

Automation Perspectives 2017

Following the November 2017 Rockwell Automation Fair, *MechChem Africa* summarises the opening address of president and CEO, Blake Moret, and highlights some of the key takeouts from the Automation Perspectives media forum.

In mid-November last year, thousands of industrial professionals convened in Houston, Texas, for the annual Rockwell Automation Fair: to learn more about the advanced manufacturing technologies shaping the industry and the automation tools that are helping manufacturers and process plants to be more globally competitive and productive.

Hosted by Rockwell Automation and its PartnerNetwork members, the Automation Fair event is a premier industry experience that helps manufacturers and OEMs to optimise their automation investments and achieve business goals.

Preceding the fair itself, Rockwell held its annual Automation Perspectives global media forum on November 14, which offered a forward looking view of the innovations and product developments associated with the digital transformation of the industrial workplace.

Opening the media forum, Blake Moret, president and CEO of Rockwell Automation, shared his vision on how companies are realising value from digital transformation and advanced technologies.

"Automation Perspectives is an opportunity to do a deeper dive into the innovations that are shaping the automation and industrial information industry," Moret began. "We are here in Houston for the second year in our 26-year history, which is fitting considering

recent events. Hurricane Harvey lashed this area with 50-inches of rain. Then came Irma, Raina and Nate, impacting the whole southern region. This convention centre that we are sitting in housed 9 000 displaced residents just six weeks ago," he notes.

Moret said that Rockwell Automation was proud to have participated in the recovery of Houston with dozens of engineers and field service technicians being deployed to restore infrastructure. "In particular, in Beaumont, Texas, the river had flooded, destroying the drives of the pumps supplying the city's drinking water. We replaced these within 24 hours, restoring the drinking water supply in a much faster time than would have otherwise been possible," he revealed, adding: "It is this spirit that is making this year a strong one for us."

Describing new products, "our lifeblood", he said that Rockwell Automation was having a particularly good year, citing in particular new Logix processors; and high-performance, low-harmonic drives that had previously only been seen in back rooms of the fair; "and our expanding FactoryTalk Analytics platform, which enables data that comes from plant-floor devices to be collected and turned into useful information to produce positive outcomes for our customers".

Describing another proud moment in 2017, Moret said that Rockwell Automation was one of only three companies in the US to be awarded the prestigious Catalyst award for



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its Culture of Inclusion – promoting diversity in the workplace – "especially by increasing the ranks of women as part of our talented team".

"We set out on this path four years ago and it speaks to the importance of talent development from the broadest possible pool of people. Even though we are an automation company, people remain our most important asset," he said.

"For more than 100 years, Rockwell Automation has been synonymous with quality, community and reliability. Customers know that they can trust us; our employees are proud to work for Rockwell Automation; and we take pride in bringing new and innovative products to the market day after day and year after year.

"These values have served us well and will continue to be important tenets of our company. While the role of industrial automation

continues to change, these basic precepts remain the same," he said.

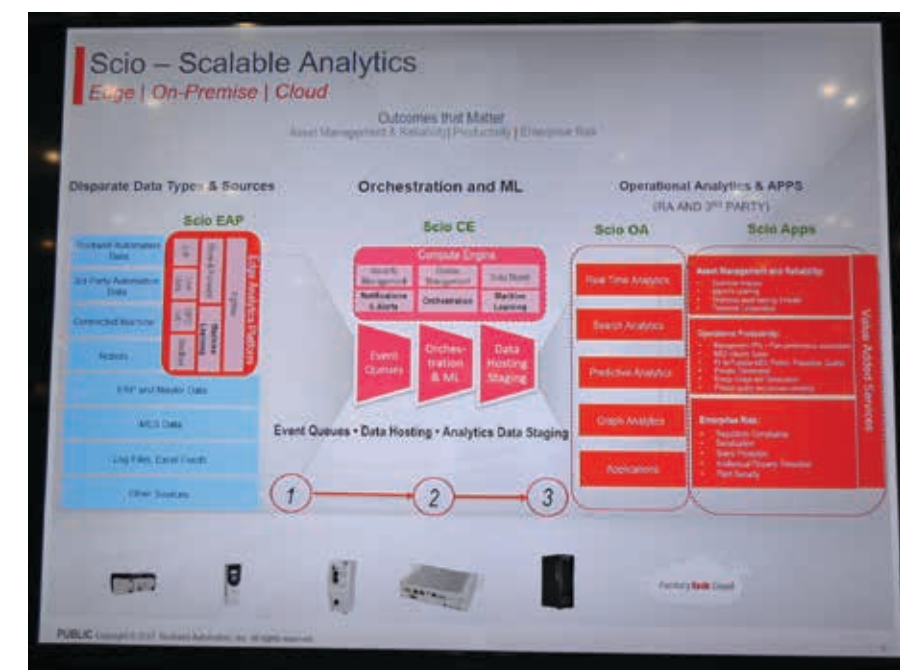
"We are evolving the way we make things, the way we live and the way we work; the industrial Internet of things (IIoT) is unlocking new ways to gain value and increase productivity – and we are just getting started.

"We see the power of the IIoT to connect data and to provide more flexibility and more choice to people in the things they buy; the enhanced ability to keep people safe in the workplace; and the ability to access and monitor data and conditions on an oil rig hundreds of miles away," he continued. "These are just a few of the advanced capabilities of the modern industrial automation environment.

"The way we at Rockwell Automation realise these outcomes is through the Connected Enterprise, which starts with developing understanding of the best opportunities to improve productivity. Teams are then assembled to identify and define technology and expertise and, finally, real, clear and tangible results from a pilot implementation are collected, understood and refined before the solution is rolled out to get to scale across the enterprise," he explained.

"Behind all of this is the people involved. These people are developing better ways to make things, to live and to work. We believe that good things happen when automation is combined with the imagination of people – and we are excited to be leaders on that journey," he concluded, before inviting Frank Kulaszewicz, senior vice president of the Architecture & Software Division to "explore the digitisation that is unlocking additional promise in the world of industrial automation".

"The digital transformation of the entire value chain – from components to systems and from suppliers to customers – is the key to hidden value, which can make a significant contribution to the productivity, quality, com-



pliance and profitability of the enterprise," said Kulaszewicz.

A highlighted innovation was Rockwell Automation's Project Scio, an expansion of the company's analytics offering via a new platform that can pull data from virtually any source in the enterprise, and deliver analytics in intuitive dashboards, helping users to rapidly resolve issues and drive tangible business outcomes across The Connected Enterprise.

This was demonstrated at the media forum session entitled 'Where Information Transforms into Value' by Andrew Ellis, the company's manager of Commercial Engineering, Information Software.

"While the availability of data has revolutionised how companies solve issues and adapt to changes, producers continue to be challenged by the complexity of making data useful at the right place and time," said Ellis. "They also lack in-house expertise for data management – from the edge devices through the cloud.

"Project Scio reduces these hurdles to unleash information that can help make decisions when and where they matter most. The platform opens access to ad hoc analytics and performs advanced analysis by pulling structured and unstructured data from virtually any existing source in the enterprise," he explained.

The platform intelligently fuses related data, delivering analytics in intuitive dashboards – called storyboards – that users can share and view. Users also have the ability to drill down to make better decisions, dramatically reducing the time to value.

Ellis' presentation was followed by one by Gavin Rennick, president of Software Integrated Solutions for Schlumberger, the US-based oilfield specialist. Rennick outlined how organisations with top-tier 'digital matu-

rity' are acknowledging that the technology building blocks alone are not the solution. "Organisations are shaping themselves to deliver new customer experiences, open environments, and inclusive partner ecosystems," he suggested.

"It is proving clear that while cross industry idea sharing is important, implementation in exploration and production requires a different recipe for success," he noted.

Another key theme of the forum was skills development and strategies for addressing the manufacturing skills shortage. A new programme developed jointly by Rockwell Automation and ManpowerGroup was presented that taps into the talents and skills of US military veterans to help solve this critical challenge.

"The manufacturing skills shortage is real and widespread. Manufacturers and industrial operators around the world are losing experienced employees to retirement and struggling to find replacements. At the same time, rapid technology advancement is creating new opportunities but also a need for new skills that aren't readily available today," said Chris Layden, vice president of the ManpowerGroup.

Blake Moret added: "This groundbreaking programme combines the expertise of world leaders Rockwell Automation industrial productivity, and ManpowerGroup workforce solutions with an underutilised source of talented and skilled workers that could help solve this critical challenge, ie, US military veterans."

Members of the first graduating class of veterans from the Academy of Advanced Manufacturing then shared perspectives on the challenges they faced as US military veterans aspiring to succeed in advanced manufacturing technology environments. □



Joe Allie (left), business manager for global competency at Rockwell Automation, moderates a panel discussion with members of the first graduating class of veterans from the Academy of Advanced Manufacturing: US Army Veteran Christopher Allison; Air Force Veteran Leandre Davis; Navy Veteran, Travis Tolbert; and Air Force Veteran Scott Bingham.