

Leaders Innovators

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LAWRENCE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

JAMES TOENISKOETTER Director, President, and COO of Hirotec America in Auburn Hills. Toeniskoetter directs the research and development of new technologies and products for Hirotec in North America and personally holds more than 10 patents. His most recent invention, the E3 Hemming Press, won an Automotive News Pace Award for innovation in April 2008. Toeniskoetter is a leading proponent of using electromagnetic pulse technology in the auto industry to reduce vehicle weight. The company has recently taken the equipment out of the research lab and into the production plant. Toeniskoetter is also responsible for overseeing all transactions within Hirotec America, including Astrum Contract Services and KGHIRETEC Engineering Service Pvt. Ltd. in India. Toeniskoetter joined Hirotec America, then known as Tesco Engineering, in 1989 as operations manager. He was elected director in 1996 and then became vice president and COO. He was appointed president in 2000. Under his leadership, the company has experienced 14 consecutive years of profitability. Before joining Hirotec, Toeniskoetter ran program and group management activities at ABB Robotics Inc. In 1997, he was recognized as a Crain's Detroit Business "40 Under 40" honoree. He was also a finalist for the 2007 Automation Alley Emerging Leader award. Toeniskoetter received his bachelor's degree in software engineering from Ohio State University.



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Image gallery of 2007 Leaders & Innovators Award Reception

Image gallery of 2008 Leaders & Innovators Award Reception

WHERE BORN: "Cleveland, Ohio."

MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSONS: "Three people: My father, who set a very good example growing up. He has his doctorate in chemistry so he had a strong push for education and is very down to earth. Next is Matt Umeno, my first mentor at Hirotec, who was a vice president when I joined. Matt is now a director in Japan at the parent company. Third is Toshio Uno, the owner in Japan. Both are level-headed, down to earth, and engineers."

LAST BOOK READ: "I don't read a great number of books. I tend to be a slave to newspapers and magazines, business, non-business, and political. I usually read two newspapers per day. But the last book was *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. It's probably my favorite business book."

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE ME: "Passionate, different, I tend to always think outside the box and am always looking for different methods. Extremely flexible and team-oriented, and a strong leader."

WHERE MY FIELD/INDUSTRY IS HEADED: "The Hirotec division that I run specializes in engineering services and manufacturing of automotive assembly lines. The parent company is a major automotive door and exhaust system manufacturer. On our side, extremely flexible manufacturing at a low cost with very high robot content is becoming much more important, even compared to the recent past. Flexibility means a new product in an existing line without major changes in the existing line, and without too many preconceived requirements. In the future, products will change over weekends, and we'll be able to move products between lines. Also, we will have the entire process in the virtual world before it's created in steel. We're rapidly headed in that direction. It's now done in pieces with CAD and simulation but it's somewhat disjointed. In the future, it will meld into one."

FAVORITE TECHNOLOGICAL GADGET: "I can't live without my laptop and Wi-Fi."

FAVORITE PLACE: "I tend to like new experiences and new things. I travel a lot. Over the winter, I spent a weekend in Kaula Lumpur in Asia and it's absolutely beautiful, so that's my current favorite."

FAVORITE HOBBIES: "Golf, and I play on a couple of soccer teams but not very well."

FAVORITE FOOD: "I very much enjoy Japanese but like a lot of variety. It's hard to pin down."

MY HIDDEN TALENT: "I used to be quite good at photography."

HOW I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED: "As a dedicated leader and having had a significant effect on changing the industry that I'm in."



At the annual awards reception in April 2009, one Leader & Innovator from the previous 12 months will be selected as the Grant Thornton Leader & Innovator of the Year.