

INSIDER

INDUSTRIAL AUTOMATION & PROCESS CONTROL

REMINDER!!

BEAMEX ACE 2023- I'M KEYNOTE SPEAKER

I'm speaking again!

I'm thrilled to share that I'll be a featured speaker at the 2023 Beamex Annual Calibration Exchange – two days full of guest speakers, industry experts, workshops, and more! I invite you to join me and other liked-minded

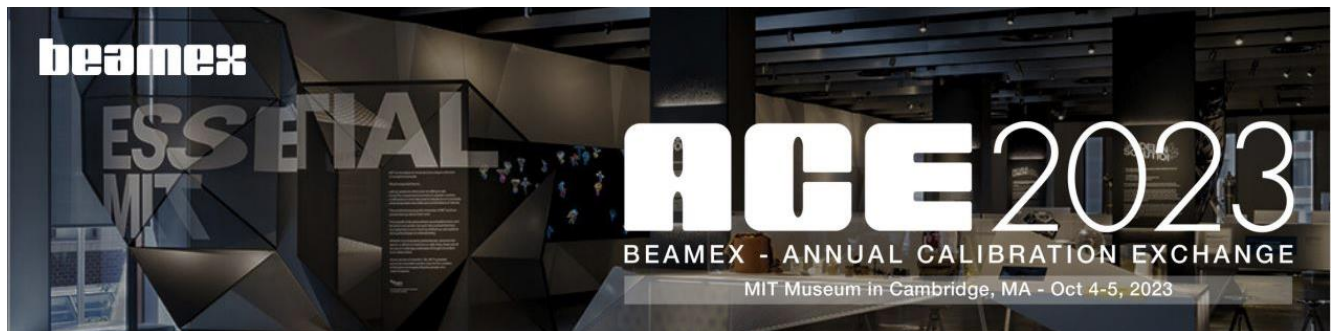
professionals on October 4th & 5th at the MIT

Museum in Cambridge, MA to connect, exchange insights, and enhance your skill set.

View the full program here: <https://resources.beamex.com/.../annual-calibration...>

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Are YOU a Luddite?

Often, when someone expresses reservations about an innovation, technical or social, they are told, “Oh, you’re just a Luddite.” Most people have forgotten what that means, if they ever knew.

Ned Ludd was a weaver, or so the story goes, and he started riots by smashing the power looms that were taking over weaving and putting many weavers out of work.

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That's true, as it goes, but there's more to it. Let me tell you a story.



Cartoon of Ned Ludd

The way weaving was done in 18th century Great Britain was called “putting out.” The wool owner had a group of crafters who worked in their own cottages (yes, that’s where the term “cottage industry” came from) and the owner “put out” the wool and received woven fabric from each crafter. This system worked well for hundreds of years.

Then came power looms. And the Jacquard programmable looms.

Power looms needed to be concentrated in one place so they could use the power generated from water or coal. This is the birth of the textile factory.

Now, the crafters couldn’t work at home on their own time. They had to work in the factory, on the owner’s time. They had to live near the factory, so the thrifty owners built barracks for them to live in. Families were broken up, pay was small, and

there were company stores so that the workers could be fleeced out of what was left of their pay. The Jacquard programmable looms made it possible for fewer workers to be needed to run the looms. Layoffs mushroomed. There was no social safety net.

The looms were much faster than a cottage loom, too, and there were no safety devices. If you were caught in the loom, you were injured, and if you were injured you were fired. And you probably died.

The reaction to this horrible transformation of rural industry was first, the Luddite riots, and then the rise of labor unions. Not much has changed from then until now.

Why am I telling you this story?
Because the rise of AI and its uses to replace not just line workers but also middle and upper-middle managers, customer service departments entirely, and put hundreds of

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thousands of workers out of jobs is inescapable. If you do a job that consists of repetitive work, or shuffling paper, or talking to customers on the phone, text, or email, you are gone. AI will get better and better at doing all those things. Are YOU a Luddite yet?

Several of my friends who are well known authors have discovered to their horror that all their bodies of work have been scraped by Generative AI engines such as ChatGPT. So now the AI can pretend to write stories as if they were the authors. No payment has been offered or made for the copyrighted works they stole. Are YOU a Luddite yet?

Als can be used to learn algorithms that will determine what the maintenance status of valves, flowmeters, pumps, condensers, compressors, and everything else on the plant site is, and generate work orders for repair or replacement. If a big part of your job is doing those things, you are gone. Are YOU a Luddite yet?

AI can be used to make diagnoses in health care. Their track record is almost as good as a trained diagnostician. If that's what you do, you are gone. So, doctor, are YOU a Luddite yet?

Even if you flip burgers for a living, an AI-enabled robot can do your job better than you can. Are YOU a Luddite yet?

Yes, AI can do marvelous things. But because of the way our society is organized, many people will be thinking to themselves, "Ned Ludd was right!"

Surviving the Coming Disruptions

Whether you're a Luddite or not, you will have to survive the coming disruption caused by AI. The relentless rush of modern corporate management to reduce costs and increase profits will drive the adoption of AI even when it isn't necessary, just to continue to reduce the dreaded head count. Remember, Als don't need human resources departments, don't take vacations, don't get sick, work 24/7/365, don't need to be paid, and don't join unions. Of course, they also don't pay taxes and they don't vote.

Remember, Als don't need human resources departments, don't take vacations, don't get sick, work 24/7/365, don't need to be paid, and don't join unions.

As a society, we need to decide if AI should simply be adopted wholeheartedly, or used where it really can make a difference and not as a way to get rid of people. The uses of AI and Machine

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Learning in automation, maintenance, operations, and control are numerous and unlikely to cost many jobs, if any.

Using AI to steal from and stiff writers and consultants or to drop headcount because you can, not so much.

When you hear somebody talking about how wonderful AI is, and how it will make life better, ask them, “better for whom?” For the factory owners, for the shareholders... but not for the workers.

We need to support politicians and political parties who value people over process and are willing to guide and direct the use of disruptive technologies like AI to those applications where they are useful and people neutral.

We need to support companies who value the work of their employees, and are oriented toward making all lives better, not just tech bro investors.

We need to support politicians and political parties who value people over process and are willing to guide and direct the use of disruptive technologies like AI to those applications where they are useful and people neutral.

If we don't do that, welcome to “The Hunger Games.”

What should you do personally? If your job fits my descriptions in this issue, change jobs, change careers. Take the hit now, because in five years it will hit you hard and you won't have prepared for it. Go back to school. Get credentialled in a field that isn't going to replace you with an AI. Join a union that is serious about defending its members. Join a political party that cares more about people than profits. Work for a society that won't screw its creative people like the generative AI developers have done. I can vouch for the incredibly awful feeling that comes over an author, for example, whose entire body of work over her entire life has been stolen to train an AI. A society that screws its creative people is failing very fast and will fall very hard.

I used to tell displaced workers that they could always get a job as a greeter at Walmart. Not anymore. Walmart doesn't even have greeters.

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Industrial Storytelling, Part 11: The *INSIDER* INTERVIEW FOR SEPTEMBER

On September 15, Walt Boyes sat down with two industry leading experts in customer relationship management for the first in a series of *INSIDER* Interviews. We are going to be doing these on a monthly basis going forward.

If you have suggestions for interview subjects, please let Walt Boyes know.

In case you missed it, here it is again:

**The *INSIDER* Interview
With Brian Gardner
And
Roger VanNuis
From salesprocess360.com
https://youtu.be/BPV_wgg7XCQ**



WALT BOYES is a principal with Spitzer and Boyes LLC. He is a Life Fellow of the International Society of Automation, a Fellow of the Institute of Measurement and Control, a Chartered Measurement and Control Technologist, and a member of the Association of Professional Futurists. From 2003 to 2013 Walt was Editor in Chief of *Control* magazine, and from 2014 he has been Editor and Publisher of the *INSIDER*. From 2016 to 2022 he acted as Editor of the alternate history magazine, *The Grantville Gazette* and as Editor in Chief of *Eric Flint's Ring of Fire Press*. He recently joined Top of the World Publishing, along with Joy Ward, as SFF/Alternate History Editors for their *Novus Mundi Publishing* imprint. Walt "pays it forward" as Vice President and Director of The Heinlein Society.

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