DR. JULIA DUWE

On leadership and collaboration in digitalization

Digitalization is shifting our focus. Not only towards technology, but also toward collaboration. Our author Julia Duwe writes why she thinks that's good news for everyone.

In today's Internet of Things, everything communicates with everything. This offers clear benefits that also extend to the sheet metal fabrication sector, because connecting individual components can save companies a lot of time. Sheet metal fabricators currently spend up to 80 percent of their production time on indirect processes and, on average, 50 percent of their jobs involve batch sizes of four or fewer parts. Viewed as a proportion of overall throughput time, the actual processing time is extremely low in the sheet fabrication business.

Connectivity inside and out

TRUMPF sees potential for improvement in this area – and that's exactly what our TruConnect digitalization solutions are designed to exploit. This also requires us to boost our connectivity in-house, linking not just our internal departments such as development and sales, but also extending this network of connections to the customers and partners outside our company's walls.

The TruConnect development process has the capacity to dissolve the borders between hardware, software, sales and service, eliminating the divisions between departments and business areas that still exist today. That's because software-based digitalization solutions do not come about through rigid plans or in isolated departments. Instead, they often involve many different departments working together with partners both inside and outside the company – just like our Track & Trace indoor positioning system. We also believe in getting our customers on board right from the very start, because we rely on timely feedback from them to perfect our products and tailor them to our customers' requirements. We also work closely with universities and research institutes. Experience has shown that highly complex Industry 4.0 products are most likely to thrive in open innovation ecosystems and not behind the closed doors of a single department.

Managers are facilitators and networkers

All this has an effect on our organization. Each agile team of experts takes responsibility for making far-reaching decisions, with managers primarily taking the role of facilitators and networkers. As organizational structures become more flexible and adaptable, management teams are increasingly focusing on augmenting people's know-how and enabling teams to manage themselves in a way that benefits the organization. Their task lies in organizing collaboration between many different individuals and bringing different disciplines together. This interdisciplinary, boundary-breaking way of thinking and acting helps ensure that we always bring out the best for our customers in connected sheet metal fabrication.

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