

Industry Trend: Connected Worker Platform

People at the center of digitization in the production environment and the opportunities that arise from them.

GERMANY, February 15, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Guest article by Benjamin Brockmann, Co-Founder and CEO of [Operations1](#)

Operational employees in digital no man's land

Digitization is changing our lives in all areas. While mobile apps, wearables and the like are greatly simplifying our everyday activities, little relief has yet arrived in the working world of manufacturing companies. Digitization efforts have so far focused on connecting machines, the introduction of digital production control and overall, on unwieldy isolated solutions. Operational employees are facing the challenge of obtaining their information from fragmented solutions with complex representations - often still from printed instructions or checklists. Problems are untraceable, often solved on demand, and data is manually transferred from paper to Excel files or not even considered at all. While knowledge workers have enjoyed sophisticated digitization solutions for years, operational workforces, plant employees, are often left alone in a digital no man's land.

New talent and old hands: the production process needs both

There are complaints about a shortage of skilled workers everywhere. Manufacturing companies are also under pressure to find young talent. At the same time, production processes are becoming increasingly complex due to a growing number of product variants. Unfortunately, a dwindling workforce spends far too much time on repetitive, non-value-adding and not very meaningful tasks- which frustrates those affected. Digital tools can be a great relief and engage operational employees, who play a central role in trouble-free operations, in a more meaningful way.

More digitization is needed. The annual training survey of 15,000 companies conducted by the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) found that digitalization is more important than ever. According to Bitkom, nine out of ten companies are focusing on Industry 4.0 and seven out of ten believe that Industry 4.0 will create new jobs for well-trained, skilled workers. However, optimal synergies are the combination of digital skills and professional know-how, the latest being developed over several years of experience. Recently, I heard from Simon Jacobson, Vice President Analyst of Gartner Supply Chain Practice, that while new hires

may be tech-savvy, they don't have access to best practices and know-how. Long-tenured employees, on the other hand, may have the knowledge but not the digital skills. But a truly connected factory worker in a smart manufacturing environment needs both.

Digitization as an employer branding strategy

In order to counteract the shortage of skilled workers and to be an attractive employer, especially for young employees or junior staff, digitization in production should be an important part of the employer branding strategy. Soudronic, a leading global manufacturer of production equipment for metal packaging headquartered in Switzerland, is implementing this correctly. The Head of Production and Test Bench at Soudronic, Cyril Maurer, told me: "Young employees find the use of new technologies exciting. They need a simple, intuitive solution at work, like the ones they know from their private lives - intuitive apps on their smartphones that can be installed in seconds and understood in minutes." This is exactly the kind of software-based system solution the corporate group has implemented with our support, introducing a Connected Worker Platform. This helps employees focus on important tasks such as the actual inspection process rather than searching for information or copying data. Soudronic - like an increasing number of manufacturing companies - is aware that a modern working environment is more important today than ever before in order to stay ahead of the competition.

Platforms for operational workers

"Connected work" refers to the organizational, process-related, and technological connecting of operational, so-called "deskless" employees. Typically, this refers to user-centric digitization of employees in production, logistics or other production-related support processes. A Connected Worker Platform is the ideal technological solution to realize this connection. The main difference to other typical software applications is that employees are integrated in a comprehensive digital system. Information is provided within a context, workers interact with IoT equipment, they are connected in real time with each other as well as with management and work planning levels. The software is provided as-a-service so that user companies benefit from continuous development of the solution.

Booming market for Connected Work

Gartner identifies five key use cases for Connected Work, namely employee management, quality and compliance, training and qualification, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Connecting operational employees has reached the agenda of international executives of manufacturing companies. Pioneers can already retrieve enormous success while most companies are still at the stage of paper, ERP interfaces on the shopfloor and fragmented in-house development. While the familiar worker assistance or worker information systems only provide cognitive or physical support for assembly activities, a Connected Worker Platform goes far beyond this: it is a modular solution for a wide range of applications, aimed at achieving a holistic technological connecting of employees.

About the author

Benjamin Brockmann has been CEO and Co-Founder of Operations1 since 2017. He studied at the Technical University of Munich from 2014-2016 and conducted research together with his co-founders at the Fraunhofer Institute, where he also received the substantive basis for the foundation of Operations1 through his master's thesis on worker information systems. He gained further experience at KPMG in IT & Finance Consulting and at Arthur D. Little in Strategy, Innovation & Technology. In his spare time, he enjoys using his international private pilot license to see the world from above and plays tennis. More at www.operations1.com.

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