Where
Tech
Does
Walesa signing on with a North Carolina
software start-up?

Why is Polish hero

By DESA PHILADELPHIA

EADING POLAND TO DEMOCRACY

brought Lech Walesa a Nobel
Peace Prize and international
acclaim, but he admits to a few
regrets. One is that he was so
busy throughout the 1980s and
'90s that he “did not have the time to fol-
low developments in technology closely.”
But he is catching up.

The first corporate board Walesa, 58,
has agreed to join is that of NuTech
Solutions, a closely held company founded
three years ago in Charlotte, N.C., by a pair
of Polish immigrants. NuTech creates soft-
ware that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to
boost efficiency in its clients’ manufactur-
ing, distribution and customer service.

NuTech software allows Ford to find prof-
itable new ways to sell vehicles that are
coming off leases. It helps Unilever target
inefficiencies in its supply chain. And it is
being used to detect check and credit-card
fraud at Bank of America—whose legend-
ary former CEO, Hugh McColl, also serves
on NuTech’s board.

Most software firms, of course, promise
to make their clients more efficient. But
NuTech claims that its products—developed
by using AI technologies such as
neural networks, fuzzy logic and evolution-
ary computing—can monitor each player
continuously in a supply-and-demand
equation, consider the millions of ways
each player’s decisions impact the business
and then suggest the best ways to fine-tune
a client’s operations. “All our products
have the common characteristic of increas-
ing profits and decreasing costs,” espe-
cially in the targeting of prospective cus-
tomers, says Matthew Michalewicz, 26,
NuTech’s chief executive.

One major bank uses NuTech software
to examine millions of customers’ deposit
and withdrawal habits, complaint records,
bounced checks and even the number of
telemarketing calls they have received.
The software predicts which customers are
disgruntled and likely to take their busi-
ess elsewhere. The bank then calls to say
“We’d like to make things better for you.”

That sort of pre-emptive analysis has
been missing from the linear software pro-
grams still used by most
corporations, says Amar
Gupta, an M.I.T. pro-
ductivity expert. Nu-
Tech and such com-
petitors as BiosGroup
and Searchspace are
counted among the pio-
ners of the next tech
 revolution. “This kind of
software gives us the abil-
ity to analyze a lot of in-
formation a lot better,”
says Gupta. “Everybody has
to be agile, and in order to be
agile, you have to be able to
pinpoint trends.”

AMR Research, a technol-
gy research company based in
Boston, estimates that 40% of all
new manufacturing-related soft-
ware already incorporates some
form of AI. “Everyone is inter-
ested in analyzing large bodies
of data to determine what is
likely to happen,” says McColl,
the former Bank of America
CEO. “NuTech has figured out how
to do that.” McColl joined Nu-
Tech’s board in September
and has invested in the
company. He and Walesa
will receive stock options
that could prove valuable if the
company successfully goes public.

Michalewicz says the 126-employee firm
has almost 100 customers and is turning a
small profit.

Michalewicz, who holds a business de-
gree from the University of North Carolina
at Charlotte (UNCC), has worked in financial
services at Ernst & Young and Raymond
James. He met McColl in Charlotte, where
Bank of America is based. Michalewicz’s
father Zbigniew is a product of Warsaw’s
famed schools of mathematics and a for-
mer chairman of the computer-science
department at UNCC; he serves as NuTech’s
head scientist. Father and son, who immi-
grated from Poland in 1989, started
NuTech with businessman Daniel Cullen.
In April they were able to organize a meet-
ing with Walesa through connections
there. Walesa, who leads a foundation
that promotes a free-market economy in
Poland, says that although he is happy to be
working with his countrymen, he joined
NuTech primarily because he is passionate
about the promise of its technologies,
which he is studying avidly. “The science
and technology NuTech represents,” he
says, “are the future of all companies.”