

'End users and vendors have to collaborate in IIoT initiatives'



Sujata Tilak, Managing Director – Ascent Intellimation Pvt Ltd, on how to approach digital transformation in manufacturing environment.

IIoT is said to have the potential to transform every aspect of manufacturing. What is the vendors' perspective here?

IIoT does have potential to transform all aspects of manufacturing. However, it is not a magic pill. End users and vendors have to collaborate in IIoT initiatives. It is a partnership right from building a digital transformation strategy → design and execution of various projects as per strategy → monitoring results and fine tuning.

Digital transformation is the key to success in IIoT. Are the user industries ready for this?

I think user industries have recognised value of IIoT in digital transformation. In that sense most industries are in positive frame of mind. However, various industries are at different stages of preparedness for starting IIoT initiatives.

While the advantages of IIoT can be overwhelming, it is often the case that manufacturers are in a dilemma where to begin. Is this the reality?

This is indeed a reality in many cases. My advice to manufacturers – Define strategy

at management level and set high level goals → bring all stakeholders on same page → identify potential areas of implementation → go phase wise with well-defined outcomes → execute each phase → hand hold and guide users continuously → measure outcomes → fine tune till defined outcome is achieved → calculate ROI → continuously review and adjust goals as new learnings take place.

Do vendors have enough use cases to convince a fence sitting manufacturing enterprise?

Yes. We have successfully deployed our Industry 4.0 solution, PlantConnect SFactory, in several industries for various use cases. Some of the use cases are – OEE Improvement, Loss Analysis, Prescriptive Maintenance, Downtime Reduction, etc.

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Ideally, for a typical user, legacy equipment is a big consideration as to how to start the digital transformation. Are there solutions for this?

This is a very good question. Getting all legacy equipment in IIoT fold is very critical for success of digital transformation. There are various solutions for this. We at Ascent Intellimation consider this as a priority area. Our goal is to connect every machine, old or new, onto our IIoT

platform and extract at least critical production data from it.

Is it possible to start small, and then scale up the implementation?

Definitely. In fact, as I mentioned above, it is a good strategy to start small and then scale up. But you must define overall strategy and set high level goals. Then work in phases towards those goals.

What are key aspects of implementation of IIoT project?

Now that IIoT is moving from concept stage to implementation stage, I would like to emphasise key aspects for success. Everyone thinks that latest technology is the key aspect, but that's not true. Key aspects are Business, People, Solution/Partner and Connectivity. To elaborate further:

- Well defined business goals
- Getting all relevant people on board
- Selection of appropriate solution and partner, and
- Connectivity to maximum assets.

If these things are in place, your IIoT project will definitely succeed. ■

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