

Automation for Green Manufacturing

Automation is Vital for the Success of Green Manufacturing

Issue: Going “green” is noticeably becoming a major component of the missions for manufacturers in the United States and worldwide. The broad spectrum of green manufacturing includes the implementation of lean manufacturing techniques (from the plant floor to the enterprise level), the development of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly products, the scale-up of next-generation energy production technologies, and the development of technology to answer global energy and environmental challenges. While the goal of green manufacturing seems simplistic, the dilemmas posed by this breadth of spectrum are daunting, especially as success on one end of the spectrum can sometimes be considered a barrier to success on the other end. Given these dilemmas and the varied driving forces behind this “green” mission (e.g. process efficiency, waste reduction, energy management, future generation technology development), it is becoming clear that if domestic manufacturers are to compete effectively in a global economy, they must take the initiative to drive this critical movement. This initiative should include identifying and developing solutions for existing and future critical needs areas in green manufacturing.

Automation’s Role: The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) has identified five critical areas necessary for the successful transformation of domestic manufacturing: sustainability, continuous improvement, workforce development, supplier development, and technology acceleration. In each of these critical areas, automation and automation professionals play a major role as key enablers for success. Automation and automation professionals are vital to the success of manufacturing, which means they will play a crucial role in manufacturing’s ability to attain “green” goals and sustain the benefits from achieving those goals. In sum, the transition to green manufacturing will significantly rely on the broad technical skills of the next generation of automation professionals.

The Automation Federation’s Role: The Automation Federation (AF) is an association of organizations engaged in manufacturing and process automation activities. AF serves as the “Voice of Automation” by providing advocacy and industry-wide strategic analysis and coordination through its member organizations. The Automation Federation has stepped forward to serve as the catalyst and guide for the development of the next generation of automation professionals. Our intent is to prepare current and future workers at all skill levels and all career stages for automation careers. These future automation professionals will be vital to the success of overcoming the challenges of and attaining and sustaining the goals of green manufacturing.

Next Step: AF and its member organizations will provide the necessary programs and services to assist MEP and its Centers across the United States in promoting and developing a trained workforce of automation professionals to fill the increasing number of “green-collar” jobs vital to U.S. manufacturers.

For more information on the Automation Federation’s “Automation for Green Manufacturing” initiative, contact:

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