

## Industry 4.0 – are we seeing it through the lens of the 3rd Industrial Revolution?

Victoria Montag\*, Gambica's new sector head for industrial automation, argues that if we are to appreciate the far-reaching benefits of the 4th Industrial Revolution, we need to see more demonstration sites, as well as closer collaboration between the various sectors involved.

Industry 4.0 – if you work in manufacturing you are undoubtedly hearing about it repeatedly. There have been so many seminars, debates, forums, exhibitions, conferences, articles – and of course columns – on Industry 4.0 (to which I am now adding), that it almost feels like you would need to retreat into the Amazon rainforest to avoid the subject.

And, little wonder – the concept, launched 10 years ago in Germany – is truly exciting in its potential. But, whenever I talk to people in industry I can't help but feel that there is a problem with Industry 4.0.

First of all, there is the name. It was launched as Industrie 4.0, which was later anglicised to Industry 4.0 (the preferred spelling for the ISO and IET). When the UK Government finally jumped on the bandwagon in 2014, they tried to plant their own flag in the idea, branding it as The 4th Industrial Revolution.

Worse still is that the concept means different things to different people, but the impression I get is that to many (but, by no means, all), Industry 4.0 is simply automation with some networking added – an industry evolution, 'Industry 3.2' if you will.

This is hardly surprising considering the sheer ambition of Industry 4.0 and its paradigm shift in how technologies are employed and applied to business models. Trying to bend your mind around all of the elements feels like standing in the Total

Perspective Vortex of Douglas Adams' *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*.

It cannot be summed up adequately in an hour-long presentation, let alone in a short column – so I will not attempt to do so. No surprise then, that when confronted with a concept that encapsulates automation technology, communication, ICT, the cloud,

moment is being expressed almost entirely on paper and PowerPoint slides, with precious few working demonstrators to be seen?

The answer is not so simple, but as a start to work towards this great leap-forward and to encourage companies to buy into Industry 4.0 – maybe where they did not

**“It is important to start to talk across sectors – with manufacturers collaborating with the ICT, data analytics and logistics sectors – to understand and realise the full potential of the 4th Industrial Revolution.”**

big data, supply networks, cyber-security, dynamic design, batch sizes of one, augmented and virtual reality, e-sourcing and more, the temptation is to retreat into our comfort zones – and, for manufacturing, that is automation. The subject matter is simply too big. Indeed, I have noticed a recent trend by some of the big players in Industry 4.0 to refer to their factories or technologies as being 'Industry 4.0 enabled' – not so much in a U-turn, but more in recognition that a smart factory is only one element of the revolution.

Compounded with the mindboggling breadth of elements within the revolution, the perception is that the uptake of automation technologies in the UK is not as high as it should be – indeed the figures back up that impression with investment in industrial automation in the UK falling below that of Germany, France and Italy.

So, while you're trying to sell Industry 4.0 to a market that is resistant towards investing, how can you cope with the idea of something that is so much bigger and at the

during the 3rd Industrial Revolution – we need more Industry 4.0 demonstrators. However, it's equally important for those in industry and those bringing Industry 4.0 to life, to start talking across sectors – with manufacturers collaborating with the ICT, data analytics and logistics sectors – to understand and realise the full potential of the 4th Industrial Revolution. ■

\* Gambica is the trade association for the automation, control, instrumentation and laboratory technology sectors in the UK. For more information, please contact Victoria Montag on 020 7642 8090 or via [victoria.montag@gambica.org.uk](mailto:victoria.montag@gambica.org.uk) [www.gambica.org.uk](http://www.gambica.org.uk)

