

# Around The Country In 30 Days

Anna Wells, Executive Editor, IMPO

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Spring tends to be a heavy travel season for many of us editors at Advantage Business Media. It's been long-standing conventional wisdom that no one will travel in either summer or winter, therefore everything tends to pile up in the corners of April and May. Lucky for me, my travel obligations tend to be interesting — either they consist of new product introductions from progressive vendors, trade shows, or an onsite interview and facility tour with one of our readers. I'm happy to report there's been action on all fronts:

In Early April, I flew out to Seattle at the behest of Fluke Corporation, one of the biggest names in predictive maintenance. In a whirlwind 36 hour media event I had my ID badge photo taken in infrared (and then had to ask why my nose was so blue), listened to dozens of product managers outline new product features, and got to participate in some hands-on demonstration of the Fluke products themselves. Key Takeaway: Vibration analysis is hard, but not so hard that it should be overlooked in your predictive maintenance efforts. Also: Consider ghost hunting with thermal imaging equipment de-bunked. Bummer.

Late April took me to San Antonio, TX for the ISA (Industrial Supply Association) product show and conference, where manufacturers and distributors spent a few days eating Tex Mex food, networking, and communicating with key accounts. Key Takeaway: Relationships in the industrial market are still alive and well. In an industry that thrives on increasingly electronic procurement, there's something nice about hitting a few rounds of golf in the desert with your rep.

A week later, I found myself in Portland, OR, where I visited a company called EnerG2. EnerG2 is a burgeoning tech company touting a revolutionary technology that could take the energy storage market by storm (think hybrid vehicle batteries with higher performance and much lower cost). Key Takeaway: Manufacturing is so old it's new again. The guys at EnerG2 say their Oregon plant is the first in the world "dedicated to the commercial-scale production of engineered carbon material." I left the place with carbon-stained fingertips and a ton of new knowledge on energy storage. Look for more on this in our August issue.

In early May, I flew to Las Vegas to see the latest and greatest that ERP software company Epicor had to offer. Software companies tend to get fired up about things like cloud computing and "social" manufacturing – most likely because when you get your head around some of these technologies, you can really see how valuable they can be. Key Takeaway: Software implementations can be a rough undertaking, but the value propositions increase for smaller manufacturers as infrastructure

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costs decrease and functionality improves.

The last of my latest trips was to Birmingham, AL - a lovely Southern city that the MRO supplier Motion Industries calls home. The team at MI clearly takes a lot of pride in the company, so much so that turnover seems almost unheard of. Visiting their facility gave me a little insight into how huge companies operate while still making retention of talented personnel a core focus. Key Takeaway: Even huge companies have to deal with small problems, like a journalist getting her heel temporarily stuck in the floor grating of the mezzanine. Really, I should know by now.

So after all of this, as well as a dozen bags of airplane mini-pretzels, I think I get a break in time to catch some summer rays in my own backyard. That said, I wouldn't trade these types of experiences for the world. Getting a chance to see industry leaders take the stage and brag about what they do best is a great way for me to really see the passion, business intelligence, and talent that drives these developments. Plus, I finally finished Crime & Punishment on one of my many plane rides. Key Takeaway: Not exactly light summer reading. Anybody have a book recommendation?

Email me at [anna.wells@advantagemedia.com](mailto:anna.wells@advantagemedia.com) [2].

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