

Emerson goes digital to transform customer experience

As in many engineering-driven corners of the world, we tend to talk a lot about technology enablers of digital transformation—the wireless sensors, operational analytics, and machine-learning algorithms that make for higher performing industrial processes and more informed operational decision-making at all levels of the organization.

But digital technology can also have a transformative effect on how knowledge workers such as design engineers and procurement managers do their jobs, according to Brad Budde, vice president, digital customer experience, for Emerson's Automation Solutions business.

Smart Industry recently caught up with Budde to learn more about how the company's personalized customer experience, MyEmerson, is helping to alleviate the stresses and urgency often associated with the execution—and effective scale-up—of automation and digital transformation projects.

Q: Clearly, when it comes to facilitating productive and efficient interactions with customers, most business-to-business organizations have a lot to learn from our business-to-consumer counterparts. But over the past several years, you've been working hard to change that at Emerson. What have you discovered in your work there to advance a new digital customer experience?

A: In our personal lives, digital technologies are transforming both our behaviors and our expectations—and we're bringing those expectations to the office with us. Compounding that trend is a pace of change unlike anything we've never seen before. Technology is enabling automation companies themselves to change, and our portfolio of automation solutions is changing at a rate much faster than even 10 years ago. Our challenge is to meet the ever-higher expectations of our customers and to make them more productive in the process.

At Emerson, we serve a lot of engineers on a day-to-day basis, and the most requested capability on our website is digitalized CAD drawings for our range of products. Just as in their personal lives, they expect to be able to find information and

content very quickly—at the click of a button—so we're building out our drawing center and CAD drawings portfolio to help serve them better.

Another example is the product catalog as a whole. The old days of customers referring to shelf upon shelf of printed catalogs are coming to



BRAD BUDDÉ
Vice President, Digital Customer Experience, Emerson

an end. Instead, our customers expect our product catalog to be digitized—they want to be able to explore our offerings and find the bits of information that are very specific to the problem that they're trying to solve. They're looking for performance factors, application requirements and other product specifications.

We found that doing things the

old way, it might take four hours to go find a manufacturer's part, make sure you have the right one, and then effectively construct a CAD representation using relevant catalog specifications such as flange sizes, etc. In the new way, you can download a digital, fit-for-purpose CAD file based on your particular application requirements. And you can do that in 15 minutes—a 93% time savings.

We've also digitalized ordering tables. So, rather than the customer building up a long part number based on the desired options, we have part-number configurators. These digital tools reduce the time needed to develop a full part number from 15 minutes to just a minute.

Q: These digital tools are certainly bringing increased efficiency to the design and specification process—and, I would imagine, to order accuracy as well. In what other ways is the MyEmerson experience designed to transform work processes? Does it reach beyond the immediate engineer-designer to other individuals?

A: We think a lot about the need to seamlessly move information from one person to many people. Collaboration is one of the key tenants of our

vision. That configured part number which we just talked about moves seamlessly and intact to the procurement department. Then, facilitating collaboration with Emerson or our Channel Partners is also important. We're enabling multiple people to work together on the same set of core information and what that does is accelerate the speed at which they can all do their work.

While MyEmerson provides for a "personal" digital experience, it also allows for users within the same customer account to collaborate with each other in shared workspaces. A given project might require inputs from a mechanical specialist, such as conduit thread specifications, while an electrical or controls specialist supplies communication-protocol specifics. Contrast this unified collaboration space with the old way, which typically entailed passing around a spreadsheet—keeping data synched within the organization, much less with other third parties, was incredibly hard at best.

Just as in our personal lives, our customers are telling us they want to be able to order things quickly, view lead times and pricing specific to them, and work when it is convenient for them. It's a big shift in customer expectations driven by our experience as consumers.

Q: Are there other customer expectations around that personal digital experience that you're addressing within MyEmerson?

Another interesting example we've seen take hold in past three years is our live chat capability – where now we are seeing over 200 live chats per day. What's really interesting is how different the interaction is from a phone call. The old way, via telephone, after exchanging some cordialities you would get one question answered then move on. But in a live chat you can have a sustained con-



Emerson's Automation Solutions business recently launched the MyEmerson personalized digital experience to help its customers streamline work processes and improve collaboration.

versation, passing information back and forth via that text field over the course of several minutes or longer.

We see not just one question being answered but two and three questions contextually as engineers move through their list of decisions. Using live chat, we can work alongside our customers and act as advisers during their process.

Q: When it comes to digital transformation projects, we find that our readers are being asked not only to implement one-off use cases with high potential, but to quickly replicate successful ones so that benefits can be realized at scale. How do digital tools such as those on MyEmerson enable the successful realization of this urgency of scale?

A: Emerson's new digital transformation business group brings together the products, services and software to help our customers' develop and implement practical digital transformation strategies that are tied to their specific business cases. What my

group does is add a digital tools layer that helps accelerate the replication of these strategies.

One component of MyEmerson is a digital installed base record, which serves as a single source of truth, capturing exactly what products, software and services we provided for an application. This means that a user can digitally view the specific details and replicate it quickly through the engineering process, while adjusting for local site requirements. Implementation is accelerated for these high ROI applications because digital tools do much of the work.

Not only are we removing the need to re-engineer the solution every time, we're also capturing the core information that led to that solution in the first place. Sometimes users have only a spreadsheet or a few written notes on a page about the solution they ultimately ended up with; we've found that supplying a digital source of truth is surprisingly valuable for our customers when they want to scale a successful pilot across the organization. ■