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Industrial IoT World: Seeking ROI, disruptive technologies like AR take center stage

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By **Mark Fontecchio**

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Introduction

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While fairly small, Industrial IoT World featured some valuable sessions on measuring ROI and justifying Internet of Things (IoT) projects in the manufacturing space, as well as examining some use cases where disruptive tech like augmented reality (AR), blockchain and digital twins are being deployed in production.

Overview

Industrial IoT World is one of more than a dozen shows that Informa Tech hosts within its IoT World Series. Its largest is the annual IoT World conference in the San Francisco Bay Area, but it operates events in several other continents and also homes in on particular topics for smaller shows. Industrial IoT World focuses on the industrial segment – other conferences target smart cities, smart homes, connected and autonomous vehicles, security and AR/VR.

The recent event had 80 speakers, more than 45 sessions, and over 40 sponsors and exhibitors. The top sponsor was IoT connectivity software provider ClearBlade. Other sponsors included technology consultancy Cyient, IoT services firm Siemens and IT security vendor Trend Micro.

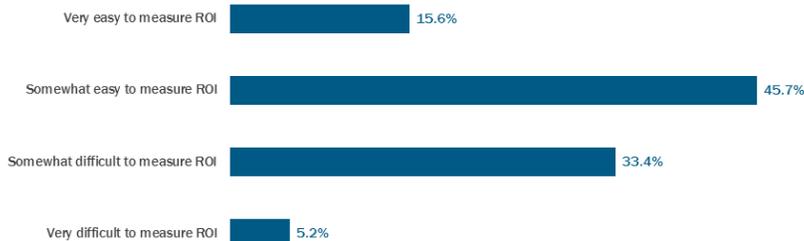
Conference tracks and themes

Keynotes were combined among all three co-located shows, with speakers spread out across all three. Different conference tracks followed, with registrants from any one event able to attend any session run by other shows. On the industrial side, the conference tracks were Strategy to Roll Outs, Enhancing Connectivity with Cutting Edge Technologies, and Revolutionizing the Future of Manufacturing and Supply Chain. The former two tracks, along with an analyst breakfast briefing and panel that this analyst moderated, made it clear that ROI was top of mind for attendees, both in getting IoT projects started and measuring their impact during and after. In our recent Voice of the Enterprise: IoT, the OT Perspective survey, nearly 40% of respondents said it was difficult to measure ROI for their IoT initiatives.

Figure 1: Difficulty of measuring ROIs

Source: 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Internet of Things - The Operational Technologies Perspective

How easy or difficult is it to measure the ROI of your organization's IoT initiative(s)?



Sample Size = 610
Base: All respondents

451 Voice of the Enterprise™ Internet of Things, the Operational Technologies Perspective

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Tracks for the other two co-located shows included Connectivity and Infrastructure and Sustainable Urban Environments for the Smart Cities Summit, and IoT Security Deep Dive for the IoT Security Summit. Attendees at Industrial IoT World show included a mix of business, IT and OT professionals. For example, a panel on the first afternoon called 'Enhancing your Manufacturing Strategy and Creating Results with Operational Excellence' included a senior manager in Boeing's global services division along with a plant manager from plastic packaging vendor ALPLA.

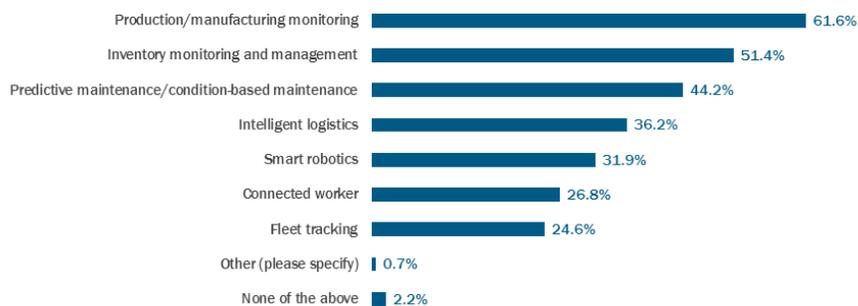
Disruptive tech use cases

Conference presentations included several from corporations presenting how disruptive technology enabled their IoT projects. All, however, tie back to popular IoT use cases. Inventory monitoring and management, for example, is the second-most-popular IoT use case for the manufacturing industry, behind production and manufacturing monitoring.

Figure 2: Popular IoT use cases in manufacturing

Source: 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Internet of Things - The Operational Technologies Perspective

You indicated you work in the manufacturing industry. Within your organization, which of the following IoT use cases are implemented today? Please select all that apply.



Sample Size = 138
Base: Manufacturing industry respondents

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Fitting into that, one of the keynotes at Industrial IoT World was from manufacturer thyssenkrupp's Bilstein subsidiary, which makes high-performance shock absorbers for sports cars. The company is using Microsoft's HoloLens – the mixed reality headset and visor that 451 Research wrote about earlier this year – for its warehouse order pickers. The HoloLens allows order pickers to see what items they need to get and the best route to get there. It can also double-check to ensure that the order picker took the right item, and then call up a manager in case there is some issue such as a damaged box.

Likewise, during a panel on the first afternoon, a manager from Boeing explained how that company is also deploying the HoloLens – workers use them to assist in wiring airplanes. During a different session, FedEx explained its participation in the Blockchain in Transport Alliance (BiTA), an association of over 400 businesses in transportation, logistics, retail and other industries looking to find common standards for employing blockchain technology in transportation. FedEx is exploring ways that blockchain can be used to track parcel shipping and transactions, not only internally but also across all of shipping, including rivals like UPS and DHL Express that are also BiTA members.