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Laurier professor authors book on management of new technology

Picture the fingers of a robot gently holding the stem of a delicate red rose. It's the image on the cover of a recently published book on the management of new technology.

Author Hamid Noori, a professor of operations management and the director of a research centre at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, says it illustrates one of the main premisses of his book, Managing the Dynamics of New Technology.

"When we think of the manufacturing plant, we think of heavy machinery and a dirty job shop," he says. "But new technology can do a lot of things with a great deal of finesse."

New technology was the business buzz word of the 1980s. "The challenge of the 1990s," says Noori, "is how to manage that software-driven technology."

The director of the university's Research Centre for Management of New Technology (REMAT) says his 385-page book, for both academics and professionals, is one of the first that takes a comprehensive look at the management of new technology.

Using the failures and successes of North American companies as examples, Noori's book will help readers to identify the need

for new technology, analyse its costs and benefits, and mitigate the organizational problems associated with its implementation.

While new technology is now feasible for small- and medium-sized operations, he says managers often fail to take into account intangible benefits when they are trying to justify an expenditure on new technology.

He says those benefits range from flexibility in production volume and even the product line itself to increased quality and consumer satisfaction, and reduced lead time for manufacturing.

With the free trade agreement in place, Noori says the adoption and skillful management of new technology is critical, especially in Southwestern Ontario with its manufacturing base of small- and medium-sized companies.

"Most of the conventional things we've learned and practised are no longer appropriate for doing business globally," he says. "New technology becomes very important. It's a tool that can help a company be competitive."

Noori has also written a companion book, Readings and Cases in the Management of New Technology. Co-authored with Russell Radford of the University of Western Ontario in London, it draws on the experiences of companies such as Northern Telecom Canada Ltd., Digital Equipment Corporation, Magna International Ltd., Raytheon Canada, Zepf Technologies Inc., and J.M. Schneider Inc. Both books are published by Prentice Hall of New Jersey.

A software package has also been developed to assist managers who are deciding whether or not to adopt new technology.