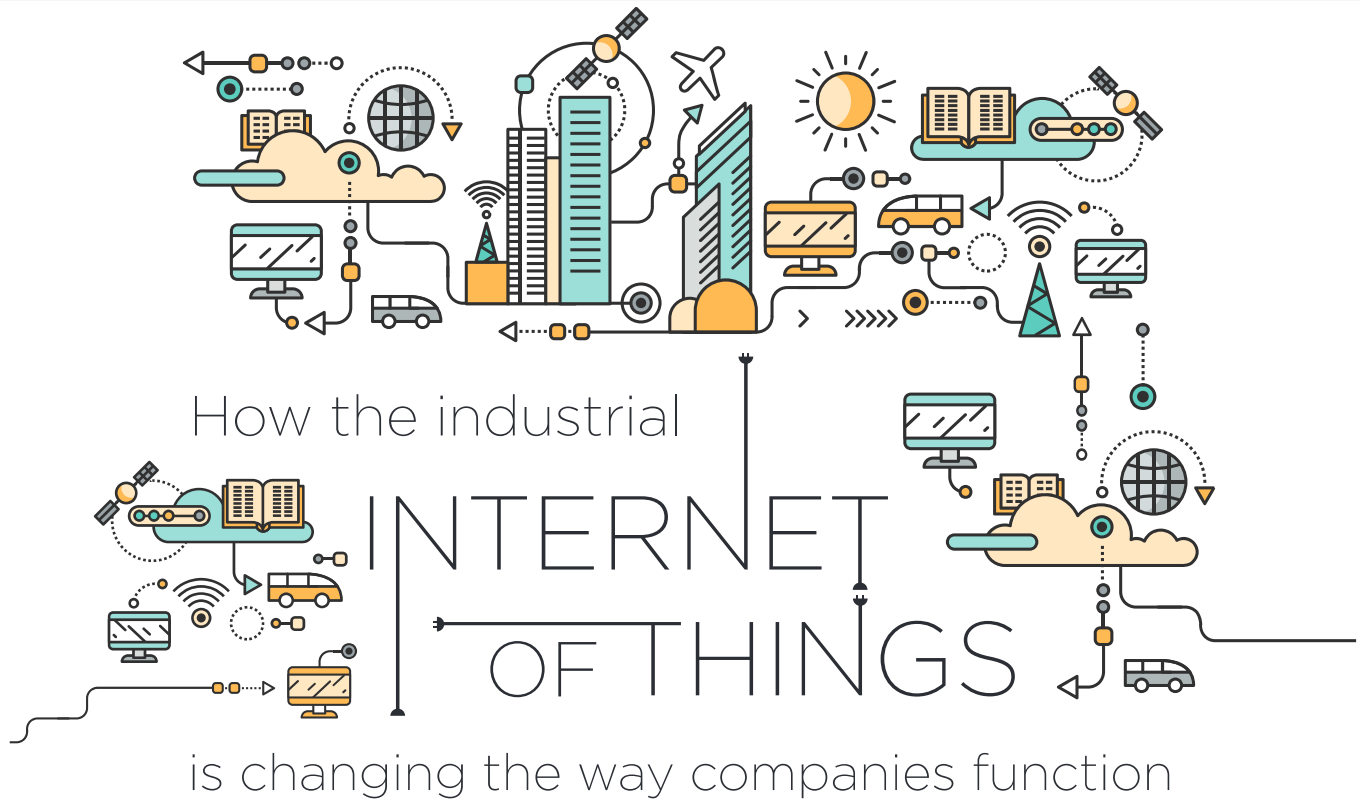


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BY REBECCA HANLON // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It wasn't that long ago that manufacturers at a water station kept a close eye on the steam gauge to determine whether a machine was working properly. But thanks to advances in technology, data management and mobile computing, the Industrial Internet of Things is changing the way companies function.

Earlier this year, Red Lion Controls Inc. in Manchester Township launched a new Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) Innovation Center in St. Louis where engineering, product and sales teams are working to get this technology into the hands of manufacturers.

Red Lion uses the vision

of The Connected Factory, a manufacturing environment in which every machine and device can speak to the others, helping to monitor and control everything from operation productivity to profitability.

"It's been an evolution that started more than 10 years ago," said Mike Granby, president of Red Lion

Controls. "We have been helping to enable the IIoT with cellular connectivity, protocol conversions and automation from before the concept even had a name."

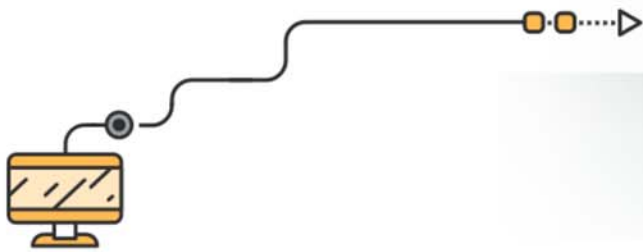
In manufacturing, the drive to boost productivity has long meant a need for resources that laid out data simply and clearly. For years, one employee might look at an individual machine's dials and tweak how it functioned. Then an operator looked at the cells of a machine while the information was given to someone

in a supervisory control system, Granby said.

Today, the IIoT allows data from multiple factories to show up in one place, offering a more strategic view of the business as a whole.



Red Lion's Brian Rosema (left) and Mike Granby (right)



Illustration/Submitted. Products offered by Red Lion Controls

“At the end of the day, companies are trying to do the same things they’ve done for years, which is to reduce downtime, improve inventory uses and boost productivity,” said Brian Rosema, director of IIoT Strategy with Red Lion Controls. “Now we take all of the display systems so we can see them at once. The larger trends are no longer a mystery.”

Using Red Lion’s remote units, known as RAM 4G LTE cellular RTUs, data is shared over a secure, all-in-one platform that integrates with existing equipment for remote monitoring and control, according to a news release. Red Lion’s Data Station Plus and Graphite HMI also work together to enable communications from

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MIKE GRANBY // PRESIDENT OF RED LION CONTROLS

different devices and different manufacturers, the release states.

With an increase in connectivity comes an increased need for data security, and Red Lion Controls has implemented several areas in which companies can securely use the system. Routers that limit network traffic to certain users and Network

Address Translation (NAT) that obscures inbound access help minimize the risk of cyber attacks. In some cases, factory-to-factory and supply-chain-to-factory securities use virtual tunnels to transmit data.

Red Lion also was intentional in allowing the IIoT to work with legacy equipment, Granby said.

“It didn’t make sense to sell a solution that required a manufacturer to rip out everything they had,” he said. “It’s easier to start in a new factory, but part of the key was to make it affordable for companies that have been around for some time.”

Red Lion reports that many manufacturers saw a return on their investment within six months of using the hardware.

“We’re not in the business of telling people how to run their factory but providing them with the tools they need to run it,” Granby said. “There’s the IT world, the cloud world and then the world of the shop floor. As IIoT takes off, I see a deeper and broader use in terms of the customer’s imagination.” ■



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As the global experts in communication, monitoring and control for industrial automation and networking, Red Lion Controls has been delivering innovative solutions for over forty years. Our automation, Ethernet and cellular M2M technology enables companies worldwide to gain real-time data visibility that drives productivity. Product brands include Red Lion, N-Tron and Sixnet. With headquarters in York, Pennsylvania, the company has offices across the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe. Red Lion is part of Spectris plc, the productivity-enhancing instrumentation and controls company. For more information, visit www.redlion.net.