NextGen Infrastructure Desk

Young Guns in the Water/WasteWater Industry

Attending the ISA Water/Wastewater Symposium this week, I sensed the younger workforce is ready to take on a larger role in the industry.

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Cyber security, workforce and modernization were just some of the topics on day one at the recent ISA Water/Wastewater Symposium, held in Orlando, Fla. on Aug. 7-9. Talking to some of the attendees, the younger workforce topic seemed apart of many discussions during different breaks at the event. My sense is the younger generation has "skills" and, especially, as it relates to network configuration for water and wastewater plants. One project manager I talked to added that he had a network project for an intern this summer, which he thought would take five to six weeks, but was done in two weeks by the young engineer. He added that these guys are really smart.

Graham Nasby, General Symposium Chair, ISA, Water and Wastewater Div
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So, how do you find these smart, young engineers? One solution is for company leaders and management to partner with local vocational schools and universities. Get familiar with the IT department at the local university, so you can mold perceptions about manufacturing in the 21st century. These kids are idealistic at this point in their career. Pitch them on being part of a team that implements a network security strategy that can thrwart terrorist intrusions. This is the millennial generation that grew up with 9/11 and the "war on terror." Worth a shot.

Symposium Conference
This was a well-attended event with attendance expected to top out around 160, according to Graham Nasby, general symposium chair, ISA (see here for a look at the event's agenda). The event had great presentations on day one regarding machine simulation, security strategies, HMI apps and case studies. You can see what was discussed at the event, via the twitter hashtag #wwac2012.

The event also included a trip to the modern Orange County Utilities S Southern Region Water Supply Facility. The water facility manages 30 million gallons/day and

three other smaller plants from one SCADA control room in the Orange County facility. Robert Doyen, SCADA administrator, Orange County Utilities, led the water plant tour to a pack of information-hungry process engineers. A great tour and well done by ISA and the Organge County folks.

The event kicked off with an excellent presentation on risk assessment by Celine Hyer, Principal, Malcolm Pirnie/ARCADIS. She worked as a regulator at one time in Florida and provided a roadmap on how to confront aging infrastructure in the water industry.

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