to make it perfect to manufacture our product."

**Resources:** Jason Zielke, Precise Path Robotics, at [www.precisepath.com](http://www.precisepath.com)

**Robotics Industries Association at [www.robotics.org](http://www.robotics.org)**



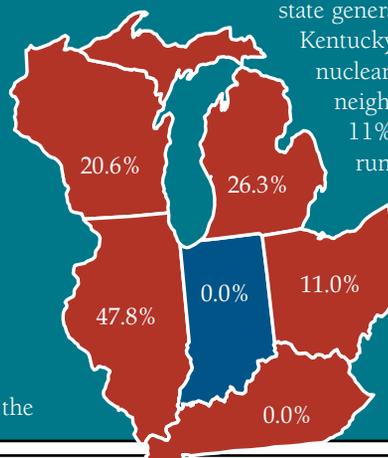
Indianapolis-based Precise Path Robotics manufactures the RG3 robotic greens mower.

Shorts written by Charlee Beasor

## Nuclear Generation Varies in the Midwest

**N**uclear power is one of those things most people don't think about. While well-known disasters (last year's Fukushima Daiichi in Japan, Chernobyl in Russia and Three Mile Island in the United States) may come to mind, thoughts tend to fade over time and nuclear power is generated fairly quietly.

While the United States has the most nuclear capacity among the 31 countries with nuclear power across the globe, generation in the Midwest varies greatly from state to state. Northwest Indiana receives a small portion of nuclear power from out-of-state facilities, but the



state generates none of its own.

Kentucky also doesn't generate energy through nuclear power. However, the rest of Indiana's neighbors participate in nuclear generation – 11% in Ohio, 26.3% in Michigan and the runaway leading total of 47.8% in Illinois.

A new nuclear reactor has not entered commercial service in the United States since 1996, when the Tennessee Valley Authority's Watts Bar 1 reactor began operating in Tennessee.

**Resource: Nuclear Energy Institute at [www.nei.org](http://www.nei.org)**

## Safety Is Top Priority for Mobile Office Workers

**A**s technology has increased, so has the ability for employees to take their office work on the road. There has seemingly always been traveling salespersons, but now they are outfitted with laptops, smart phones and GPS machines.

While this makes for a more efficient mobile office worker, it can also lead to distracted driving that causes accidents.

Hands-free cell phone sets – if they aren't already required by the employer – are one easy way to cut down on distracted driving. It's not a guarantee for safety, however. Cell phone talkers are still more distracted than those who aren't on the phone.

Mobile computer docking stations are also important and can prevent idle computers from flying onto the floor or into laps if the driver has to quickly hit the brakes. Professional docking stations are the safest way to go and should be installed properly to keep accidents at bay.

While less immediate danger is associated with ergonomics, it's an important piece to consider. Those who spend hours in the car are susceptible to back, wrist and eye strain, which can eventually result in distracted driving.

## Indiana a Second Home for Sports Video Sharing Company

**W**hat was once a long and arduous weekly task for college sports teams has now become easier and more efficient, thanks to the work of an Alabama-based company that recently opened an office in the Purdue Research Park of Northwest Indiana.

Trading game film is a time-honored tradition – and well, an NCAA rule. Previously, video coordinators for sports teams would work each weekend to get game film burned to DVDs and mailed to the next week's opposing teams. Once DragonFly Athletics came along in 2006, however, the "trading" became much easier.

"Within two years, we had every single Division I football team exchanging game film through STORM (DragonFly's video exchange software)," notes Hannah Black,



**ESPN college football analysts Desmond Howard (left) and Kirk Herbstreit, with company marketing and customer relations director Hannah Black, show off the DragonFly Athletics mobile program, RoadTrip, on their iPads.**

marketing and customer relations director. "Fast forward to today, we have diversified ourselves a little more: basketball, volleyball, lacrosse, soccer."

The company also has a web site called BLAST, where officials, coaches and others can upload and download game videos. An iPad application called RoadTrip also gives on-air media analysts and coaches the ability to stream and download video on games almost immediately.

DragonFly's new office

in Merrillville will house two of the company's 11 employees. Black points to the park's close proximity to other cities the company does business in.

"Our sales team is located all in the Chicago and Indiana area. One of them is a Purdue grad (Chad Q. Brown, DragonFly COO) who played football and coached for a short period of time and thought it'd be a really good spot for (the office)," Black indicates. "We do a lot of business up in Indiana; it's a good central location."

**Resource: Hannah Black, DragonFly Athletics, at [www.dragonflyathletics.com](http://www.dragonflyathletics.com)**