

Setting Sights on Hannover Messe 2017

Digital and industrial sectors collide in Germany for popular trade fair

Matthew Jaster, Senior Editor

The last time I attended Hannover Messe in Germany (2013) the talk about the factory of the future, digitalization and Industry 4.0 was really picking up steam. As I prepare for the 2017 show, we've reached a fever pitch regarding these manufacturing buzzwords. So where exactly is the conversation going today?

It appears companies interested in utilizing some of the many high-tech solutions available are not short of options. Collaborative robots, predictive maintenance, smart materials, machine learning, digital twins and integrated energy all fall under the rather daunting Industry 4.0 umbrella. The question for manufacturers becomes what will *really* work for their organization and, more importantly, why should they bother?

"The task is to ensure that decision makers from industry and the energy sector understand the direct, long-term benefits that digitalization can offer their organizations, business models and employees," said Jochen Kockler, managing board member for Deutsche Messe. "This is a landscape in which mechanical engineering and I.T. are converging. This is digitalization, and Hannover Messe will show visitors how to recognize its benefits and make them their own."

This is going to be the focus at Hannover Messe. Hannover officials believe that in the not-too-distant future, manufac-

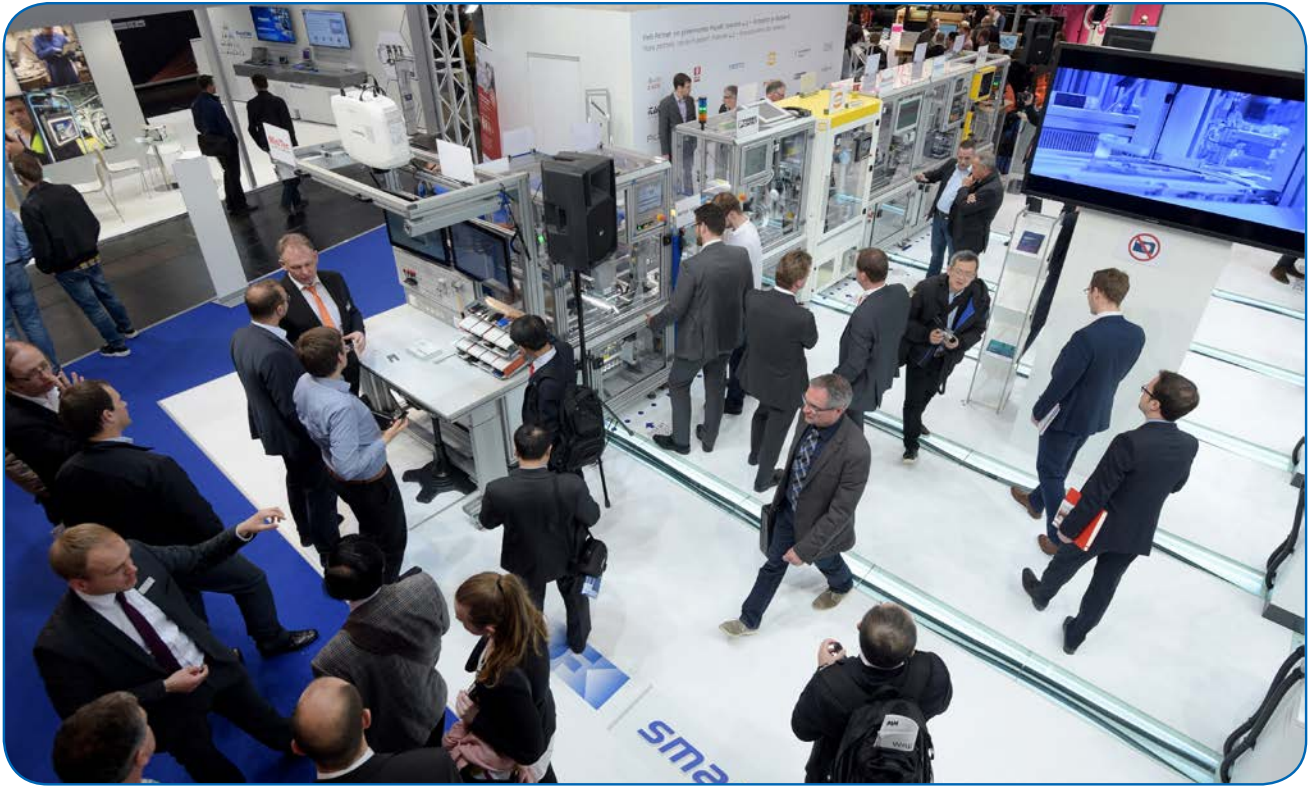
turing systems will incorporate machine-learning technologies that analyze data centrally and feed the results back to the production machines in question, thereby enabling them to learn and self-optimize. As such, machine learning is fundamental to predictive maintenance at this year's show.

Organizers say that despite the ongoing and rapid spread of digitalization, people will always be absolutely critical to success in industry. Industry 4.0 technologies will help make factory workers' duties more interesting and varied. Instead of focusing on repetitive manual tasks, factory employees will increasingly be called upon to solve problems, make decisions, innovate and drive value-adding initiatives. But this will not happen in a vacuum. Manufacturers need to invest in upskilling and education measures to prepare their workforces. "In tomorrow's agile, flexible factories, employees will be experts in the use of virtual reality, augmented reality, smart glasses and tablets. All of these exiting new digital factory tools will feature prominently at Hannover Messe 2017," Kockler explained.

Some other interesting news coming out of Hannover is the return of the Young Tech Enterprises hub (Hall 3). Young Tech Enterprises is where Hannover Messe founders and young companies meet startup networks, accelerators and economic development organizations as well as large companies and investors.

All photos courtesy of Hannover Messe.





The program features an exhibition area as well as a forum, pitching and matchmaking events, and workshops. Participants also profit from the synergies of research and technology in Hall 2 plus access to the thousands of exhibitors and investors at the trade fair. Young Tech Enterprises showcased 116 companies from 12 countries in 2016.

The competition “Startup Pitches @ Young Tech Enterprises” is all about brevity: each challenger has only a few minutes to convince the audience of his product’s advantages. Altogether 32 exhibitors compete for prize money of 5,000 euros as well as new supporters and investors. Berlin-based FDX Fluid Dynamix GmbH won in 2016 with its OsciJet nozzles, which mix gases and liquids without moving parts.

In addition to Young Tech Enterprises, Hannover offers startups further tailored participation options. Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) sponsors the program “Young Innovative Companies,” which features group exhibits for startups in three sectors: Digital Factory, Energy and Industrial Automation. A participation package includes a turnkey exhibit as well as central administration and a shared meeting lounge. BMWi assumes up to 60 percent of participation costs. Approximately 40 companies took advantage of the offer in 2016.

Poland is this year’s partner country. Apart from domestic reindustrialization, the country’s main economic focus is on opening up foreign markets and supporting innovative Polish companies. Around 150 of these companies will feature at this year’s show. Together, they will mount a Partner Country showcase that will center on the themes of energy and I.T.

“Being next-door neighbors, Poland and Germany are already strong partners,” remarked Köckler. “Poland will demonstrate its innovative spirit and its dynamic uptake of digitalization-factors that make it a key player on the global stage.”

150+ Polish companies will exhibit on about 4,000 square meters (43,000 sq. ft.) of display space spread across all of Hannover’s trade shows. This compares with about 80 companies in 2016. The lineup will include a sizable contingent from Poland’s energy technology and industrial subcontracting sectors.

Overall organization and coordination of this year’s Partner Country showcase rests with the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP). The National Center for Research and Development (NCBR) will be running a pavilion at the Research & Technology show in Hall 2. Meanwhile, the Polish government’s central pavilion will be in Hall 3. This is the heart of the showcase and will feature group presentations by ten of the country’s provinces. Poland’s Ministry of Science and Higher Education will also be using pavilion to profile a number of stand-out innovations from the country’s industrial sector. There will also be Polish group pavilions dedicated to industrial subcontracting (Hall 4), the foundry industry (Hall 5/6), electrical engineering (Hall 13), heating and cooling supply technology (Hall 27) and electric transportation (open-air site). (www.hannovermesse.de) **PTE**