

Technology Strategies for Progressive Manufacturers



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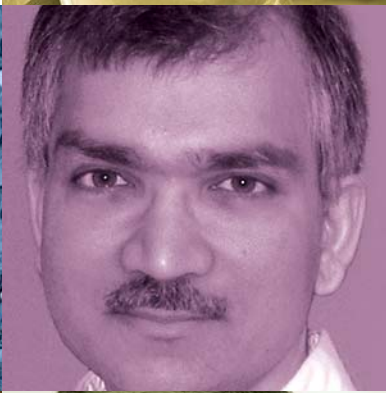
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No, these 10 people are not running for U.S. president. They already hold high office — at companies with unique stories to tell. See page 20.



COMPANIES to WATCH

Our 2008

COMPANIES to WATCH

Here Are 10 Innovators to Keep Your Eye On

BY DAVID R. BROUSELL

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o you find it difficult keeping up with technology developments in manufacturing? Do trends in software, hardware, data collection, and networking seem to be moving faster and faster? Do you routinely receive e-mails, print mailings, and telephone solicitations about tech products that you simply can't sort through, let alone comprehend?

Well, if the answer to any or all of these questions is yes, you are far from alone. Tech information overload is a fact of business life today. But an equally important fact is that those responsible for running manufacturing companies still have an obligation to know what's going on, what's coming up, where innovation can be found, and where an edge for their companies can be obtained.

In this spirit, I welcome you to *Managing Automation's* third annual Companies to Watch report. Once again, this year, the editors of *Managing Automation* have selected 10 companies, most of which are relatively young and generally unknown, whose technology stories we found interesting.

This year, our picks span a wide spectrum of manufacturing technologies, ranging from enterprise software, such as profitability and portal applications, to wireless and RFID products, to software for decision support and demand management. All of our chosen companies have done something new and innovative in their respective fields.

Our objective and hope are that this Companies to Watch report will help reduce some of the time and labor it takes you to keep up with technology trends in manufacturing. As always, let us know how we are doing.

ACORN SYSTEMS INC.
Cost/profit analysis

APPRION INC.
Wireless

IDASHBOARDS
Business intelligence

INCIVITY SOFTWARE, INC.
Manufacturing intelligence

INOVx SOLUTIONS, INC.
3D simulation

OMNITROL NETWORKS INC.
Wireless networks

QUESTRA CORP.
Intelligent device management

RFIND SYSTEMS, INC.
RFID

SYNCHRONO, INC.
Supply chain

TERRA TECHNOLOGY
Demand management

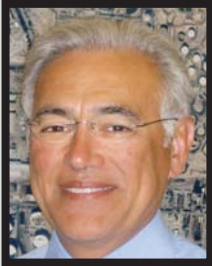
3D simulation

INOvx SOLUTIONS, INC.: 3D Software Puts Plant Assets on Display

INOvx Solutions, Inc., founded in 1999 to address the problem of unorganized assets in the plant, is the developer of RealityLINx, 3D virtualization software that gives a precise representation of the plant, letting personnel take a virtual walk-through to gain information on individual assets.

CEO Costantino Lanza describes the concept as “asset certainty” — knowing exactly what you have in the manufacturing facility, where it is, and whether it has been accurately maintained. “It’s this idea of being able to walk through your plant while sitting at your office or home, and access everything there is to know about it,” he says.

RealityLINx creates a 3D model using laser scanning technology. The



Constantino Lanza
CEO

scan converts physical assets into 3D object models that store information on real-life dimensions and instrumentation layout. The data is synchronized with CAD environments and other back-end systems, including ERP, inspection software, and plant management applications. RealityLINx takes the virtual model a step further by adding role-specific Knowledge Views, active subsets of the model.

The INOVx technology is an innovative addition to plant floor operations. “It is using interesting video-like graphics, which makes it

more state-of-the-art and visually appealing,” says Houghton LeRoy, an analyst at ARC Advisory Group.

Lanza sees 3D virtualization as the wave of the future for everything in

the plant — from construction to operations, inspection, maintenance, and, eventually, production. “Today we work off of 2D drawings only because that’s what past technologies supported,” Lanza says. “But when we make a decision, we don’t do it in 2D or in a silo. So in the future, I see everything coordinated through virtual reality.” — *Stephanie Neil*



YEAR FOUNDED: 1999

PRODUCT NAME AND CATEGORY: RealityLINx/asset management through 3D simulation and virtualization

INDUSTRY SEGMENTS SERVED: Process (oil & gas)

KEY PROBLEM SOLVED: Before, the only way to represent the complex assemblies in process plants was via 3D CAD designs translated into flat 2D files for construction or maintenance. RealityLINx 3D software lets plant personnel see everything “as is” from the desktop.

DIFFERENTIATION: Laser scanning technology captures accurate, “as-built” renderings of equipment, which are translated into a digital 3D plant layout. Assets are identified by location, rather than tag names, to help coordinate tasks such as maintenance, repair, or inspection.

TOP CUSTOMERS: Shell Canada, ConocoPhillips, BP

FUNDING: Angel investor

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