

## Q & A With Bernie Anger, GE Intelligent Platforms

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As automation technology has developed over the years, workers have been forced to adapt and refine the necessary skills to utilize and maintain various systems. According to Bernie Anger, General Manager Control and Communication System for GE Intelligent Platforms, there is a shortage of individuals with the expertise necessary to accomplish these tasks and usher in the future of automation. We recently spoke with Anger about this skills shortage, the ideal skill set needed in today's tech-heavy manufacturing environment, and how the worker of tomorrow is preparing to coexist with ever-changing technology.

### **Q: How has the ideal skill set for a skilled worker changed over the course of the past few years, given how much technology has changed?**

A: For the longest time, you could progress your career by being the expert yourself; and, as a corollary of that, knowing the expert. Today, the breadth of expertise required is so big that you just can't do that anymore. The key skill you need is to have the ability to scout the expertise out there and rely on others to get things done. It's not so much about being the individual expert on something. I can have my field of expertise, but I am also increasingly good at networking, collaborating, and getting things done. That's a pretty fundamental transformation.

In our industry, we have seen a little less of that. But I have no doubt that's going to continue to accelerate. The tools are there to make it possible.

### **Q: Are companies taking advantage of them? Are they doing so effectively?**

A: I think every company has some initiative related to collaboration, community content, and digital media. Tried and true has a lot of value to the people you are trying to serve. So I think that drives a certain degree of conservative thinking and behavior. What I think is going to accelerate this change is that a lot of the know-how for the prior generation of solutions is in peoples' heads. That's not very translatable when they retire.

Think about that generational shift and move from the know-how in peoples' heads to the know-how in a sort of aggregate community. I think that's going to accelerate the utilization of digital technology to get things done. If I look at other industries, it's fascinating how much better the results can become. Look at Silicon Valley and the degree in which sharing is happening to accelerate innovation. I think we are going to see more of that, but maybe not to that extreme. You just need to have the right tools to enable that.

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### Q: Do young people have the built-in skills to use these tools?

A: Think of online video games. If you were to think about completing a mission... you will get online and assemble a team of people you have never met before. You will pick an objective, you will complete it together with that group of people, and then you will disband and never talk again.

Now contrast that with the way we are used to doing work for a project. It's very different. So when that ability of building teams instantaneously, adjusting on the fly, I think you have a generation of people that are not 15 years of age anymore. They are actually technical participants in the work community, and they have an expectation that those tools are going to be available in the work community. I know I'm going to get stuff done better and faster.

### Q: The technology is always changing. Can you compare that with how people's skill sets are changing?

A: I'd say the main expertise - understanding the specific process you are controlling - is a skill that builds all the time. The one thing that is changing, if you think about the generation that started in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, potentially part of their education had to do with electromechanical or hydraulic systems. A lot of your frame of reference, even your schooling frame of reference, comes from that. The tools that evolved from there mimic that paradigm.

You think about a generation of people that grew up building iPhone and Android apps. The concept of electromechanical anything is not a natural concept. You think about the way you learn modeling in school today, you learn it in the control space with a different set of tools. So how do you make sure you make that new set of tools and skills more applicable so you get a faster transformation?

That's what we're trying to do. It is new technology, but it is new technology that allows people to use the tools they grew up and got educated with — with a different set of tools and use those directly. You've got to be able to do that, understanding that you have to be able to coexist with those worlds. You don't want to reinvent everything from scratch. That makes no sense. You want to add it to what's already there.

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