

Jun 17, 2019

Panasonic Signs Joint Business Development Agreement with Startup Linkwiz to Enhance Welding Processes in Manufacturing

Accelerating “Gemba Process Innovation” via collaboration with partner company



Osaka, Japan - Panasonic Corporation today announced that it has signed a joint business development agreement with Linkwiz, Inc. — a startup company specializing in the development and sales of autonomous robotic system software and technical consulting — to develop solutions to enhance welding processes in the manufacturing field. The agreement is being undertaken by Panasonic’s Connected Solutions Company.

Under its “Gemba Process Innovation” vision, Panasonic is expanding its B2B solutions business. “The ‘gemba,’ or physical site for frontline operations, is where value is generated and problems must be confronted,” explained Yasu Higuchi, CEO of the Connected Solutions Company. “By applying our 100-years of experience and expertise gained in the manufacturing industry with our sensing technologies and edge devices, Panasonic aims to co-create with our customers and partners to solve problems at the gemba. We are advancing the Gemba Process Innovation vision with offerings to the three main areas of manufacturing, logistics and retail.”

In recent years, these industries in Japan in particular are facing pressure to improve and innovate processes as they become impacted by societal issues including a rapidly declining labor force, stagnant productivity, a drastic increase in the volume of logistics, a shift to a smarter and more automated society, and demand for work style reforms. Under such conditions, especially in the welding processes for automotive manufacturing, there is a shortage of expert workers due to difficulties in passing on technical knowledge. Moreover, with heightened environmental concern driving the expanded use of EVs, there are additional challenges to make vehicles lighter in weight and higher in strength by integrating new materials; and from a safety standpoint, to maintain a high level of quality over the long term and to strictly control manufacturing traceability.

Panasonic began its welding equipment business in 1957, and over the past 60 years has been providing welding systems and robots for the automotive, construction machinery and shipbuilding industries. On its side, Linkwiz has been developing and selling industrial-use robot control system software which utilize proprietary algorithms. Linkwiz's main products include software to control robots used for welding and paint application, and software for conducting automated inspection of each piece coming off a production line. Linkwiz's products have already been adopted by a number of major enterprise customers.

Through this collaboration, Panasonic will combine its expertise in manufacturing operations cultivated over its long history with Linkwiz's knowhow in autonomous robotic system software to optimize welding processes in the three stages of cutting, welding and inspection; and through this, make a contribution to the advancement of the manufacturing industry by addressing the pressing issues of labor shortage and quality enhancement.

Panasonic plans to further expand its partner ecosystem in order to promote its Gemba Process Innovation vision, becoming a total integrator for frontline operations in diverse fields.

Linkwiz Overview

Company name:	Linkwiz, Inc.
Founded:	March 2015
Headquarters:	Hamamatsu city, Shizuoka pref., Japan
Representative:	President: Go Fukino
Operations:	Development and sales of autonomous robotic system software and technical consulting
Website:	https://Linkwiz.co.jp/en

About Panasonic

Panasonic Corporation is a worldwide leader in the development of diverse electronics technologies and solutions for customers in the consumer electronics, housing, automotive, and B2B businesses. The company, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2018, has expanded globally and now operates 582 subsidiaries and 87 associated companies worldwide, recording consolidated net sales of 8.003 trillion yen for the year ended March 31, 2019. Committed to pursuing new value through innovation across divisional lines, the company uses its technologies to create a better life and a better world for its customers. To learn more about Panasonic: <https://www.panasonic.com/global>.

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