The Robotic Renaissance

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By MIKE JACOBS, President of Applied Manufacturing Technologies

The convergence of three developments — more capable and less expensive robotic automation, demand by manufacturers to automate their production and the National Robotics Initiative — is fueling a robotic renaissance in the United States. As a leading supplier of factory automation design, engineering, and process consulting services, we at Applied Manufacturing Technologies (AMT) have launched an aggressive hiring initiative to support the rebirth of this industry as a result of these three major developments.

First, robotic automation has matured robots, and sensors have become more capable, faster, less expensive, and easier to use. Opportunities now exist for applications in many areas that were never considered before. Automation professionals are currently deploying robots in a wide variety of industries including wind and solar energies, medical devices, glass processes, food and beverage production, chemical processes, and many more. Beyond traditional industry, innovative robotics applications are emerging, such as cooperative robotic endeavors where robots are used in situations dangerous to humans. Robots and humans can now work in teams to perform such tasks as chemical processing, nuclear reactor inspecting, and navigating building fires or other disasters.

Second, while industries in the United Sates emerge from the severe recession, many companies realize that the best way to keep manufacturing on-shore is to improve production with robots and automation. Producers are realizing that automation helps to make products of higher quality, at less cost, and in a shorter time period. Programmable automation is more flexible and industry leverages that to meet changing consumer demands.

The final development in this convergence is the recent government announcement of plans to invest $500 million in manufacturing, which includes $70 million specifically allocated for a National Robotics Initiative. It appears that the robotics industry will see some exciting advances in the next few years. The National initiative will focus on advancing high-end manufacturing in industries such as: nano-tech, bio-tech, and robotics.

The current manufacturing engineering landscape continues to evolve. Companies that scaled back during the recession are growing again but may lack the talent or capacity they now need. New engineers are entering the work force with current computer technology skills, but many of the seasoned manufacturing veterans that are needed to provide practical mentorship have moved on or retired.

The future of automation looks brighter than ever. I believe that we will see significant growth in the automation deployment in the next few years and in order to achieve these advances and enhancements the industry will need a significant boost in its pool of robotic and engineering talent.

At Applied Manufacturing Technologies (AMT), we are again investing aggressively in recruiting engineers and launching them into fulfilling careers in the robotics and automation industry. We expect that continued investment in robotics technology and engineering education will inspire our nation’s youth to pursue automation technology degrees with more vigor than ever.

Our “Robotic Renaissance” Hiring Initiative is underway with plans to add up to 40 engineers in the next 12 to 18 months. The program’s focus will be on placing automation engineering talent into a variety of industries and locations.

We have a process for hiring engineers with varying ranges of experience and capabilities. We tailor training for them and place them into teams or situations that “custom fit” their talents and career aspirations. This model also enables our company to provide a unique range of engineering solutions to customers in very different manufacturing industries.

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