

Ivy Automation

Cross-Pollination

Community?? Tell me about it. I'm a member...

Yes, I'm a member of a community. I am not referring to the wonderfully artistic and culturally diverse 'Northeast' community of Minneapolis that I moved to several years ago, but I am referring to an online community. The online community is the I.S.A. sponsored Control's Forum, an on-line discussion group where participants present questions involving instrumentation issues and other participants respond. Since I became a member, my sense of the participants in this forum is that their backgrounds are as varied as the issues presented. This is absolutely fantastic and therein lies the brilliance of the whole forum. Through this on-line community we can be exposed to instrumentation issues beyond the scope of our own narrow industry bounded as it may be within the geographical confines of a country or philosophical dogma. This community, much like life, can expose us and broaden our knowledge base by sharing with us the completely different set of experiences brought to the table by the other participants. Is this a good thing? Let me explain.

At the start of my career I was a travelling salesman. Yes, I knew all the salesman jokes but I also knew my 'stuff'. My customers were happy to see me because I not only offered them solutions to their measurement application issues but just like the travellers in "days of yore", I brought information & news from other industries and in other geographical areas. Over my long (30years) and varied (Yokogawa, Rosemount, ABB, my own company, EPG) career the only things that have changed have been the size and/or the scope of the area covered. Today, the World Wide Web has not only changed the size and scope of the territory but also the speed at which it can be covered. Whereas I used to travel to Sarnia, Ontario, it was a 4-hour drive to get there. Today, the Web let's us travel anywhere, anytime, as fast as we can type. We can now

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be exposed to and benefit from, not only those in our own particular industry, but also both those other industries and those with a different experience than our own implementing instrumentation solutions. For instance, who better to ask about winterizing instrumentation for outdoor climates than an instrumentation person from Fort McMurray where winter temperatures are typically in the -10 to -30 degrees Celsius range. If your issue is 100% condensing humidity, ask someone that works in the Philippines or an equatorial country, they will have an answer. The Pulp and Paper industry faces similar issues as Waste Treatment plants. The liquor industry and the oil industry are similar in that a refinery is really only a big still for oil and not corn mash!! How about that pneumatic recorder? Reliably working, day in and day out, in the smokehouse at the meat packing plant. Who knows anything about those relics. Ask the forum, a relic like me might just reply! ^_^

Let me conclude (the final say) by saying that in this world of political correctness and cover your behind / libel protection I find it refreshing that there is a forum in which there is a free exchange of information. Yes, there may be some who feel that this forum should only be open to individuals with certain 'professional qualifications'. It is my experience that those who do not add constructive input will soon be filtered out much like questionable practises (DC street lamps, 10-50mA signals) were in days past. This community facilitates, yes even encourages a CROSS-POLLINATION of ideas, not just across industry but also across geographical territories and generations. This is made possible by individuals of all educational and industry backgrounds and experience levels contributing. Is this a good thing? The answer is a resounding - YES!! How exciting and stimulating. Enough said!