

Techweek'18 event highlights benefits for the West Coast

The West Coast could be uniquely placed to emerge as a centre for smart technology and innovation, according to a New Zealand technology leader in town for Techweek'18.

Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) has partnered with Carl Pavletich, head of Fabriko Creative and the Fab Lab Christchurch, to help bring new technology and developments to the West Coast. Carl will be in Greymouth during May as part of Techweek'18, along with Westport-based Vertigo Technologies, to talk to people about the potential benefits of the so-called "fourth industrial revolution", digital fabrication devices such as 3D printers and CAD, and the significance of greater access to technology.

TPP Chief Executive Alex Cabrera says the week-long event is a great way for Coasters to learn more about how they can use technology in their business and to aid their every-day lives. "TPP is supporting dozens of events right across the region and right here on campus. As well as providing quality tertiary education that meets the needs of our students and industry, TPP supports events and activities that benefit the entire region – Techweek'18 is a great example of this."

Carl Pavletich says the geographical challenges faced on the Coast could become an advantage as locals use new technology to address unique issues.

"Common sense says that if you have a problem, it's more than likely shared by others around the world. If we use technology to find solutions to the unique challenges faced on the West Coast – geographical isolation, distance from city hubs, etcetera – it could put the region at the forefront technological innovation," he says.

Carl and Westport-based Vertigo Technologies Co-founder and Chief Executive Brett Cottle will host an afternoon event on Friday May 18 focused on how Industry 4.0 – the trend toward increased connectivity of devices, digital fabrication through technology such as 3D printers and the subsequent impact on manufacturing technologies – could benefit the West Coast.

"A few years ago, this technology was only available to big multi-nationals. Now, through companies like Vertigo, almost anyone can own a 3D printer or CNC router. The barriers to innovation have been lowered; you no longer have to send prototypes to China to be mass-produced, you can create them now, right here, in the quantities you need," Carl says.

"We're only limited by our imagination. Think of a problem your business faces and it could be solved by technology – that same technology could then be marketed on a global scale. While New Zealand has taken a little longer than the rest of the world to embrace these technologies, there is still plenty of time to get onboard."

Brett Cottle says his Westport-based business, designing and building affordable CNC machines for home and small business use, is not limited by its location.

“We’ve been operating two years and we’ve come a long way in that time. We’re proving to the big wigs and the rest of the country that technology can be developed anywhere – it’s not a barrier to be based on the West Coast. Our market is largely outside the region but there’s absolutely no reason why you can’t be successful from Westport.

“There are not very many places in New Zealand you can walk out of the office and straight on to the beach. It’s about work-life balance and I’m keen to share my experience with other Coasters,” he says.

Techweek’18 West Coast Events

Techweek’18 is a national event that aims to provide a week-long opportunity for connection and cross-pollination of ideas. TPP is helping to bring Techweek’18 to the West Coast by supporting regional events and hosting live-streaming of national activities.

TPP invites anyone interested in learning more about the latest technologies to come along to the Techweek’18 events. As well as **the Friday 18 May Fab Lab Club event (3.30pm-5.00pm, TPP Conference Room, Greymouth)**, there will also be an opportunity for people to test some of the latest Virtual Reality and 3D printing technology as part of the **Tech Showcase being held in the TPP Conference Room on Saturday 19 May, 10am-3pm.**

For a full list of local events see: www.tpp.ac.nz/techweek

For more information contact:

Mequa Hourston, Communications and Marketing Manager

DDI: 03 7699 405 | Mobile: 027 237 5844 | email: mequah@tpp.ac.nz

www.tpp.ac.nz