Article

6 Resolutions for an Innovative Year

Focus on Data and Innovation in Manufacturing for 2014

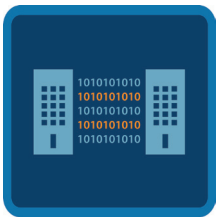
As disruptive technologies transform the manufacturing industry and business in general, innovation has become much more than a buzzword: it is now essential to your company's long-term survival. Of course, being innovative is easier said than done; it requires a new way of thinking and doing things. With that in mind, here are six forward-thinking resolutions to help you make 2014 your most innovative year so far.

1. Reevaluate your current strategy for technology adoption.

Do you view technology as an investment or a liability? If you tend to put off adopting new technology as long as possible, you will be exceeded by competitors who adopt it earlier. Slow technology adoption may have been a safe strategy in the 20th century but it has become too risky in the much faster-paced environment of the 21st century. This year, resolve to put more money into innovating and less into keeping outdated technology running.

2. Be data-driven.

Disruptive technologies are changing business at an extraordinary pace. From the Cloud to Big Data to social technologies, disruptive technologies are all geared toward increasing people's access to information. Manufacturers can't afford to be left out of the data revolution, so resolve to place more focus on data. Seek solutions for gathering more data in real time, extending data throughout the enterprise, increasing access to data to more employees and on more devices, and analyzing data. With more data you will have the power to make better decisions.



3. Open up a free flow of data between people, departments and systems.

Ironically, technology can stand in the way of innovation. The differences between technologies used in separate areas of an enterprise can make it difficult for departments to communicate with each other in a practical way. For example, does your staff still have to communicate data verbally or by writing it on a clipboard or whiteboard? If so, commit to investing in software that lets you share data enterprise-wide. Ignition can send data from one end of an enterprise to another with just the click of a mouse. Once the whole company is sharing more information, they'll start sharing new ideas, too.

4. Innovate by using cross-pollination.

It's reasonable to focus on your own industry but often the greatest ideas are found when you look at what others are doing. Cross-pollination is a method of creating game-changing innovations by combining ideas from different fields. One very successful example is the smartphone, which combines the functionality of computers, phones and MP3 players. Another is Ignition, which is the result of a cross-pollination of the best elements from the controls and IT industries. Because innovation is a continual process, we recommend that you incorporate cross-pollination into your company's culture. This can be done by facilitating collaboration among colleagues, networking with peers from outside your industry, and researching successful practices from other fields and applying them to manufacturing.

5. Unite HMI, SCADA and MES functions with cross-platform, database-centric and database-agnostic software.

In an innovation-driven manufacturing environment, the plant floor should operate in a connected way that is consistent with the rest of the organization. The SCADA system on the plant floor should connect with the ERP system at the executive level, and should work with SQL databases and use modern communication protocols. Resolve to find and use cross-platform technologies that allow the whole company to exchange vital information across all levels. Ignition offers this functionality, and its modular architecture gives manufacturers the flexibility to customize it to meet their HMI, SCADA or MES needs.

6. Continually evaluate new technology as it becomes available.

Even if a new technology sounds odd in present-day, you should evaluate how it might impact your industry and how your company might leverage it. No one can entirely predict which developments will shape tomorrow: Who would have known years ago how much Craigslist would affect the classified-ads business or that Netflix would transform the TV industry? Resolve to keep your eyes and mind open to new trends so you'll avoid getting caught off-guard by big changes. If one thing is certain in the 21st century, it is that technological changes will continue to come at a quick rate.

If you'd like to learn more about the subjects of disruptive technology, cross-pollination and innovation, read the free white paper, "Innovation-Powered Manufacturing."

To find this paper and many more go to:
www.inductiveautomation.com/info/resources