Asset Performance 2026

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CONFERENCE MAGAZINE

November 18 & 19 2026 | Antwerp, Belgium

- Beyond the hype: how AI is starting to deliver real value in industrial reliability and maintenance
- Reliability moves to the boardroom
- How trusted asset information is reshaping maintenance and lifecycle management
- The road to self-preserving assets: how AI, automation and digital intelligence are changing the future of asset performance

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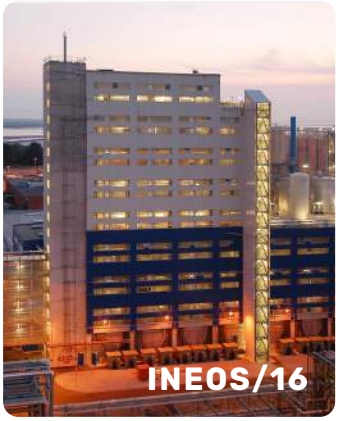

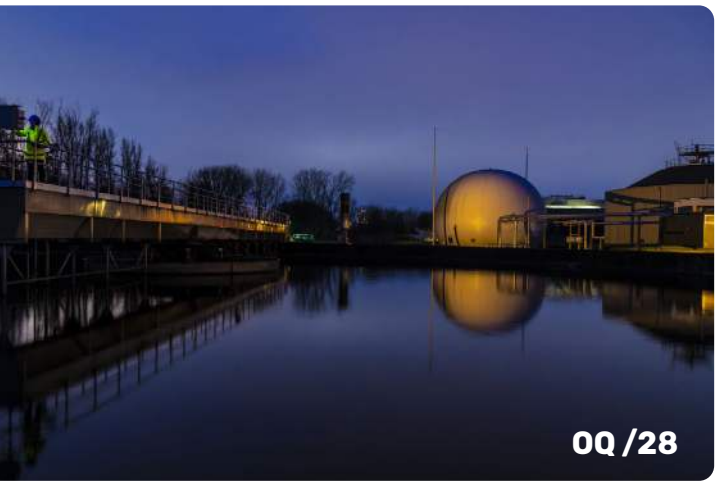

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PUBLISHER:
Wim Vancauwenberghe

LAYOUT:
Starling Book Design

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Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing maintenance, reliability and asset management. New possibilities emerge almost every day, but for industrial organisations the key question is not what AI could theoretically achieve. It is how technology can create measurable value in real operating environments.

Asset Performance 2026 brings together professionals who are moving beyond the hype. Across two days, we explore how AI, data and digital technologies can improve reliability, increase equipment availability, support frontline teams and enable better decisions throughout the asset lifecycle.

Through practical cases from companies including Domtar, Sanofi, Nyrstar, INEOS Styrolution, Aquafin and OQ, we examine the realities behind digital transformation. How do you turn fragmented technical data into useful insights? How can AI support planning, diagnostics and work execution? And what is needed to turn a promising proof of concept into a scalable business case?

Agentic AI is an important theme this year, as AI evolves from a supporting tool towards a more active digital teammate. At the same time, the programme looks critically at the data, processes, leadership and organisational capabilities required to make these technologies work.

The conference also reaches far beyond AI. Sessions on predictive and prescriptive maintenance, condition monitoring, asset health, lubrication, motor systems, asset risk, cost management and human-centred innovation all share the same objective: better decisions, stronger reliability and sustainable performance.

This year we are also introducing new opportunities to experience technology and exchange knowledge. The Demonstration Zone brings solutions to life, while breakfast sessions at the platinum sponsor booths provide an informal setting for focused discussions and valuable connections.

Together with the presentations, innovation pitches and exhibition, these formats reinforce what Asset Performance has always been about: an independent, peer-driven community where maintenance managers, reliability leaders, asset managers... and anyone else interested in asset performance can openly share experiences and test new ideas against industrial reality.

I invite you to use this magazine as your introduction to the people, cases and ideas you will encounter on 18 and 19 November. I hope it helps you ask the right questions, make new connections and identify practical steps to turn technological potential into lasting industrial value.

WIM VANCAUWENBERGHE
Conference Director

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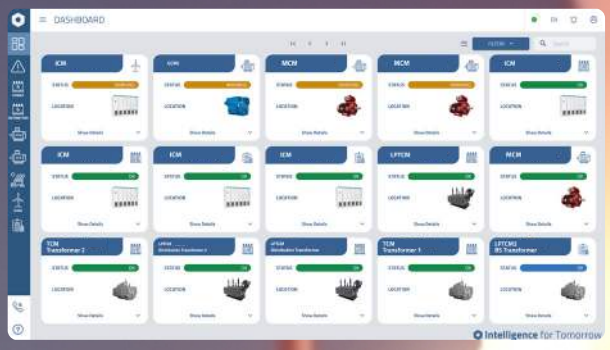

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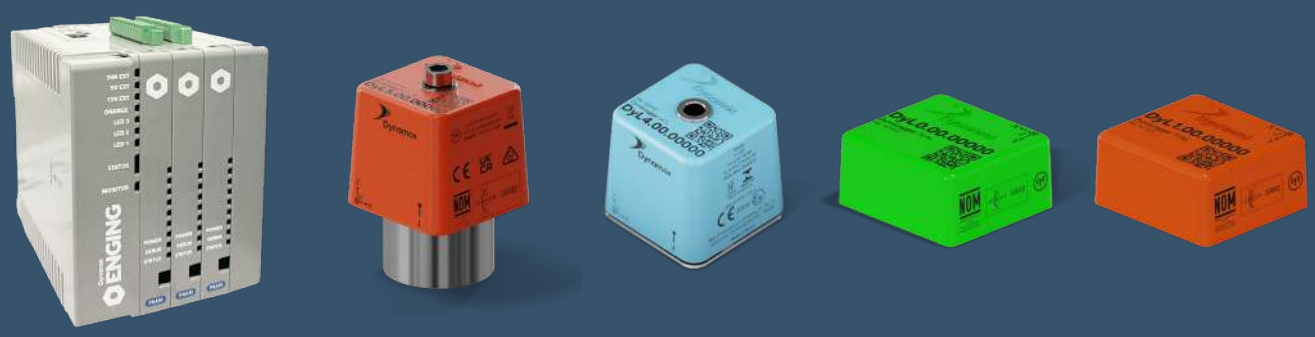

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SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER	
08.00	Registration & coffee/ breakfast sessions
09.00	**Opening Keynote**
09.35	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
10.45	Coffee break
11.15	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
13.00	Lunch break
14.00	Demo Experience
14.35	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
15.45	Coffee break
16.15	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
18.00	Reception and networking
18.45	**Evening Keynote**
19.45	Walking Dinner
21.45	End of event

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER	
08.00	Registration & coffee/ breakfast sessions
09.00	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
10.45	Coffee break
11.15	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
13.00	Lunch break
14.00	Demo Experience
14.35	**Parallel sessions & workshop**
15.45	**Closing Keynote & Discussion**
16.30	Reception

▶ WANT TO EXPLORE ALL SESSIONS, SPEAKERS AND TIMINGS?

Find the complete programme in the separate Asset Performance 2026 programme brochure.

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ASSET MANAGEMENT IS NOT MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT

Why industrial performance requires a lifecycle approach

When industrial performance falls short, maintenance is often the first place organizations look for improvement. They invest in new maintenance systems, optimize preventive maintenance plans, or introduce predictive technologies. While these initiatives can create value, they rarely solve the underlying challenge on their own.

The reason is simple: asset management is not maintenance management.

According to ISO 55000, asset management is the coordinated activity of an organization to realize value from its assets. In practice, this means aligning decisions across the entire asset lifecycle: from business case and engineering to operations, maintenance, improvement and eventual replacement. Asset management is therefore not the responsibility of a single department. It is a business discipline that connects strategy, performance, risk and cost.

The hidden cost of organizational silos

Most industrial organizations already perform the activities associated with asset management. They maintain assets, operate facilities, execute projects and invest in improvements. The challenge is that these activities are often managed in separate silos, each with its own objectives and priorities.

As a result, decisions that seem optimal within one department do not always create value for the organization as a whole.

A project team may focus on minimizing CAPEX during a plant upgrade, while maintenance teams are left with higher operational costs for years to come. Operations may prioritize short-term production targets, while the long-term condition of critical assets gradually deteriorates. Engineering, operations and maintenance all make the right decisions within their own domains, yet overall performance suffers.

True asset management addresses this challenge by creating a clear line of sight between organizational objectives and day-to-day activities. It ensures that decisions are made from a total lifecycle perspective rather than within departmental boundaries.

From maintenance performance to business performance

Leading industrial organizations increasingly recognize that sustainable performance depends on balancing three factors: performance, risk and cost. Asset management provides the framework to achieve that balance.

The goal is not simply to improve maintenance KPIs. The goal is to improve business outcomes.

That can mean increasing production capacity, reducing operational costs, extending asset life, improving safety performance, strengthening compliance, or supporting future growth. In all cases, the focus shifts from maintaining equipment to creating value through assets.

At the same time, digitalization and AI are creating new opportunities. Better data collection, integrated IT and OT environments, predictive analytics and AI-supported decision-making can significantly accelerate asset management processes. However, technology alone is not enough. Without clear governance, aligned processes and shared objectives, digital tools simply make existing inefficiencies more visible.

Organizations that achieve lasting improvements are those that combine technology with a structured asset management approach, linking strategy, people, processes and systems across the entire asset lifecycle.

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Requirements for AI-Driven Reliability and Strategic Decision-Making

Wednesday, Nov 18

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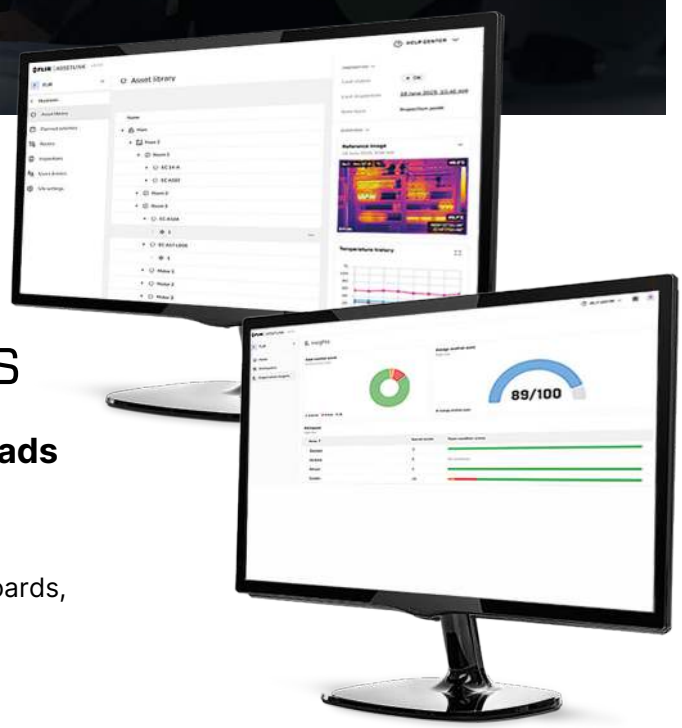

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INTERVIEW

AI FOR RELIABILITY: BETWEEN PROMISE AND PRACTICE

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— TOR IDHAMMAR

Director of Reliability, Domtar

At Domtar, Tor Idhammar is exploring where artificial intelligence can genuinely strengthen reliability, and where enthusiasm for technology risks distracting organisations from the fundamentals.

At Domtar, reliability is a business necessity. The pulp and paper group operates around sixty facilities across the United States, Canada and Mexico, in a market defined by global competition and narrow margins. For Tor Idhammar, Director of Reliability, operational discipline is therefore as important as technological innovation.

At the Asset Performance Conference, Idhammar will open the programme with *AI for Reliability at Domtar: Hype, Help, or Hard Truths*? His keynote will explore the gap between what artificial intelligence promises and what industrial organisations can realistically implement.

"AI is a great tool, but today it is sometimes presented as a solution for almost everything," he says. "At the end of the day, someone still has to turn the wrenches and do the repair."

From corporate ambition to local reality

Idhammar joined Domtar after nearly three decades at reliability consultancy IDCON. His experience taught him what good reliability looks like, and why improvement programmes often fail to become part of everyday work.

One of his first assignments was to develop a company-wide reliability strategy. The difficulty was not adding detail, but removing it. A mill manager must balance safety, quality, production, environmental performance and cost. A strategy that is too complex quickly becomes another corporate document.

Domtar created a simple framework that allows each mill to identify its own gaps and translate them into a local roadmap. "You need to meet each mill where it is," Idhammar says. "For ownership and buy-in, the mills themselves need to identify their gaps and decide what they will work on."

A mill without effective planning processes needs a different starting point from a mature site ready to expand predictive maintenance. Reliability cannot be improved through one standard programme imposed on every facility.

The hard truths behind AI

Domtar is testing several AI-related applications in reliability. The organisation is still learning where the technology can add value and where its limitations become visible.

The first hard truth is that AI depends on much more than an algorithm. Data must be collected, transmitted, stored and validated. Connectivity can fail, servers can become overloaded and sensors may not measure what engineers assume they are measuring.

"If you start collecting large amounts of data, that data needs to flow somewhere," Idhammar explains. "Validating, calibrating and checking sensors takes time."

A second hard truth concerns failure data. Many AI applications focus on anomaly detection. A system learns what normal behaviour looks like and warns when something changes. That may be useful, but detecting an anomaly is not the same as diagnosing a failure.

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> KEEPING THE HUMAN IN THE LOOP REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURING THE RELIABILITY OF OUR MILLS

"The system can tell you that something is abnormal, but not necessarily what the failure mode is or what action should be taken."

A critical motor may run for twelve years before failing. From a reliability perspective, that is desirable. From a machine-learning perspective, it means there may be few failure examples available to train the model.

People must therefore validate alarms, connect them to known failure modes and determine the appropriate response. Domtar is examining whether thresholds and alarm limits can help AI systems learn faster. Setting this up properly still requires time, competence and resources.

Technology cannot repair weak fundamentals

For Idhammar, the key question is not whether AI is impressive, but whether it addresses the organisation's most important reliability constraint.

A company can invest heavily in analytics while work notifications remain poorly prioritised, preventive maintenance routes are weak or craftspeople lack the training to perform precision repairs. The result may be more alarms and dashboards without better equipment performance.

"Sometimes companies spend significant amounts of money on AI, while the same investment in training craftspeople, training planners, improving prioritisation or strengthening change management might deliver greater reliability gains."

He sees inspections, work prioritisation and maintenance prevention as three of the strongest reliability levers. Technology

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does not eliminate the value of a skilled mechanic who can look, listen, feel and smell while understanding the machine in its wider process context.

Maintenance teams also face a constant stream of notifications. Without disciplined triage, urgent work, important work and low-value work compete for the same limited resources.

Maintenance prevention tackles defects introduced through poor installation, lubrication, alignment, bolting or repair practices. Domtar has invested in a precision maintenance programme in which craftspeople develop practical skills over several training periods.

These fundamentals may appear less exciting than AI, but they determine whether digital information can be translated into reliable action.

Keeping the human in the loop

As plants become more data-driven, people who remain physically close to the equipment may become more valuable rather than less. Mechanics, electricians, inspectors and lubricators provide context that systems do not automatically possess.

"Keeping the human in the loop remains essential to ensuring the reliability of our mills," Idhammar says.

The same is true for leadership. A corporate reliability team can provide expertise and direction, but mill managers must allocate resources, set priorities and sustain change. When Idhammar accepted his role, he made one condition clear: management should not merely support reliability, but drive it.

His keynote will examine how traditional maintenance and digital transformation must reinforce each other, and why advanced tools can only perform as well as the organisational system around them.

"We should not get derailed," Idhammar concludes. "Basic reliability practices may not always be glamorous, but they are still essential."

For technical managers evaluating AI projects, that may be the most important hard truth of all.

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AI for Reliability at Domtar: Hype, Help, or Hard Truths?

Wednesday 18 Nov

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Maintaining machinery at peak performance is no longer optional. Most people in maintenance understand that poor lubrication causes failures, explains Peter Van Geertruyen, Business Expert in Transmissions & Motion Control. "But what's often underestimated is how these errors snowball into major losses, not only in repair costs, but also in reliability, uptime, maintenance spend, energy consumption, waste, and workplace safety." Effective lubrication management, he adds, can unlock savings of up to 30% if approached the right way.

Total Cost of Lubrication tells the full story

Lubrication management rarely makes headlines, nor does it attract budget attention. On the shop floor, it is often the difference between stable production and costly, recurring surprises, losses frequently accepted as normal rather than addressed as solvable.

"Even organisations seemingly doing well in this area often have considerable room for improvement," notes Van Geertruyen. "The potential impact of lubrication is consistently underestimated." That potential becomes visible only once lubrication is assessed through its total cost impact, not the cost of lubricants or labour alone:

Total Cost of Lubrication (TCL) = Downtime + Maintenance + Lubrication + Lubricants + Energy Savings + SHEQ + Waste

Framed this way, lubrication is no longer a minor consumable expense, but a variable with disproportionate influence on reliability, energy efficiency, safety, and environmental compliance.

A documented problem with limited progress

Poor lubrication is responsible for more than 36% of premature bearing failures and can affect the maintenance budget by up to 40%, driven by excessive planned and unplanned maintenance and a shorter than designed mean time between failures.

"We are not publishing anything new with these figures," acknowledges Van Geertruyen. "The consequences of poor lubrication have been known for years, and research into optimal lubrication-related maintenance has been carried out for almost as long. Unfortunately, it has changed very little in practice."

Excess friction still drives up energy use; components seize, bearings fail from insufficient lubrication, and operating temperatures climb, despite better lubricants, tools, and monitoring solutions being available. Lubrication remains largely reactive, experience-based, undocumented, and disconnected from the broader reliability strategy.

A targeted approach can change this. Applied correctly, lubrication shifts from a persistent burden to a valuable asset. A case for a holistic approach

"Several factors distinguish good lubrication management from poor practices such as: lubricant selection matched to components, contamination control and lubrication frequency."

"The greatest return lies in the total picture," Van Geertruyen argues. "Even the best lubricant cannot perform effectively if it is not applied and managed correctly." "A sound methodology aligns the approach with a company's current position on the P-F curve and its specific ambitions," Van Geertruyen concludes. Most companies do best to start with quick wins, critical equipment or known issues. Once initial results are demonstrated and internal support is established, expansion toward a fully integrated, holistic lubrication management programme follows as a logical progression, rather than a separate initiative.

Want to know how to optimise your lubrication maintenance programme, and what this could mean for your operations?

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INTERVIEW

FROM AGEING ASSETS TO ACTIONABLE PRIORITIES

— TOON VAN MELCKEBEKE

Global Operations Excellence at INEOS Styrolution and INEOS Aromatics

Across asset-intensive industries, technical leaders face an urgent question: how can ageing plants remain safe, reliable and competitive when budgets, engineering capacity and experienced technical resources are limited? Many production facilities in Europe and beyond have been operating for decades. Some installations date back to the 1960s and have since been expanded, modified, acquired, integrated and adapted. Their asset bases often reflect that history: different engineering standards, varying documentation quality, different maintenance strategies and uneven levels of digital maturity.

For Toon Van Melckebeke, Global Operations Excellence at INEOS Styrolution and INEOS Aromatics, the answer is not to replace everything that is old. Age is only one factor in asset management. A 50-year-old asset can still perform reliably, while a much younger asset may pose a greater operational or safety risk because of its condition, criticality, maintenance strategy or spare parts availability. The real challenge is to identify where action is truly needed, and which action will reduce risk most effectively.

At the Asset Performance Conference, Van Melckebeke will explain how INEOS Styrolution is addressing this challenge through a structured asset health assessment programme covering more than 100,000 equipment items and assets. The objective is pragmatic: to create a consistent, well-founded and actionable view of asset risk across a complex global industrial portfolio. The programme is not about building the most sophisticated model possible. It is about giving maintenance, reliability, operations and CAPEX decision-makers a common language for discussing condition, criticality and priority.

Van Melckebeke brings a broad operational perspective to the topic. A chemical engineer with a PhD, he began his career at BASF in production roles, including plant manager. In 2011, the BASF division in which he worked became part of a joint venture with INEOS under the name Styrolution. After INEOS acquired BASF's share in 2014, the company became INEOS Styrolution. From 2011 to 2021, he served as site manager and site director in Antwerp, the largest INEOS Styrolution site, with four world-scale production units. Since the end of 2021, he has headed the Operations Excellence Department.

Today, his team supports 15 INEOS Styrolution sites and 5 INEOS Aromatics sites across Europe, Asia and North America. Its scope includes maintenance excellence, asset management, project excellence, turnaround excellence, variable cost optimisation and OT cybersecurity. Behind the products made by these businesses lies a diverse industrial footprint with different histories, standards, asset structures and data maturity levels. That diversity makes a structured approach essential.

One Portfolio, Many Histories

Local teams have different backgrounds and ways of working, and sites have evolved through acquisitions, joint ventures and operational changes. Without a common methodology, it becomes difficult to compare risks, decide priorities and allocate resources across a global portfolio. A structured asset health assessment helps bridge those differences by creating a shared basis for discussion.

Risk, Not Age, Drives the Priority

The strategic relevance of ageing assets is increasing. Industrial companies must maintain availability, control costs, improve safety, reduce environmental impact and use capital more effectively. At the same time, maintenance and engineering teams are stretched across competing priorities. In that context, asset replacement decisions cannot rely only on intuition, age or isolated expert judgement.

OEM recommendations may suggest replacing equipment after a certain number of years, but Van Melckebeke stresses that equipment may still be in acceptable condition if it has been well maintained. Replacing it too early can waste scarce CAPEX and engineering capacity. Conversely, ignoring ageing-related risks can expose the business to failures, safety issues or production losses. The value of asset health scoring is that it combines condition-related information with asset criticality to create a risk ranking. This ranking helps teams determine which assets need attention first.

Importantly, the outcome is not simply a list of assets to replace. Replacement may be the right answer in some cases, especially where a highly critical asset is in poor condition and the risk cannot be mitigated otherwise. But action can also mean improving inspections, adding condition monitoring, adjusting preventive maintenance, improving documentation or strengthening spare parts availability. The programme supports better decisions about the most cost-effective risk-reduction measure.

A Pragmatic Model at Global Scale

The methodology began with site-level input into a simple tool. Each site was asked to provide equipment data and complete fields for each asset, including age, inspection or maintenance strategy, criticality and spare parts availability. Since all sites use a common ERP system, much of this data should in principle be available. In practice, the exercise also revealed differences in data quality, asset registration and documentation maturity. That is not a weakness of the programme, but one of its valuable outputs: it shows where the data foundation itself must be improved.

The data are processed in a tool that calculates a health score and risk ranking for each asset. Van Melckebeke emphasises that the tool was developed internally and is intentionally not overly complex. For a programme covering more than 100,000 assets, accessibility, consistency and usability are crucial. A sophisticated model that is difficult to maintain or explain would be less useful than a pragmatic, transparent method that can be applied across sites and reviewed by experts.

Expert judgement remains central. Once the tool calculates the scores, specialists in Van Melckebeke's team analyze and discuss the results with site experts. They review which assets require attention, where replacement or upgrading is justified, and where alternatives may be more appropriate. The scores structure the discussion; they do not replace engineering knowledge or operational context.

From Assessment to Action

The programme has now moved from assessment to action. When Van Melckebeke spoke at the previous edition of the conference, INEOS was still largely in the assessment phase. Since then, most sites have completed the assessment. The current phase focuses on defining concrete actions, starting with the highest-risk assets. Where

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> PREVENTING THE WRONG INVESTMENT CAN BE JUST AS VALUABLE AS APPROVING THE RIGHT ONE

replacement is justified, the output can feed directly into CAPEX planning. Where replacement is not the best option, the output can lead to maintenance strategy changes, inspection improvements, monitoring plans, spare parts actions or data quality improvements.

Avoiding unnecessary projects is a significant benefit. Every project consumes capital, engineering time, procurement effort, contractor management, maintenance planning and operational attention. If a health assessment prevents projects that do not create enough value, those resources can be redirected to higher-priority risks. In a constrained environment, preventing the wrong investment can be just as valuable as approving the right one.

Another benefit is cross-site learning. Because INEOS Styrolution operates similar equipment and processes across different regions, the programme makes it possible to compare how comparable assets are managed. One site may have a stronger inspection strategy, another may use better condition monitoring, and another may have experienced failure modes that others can learn from. The assessment becomes a platform for knowledge sharing, standardisation and stronger collaboration between operations, maintenance, engineering and asset management.

Digital Speed, Human Judgement

Digitalisation is also part of the story, but Van Melckebeke's message is clear: digital maturity starts with data quality. Modern tools can analyse large datasets, identify patterns and support prioritisation more quickly, but they cannot fully compensate for poor asset data. Some sites need to improve how assets are registered in ERP systems, strengthen functional structures or update documentation. Improving the asset information backbone can be both an enabler and an outcome of the health assessment.

INEOS Styrolution is also exploring generative AI in this context, using licensed tools in a confidential environment so company data remain protected. Van Melckebeke sees productivity potential in AI, especially for analysing, summarising and comparing large amounts of information. At the same time, he is cautious. AI outputs still require expert review, particularly in industrial asset management, where decisions can have safety, reliability and financial consequences. The value lies in combining digital speed with human engineering judgement.

The original ambition of the programme was to build a ten-year view: which assets may require replacement, where inspection strategies should be strengthened, which risks should be addressed first and how CAPEX plans should evolve. No assessment can predict the future perfectly, but a structured portfolio view gives the organisation a stronger starting point. It helps technical teams substantiate priorities and helps executives understand the logic behind investment requests.

For Asset Performance Conference participants, the INEOS story is valuable because it is practical rather than theoretical. It shows how a global industrial organisation can move from fragmented technical knowledge to structured, evidence-based prioritization. By combining ERP data, site input, health scoring, criticality and expert review, INEOS is turning ageing assets into actionable priorities.

The central message is straightforward: age alone is not enough, criticality alone is not enough and data alone is not enough. But when these elements are brought together in a consistent methodology, they can help organisations make better maintenance, reliability and CAPEX decisions. For anyone responsible for asset management, operations excellence, reliability, maintenance or industrial digitalisation, Van Melckebeke's session offers a concrete example of how ageing assets can be managed as a portfolio of risks to understand, prioritise and act upon.

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Translating Asset Health Assessments into Action at Ageing Chemical Production Sites

Thursday 19 Nov

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INTERVIEW

FROM KNOWLEDGE AT RISK TO AI AT WORK

How generative and agentic AI are entering the maintenance organisation.

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— LOUIS MORIAS

Winner of the European Master Thesis Award

When Louis Morias received the European Master Thesis Award, from the Salvetti Foundation and EFNMS, the recognition went beyond a milestone. Nominated by BEMAS, he became the European laureate with a thesis addressing an urgent maintenance question: how can industrial organisations use generative AI to secure and activate technical knowledge?

"I felt very honoured," Louis says. "But the award also showed that the topic of my thesis resonates in society. Generative AI is not a small or temporary subject. It is part of a broad evolution that we are all going through."

His research focused on generative AI in maintenance. The issue goes beyond ChatGPT: how can organisations preserve decades of experience, make it accessible to younger technicians and use AI without compromising safety or trust?

At the Asset Performance Conference, Louis will explain why the next wave of AI will retrieve information, analyse context and prepare actions. The focus is shifting from generative to agentic AI.

From Formula Student to maintenance

Louis studied business engineering and joined the UGent Racing Team, which builds a self-driving electric Formula Student car. As part of the management team, he worked on finance, partnerships, marketing and strategy. Although his role was mainly non-technical, the environment brought him closer to engineering and innovation.

That experience led him to the Master in Smart Operations and Maintenance in Industry, organised by KU Leuven and Ghent University, where he studied AI in maintenance.

"There was little clarity on how far companies really were," Louis says. "Often it was seen as a marketing tool. We wanted to know what was actually happening in production environments."

A natural fit for AI

Maintenance is knowledge-intensive and text-heavy. Work orders, inspection reports, manuals, procedures, shift handovers and troubleshooting notes contain valuable information, much of it scattered across documents and systems.

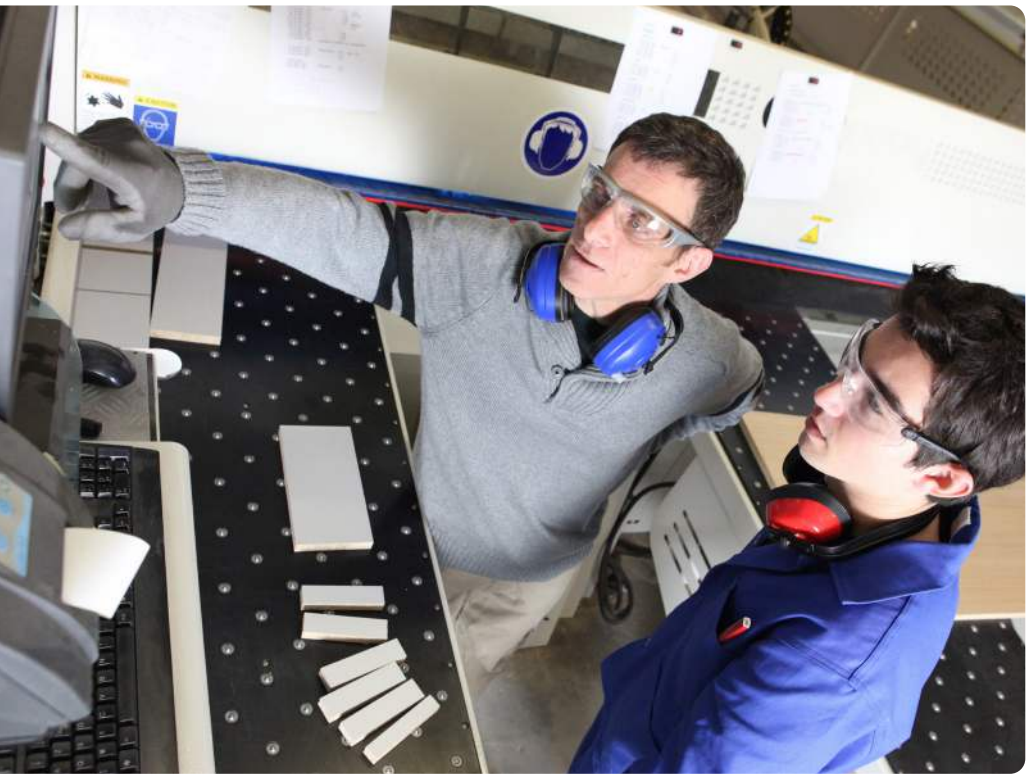
Organisations also depend on experienced people who know how the work is really done. Ageing workforces put that knowledge at risk, while new technicians need faster access to expertise that took colleagues decades to build.
"Knowledge retention is becoming more difficult," Louis says. "Generative AI can help capture that knowledge and make it accessible in another way to new people entering the workplace."

Faster access to the right information can shorten troubleshooting, improve first-time-right interventions and reduce dependence on a few experts—important amid technical labour shortages.

Adoption is growing, but still early

Louis' research, conducted in 2024 and 2025, showed that adoption in maintenance remained at an early stage. Many professionals had experimented with ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot, but daily operational use was far less common.

Service providers appeared more willing to explore AI to improve efficiency and customer value. Internal maintenance



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> IF YOU USE AI IN CRITICAL PROCESSES, YOU NEED CHECKS

teams were more cautious, focused on keeping assets running and solving breakdowns.

"The adoption was lower than you might expect," Louis says. "Many people had experimented with it, but when you asked whether they used generative AI every day in their work, the answer was almost always no."

The conclusion is that organisations need concrete use cases embedded in real maintenance workflows.

Making documentation usable again

One of the clearest applications is access to technical documentation. Industrial organisations have enormous amounts of information spread across systems, manuals, PDFs and historical reports. Finding the relevant answer can still take too long.

Louis points to Retrieval-Augmented Generation, or RAG. In a RAG setup, an AI model is connected to approved internal documentation. When a technician asks a question, the system first retrieves relevant information. Only then does the model formulate an answer.

A general AI model does not know the details of a specific machine or procedure. It may sound fluent, but fluency is not reliability.

"If you ask a question about machine X, the system should first search the documentation you have about that machine," Louis explains. "It retrieves the relevant information, formulates a clear answer and shows where it came from." In maintenance, trust depends on traceability. A technician must be able to verify the source, especially for safety or critical equipment.

Safe AI starts with governance

Generative AI raises difficult questions: where does company data go, which documents may be used and how can confidential information and reliability be protected?

Louis argues that AI needs appropriate guardrails. RAG can lower risk by grounding answers in internal sources, but human checks remain necessary. "An AI model remains probabilistic," he says. "If you use AI in critical processes, you need checks. For critical information there must always be verification." Companies may use a trusted vendor's secure ecosystem or prefer locally hosted systems for sensitive production data. For Louis, this is not a reason to avoid experimentation, but to experiment properly, with clear boundaries between AI support and human responsibility.

Start with the workflow, not the tool

If Louis managed maintenance on an industrial site today, he would start close to the shop floor, with documentation and existing work practices—not a large transformation programme.

"The first step is to digitalise your documentation," he says. "Then look at how much is already available digitally and how your technicians work today."

AI should not force technicians into a new process created around a tool. It should reinforce the workflow they already use.

"The goal is not to build a workflow around AI," Louis says. "The goal is to integrate AI into the existing workflow." Adoption should begin with real pain points: repetitive reporting, hard-to-find documents, language barriers, knowledge loss or time-consuming

preparation. Technology fails when it adds friction to field work.

From generative to agentic AI

Since Louis completed his thesis, attention has shifted towards agentic AI. Where generative AI mainly formulates answers, an AI agent can use tools and perform actions within predefined boundaries.

"The major difference is that an agent has tools to execute actions," Louis says. "But you have to define very carefully which permissions you give."

In maintenance, an agent could collect sensor data, review work orders and earlier interventions, and prepare a preliminary root cause analysis.

"When the technician arrives, he already has a first analysis," Louis says. "The agent has retrieved data, looked for connections and suggested what may be happening. I do not think this is science fiction anymore."

The point is not to replace the technician, but to make that person better prepared. Reducing time spent searching and reconstructing context can improve reliability and productivity.

The all-knowing operator

Almost every industrial site has an experienced operator who knows the installation's history, remembers earlier failures and often senses what is wrong before others find the data. Louis calls this person the "all-knowing operator". "Many companies recognise that one operator who has been there for thirty years," he says. "Someone who saw the installation being built and almost instinctively knows where the problem is." That knowledge is a strong but fragile asset. When experienced people retire, it often leaves with them. Manuals and work orders rarely capture the full reasoning behind decisions.

"You want to internalise that knowledge as a company," Louis says. "You do not want it all to disappear when someone retires."

AI cannot replace experience, but it can help capture fragments of knowledge, connect them to documentation and make them reusable.

Experiment, but keep people in control

Looking three to five years ahead, Louis expects wider adoption, but not uncontrolled automation. Wrong decisions can cause downtime, safety incidents or environmental impact.

"You do not want AI to autonomously make decisions that could stop a factory," he says. "I mainly see human-in-the-loop assistance: the technician remains responsible, but has a digital assistant that brings the right knowledge at the right time."
His advice is direct: start experimenting. Identify repetitive tasks, test tools, launch focused pilots and involve people who understand the work.

The discussion is moving beyond hype. The question is whether AI can improve maintenance safely and usefully.

At the Asset Performance Conference, Louis will show where the technology stands, which barriers remain and how organisations can take their first steps. His message is pragmatic: AI will change maintenance, but the strongest results will come from combining digital intelligence with human expertise.

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From Tool to Teammate: Exploring Agentic AI in Maintenance and Asset Management

Wednesday 18 Nov

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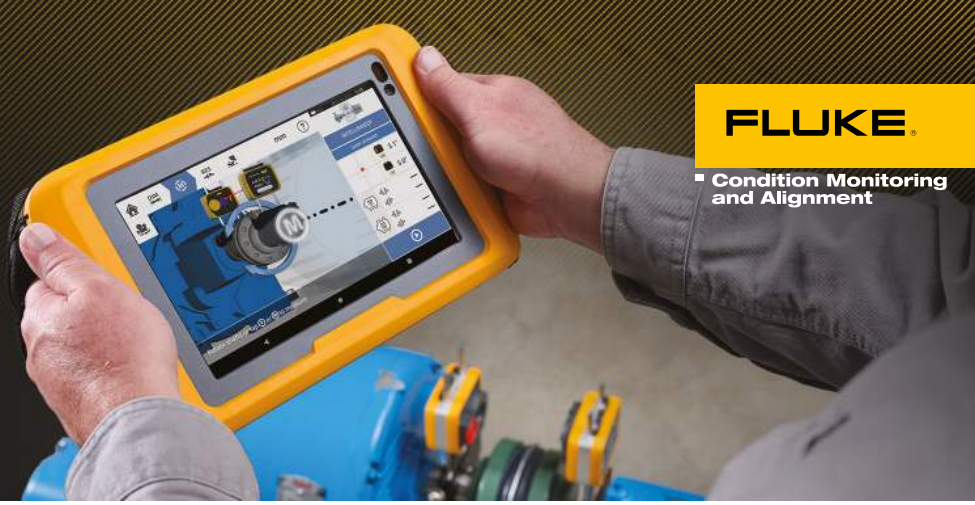

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FROM MAINTENANCE CHALLENGES TO MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF ASSET MANAGEMENT

Maintenance, reliability, and asset management leaders are under increasing pressure to do more with less. Aging assets, skills shortages, rising operational expectations, and the rapid development of artificial intelligence are transforming the way organisations must manage their equipment and workforce. At the same time, leaders need to make confident decisions based on the right performance indicators, not simply more data.

PwC helps organisations turn these challenges into opportunities. Combining deep experience in asset management and reliability with expertise in operational improvement, digital transformation and emerging technologies, PwC supports clients in improving both the effectiveness and efficiency of their maintenance operations. The goal is not technology for its own sake, but sustainable performance improvement that delivers measurable business value.

Navigating a more complex maintenance environment

One of the most pressing challenges is the continued use of aging assets. As equipment reaches the later stages of its lifecycle, the risk of failures, unplanned downtime and rising maintenance costs increases. Spare parts may become more difficult to source, technical documentation may be incomplete and experienced employees may hold critical knowledge that has not been formally captured. Organisations must therefore find ways to extend asset life while maintaining safety, reliability and production performance.

At the same time, maintenance strategies are becoming more complex. Organisations are moving beyond reactive maintenance, but many still struggle to establish the right balance between preventive, predictive and condition-based approaches. The challenge is not simply to collect more data from connected assets. It is to use that data effectively to identify risks, prioritise interventions and support better decisions.

The emergence of artificial intelligence is creating new possibilities in this area. AI can help analyse large volumes of operational information, identify patterns, support troubleshooting, and improve planning. More advanced capabilities, including Agentic AI, can assist maintenance professionals by taking a more active role in workflows. An AI agent may help retrieve relevant technical knowledge, analyse work orders, recommend next steps or support technicians as they diagnose an issue.

However, the introduction of AI also raises important questions. How should it be governed? Which data and systems are required? How can recommendations be trusted and validated? How should AI be integrated into existing processes and the daily work of maintenance teams? Successful adoption requires more than selecting a software solution. It requires a clear use case, reliable data foundations, appropriate IT architecture, defined responsibilities and effective change management.

Workforce effectiveness is another critical consideration. Maintenance professionals are expected to manage increasingly sophisticated equipment while responding to higher demands for safety, quality and productivity. In many organisations, this pressure is intensified by skills shortages and the retirement or movement of experienced employees. Ensuring that technicians have the right skills, tools, information and decision support is essential.

This is where the distinction between effectiveness and efficiency becomes particularly important. Effectiveness is about doing the right work: preventing the failures that matter most, focusing on critical assets and aligning maintenance activity with operational and business priorities. Efficiency is about doing that work in the best possible way: reducing wasted effort, improving planning, optimising resources and completing tasks safely and reliably.

An organisation can be efficient at performing the wrong maintenance activities, just as it can have an effective maintenance strategy that is too costly or difficult to execute. Sustainable performance requires both.

Combining industry experience with practical transformation

PwC supports clients across the full spectrum of maintenance, reliability and asset management challenges. This may involve improving the effectiveness of an existing maintenance strategy, increasing the efficiency of planning and execution, strengthening reliability practices or preparing the organisation for new digital and AI-enabled ways of working. Our approach begins with an understanding of the organisation's specific assets, operating model, risks and objectives. Together with the client, we identify the most important performance gaps and prioritise initiatives that can deliver tangible value.

PwC also helps organisations assess where digital applications, automation and AI can provide practical benefits. The focus is on identifying high-value opportunities and ensuring that solutions are implemented in a way that is secure, scalable and usable. This includes consideration of data quality, systems integration, IT architecture, governance and user adoption. Whether the objective is to improve decision-making, support technicians in the field or automate repetitive activities, the technology must be embedded into the operating model to create lasting impact.

PwC draws on experience across a variety of industries such as aerospace and defence, industrial manufacturing and chemicals. Our multidisciplinary team combines expertise in asset management, reliability engineering, operations, technology and organisational change, supported by recognised qualifications including Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) and Lean Six Sigma Black Belt. This enables us to help clients enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their maintenance, reliability, and asset management functions and achieve sustainable performance.

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A.I. and Digitalising from buzzword to value generator: Avoiding Pitfalls and Implementing AI Successfully

Wednesday 18 Nov

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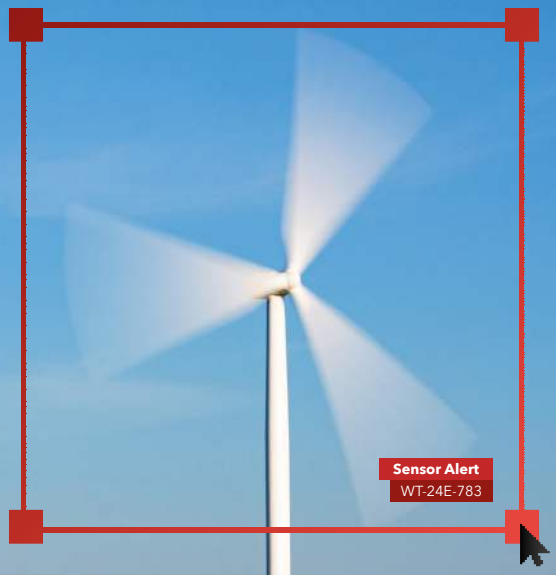

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INTERVIEW

RELIABILITY IS NOT A MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

— TAMÁS BALLA
Senior Advisor for Reliability OQ RPI

— ATTILA KISS
Asset Performance Principal at OQ RPI

How OQ is turning reliability into a leadership and business question

Reliability programmes often begin with operational pain. A difficult turnaround, unstable production or repeated failures expose weaknesses in the way work is planned and executed. The first response is usually familiar: review the maintenance strategy, add indicators or launch another improvement project. But what if the real issue is larger than maintenance?

At OQ Refineries and Petrochemical Industries, or OQ RPI, reliability is being developed as a company-wide business capability. The organisation is examining not only how assets are maintained, but also how leaders make decisions, how departments cooperate and how technical performance is translated into value that executives and shareholders understand.

The journey involves OQ RPI's leadership team, asset owners and technical functions, including Tamás Balla, Senior Advisor for Reliability, and Attila Kiss, Asset Management Principal. At the Asset Performance Conference in Antwerp, they will share how OQ is moving from separate initiatives towards a more integrated and sustainable approach.

A reliability role outside the technical department

OQ is the national integrated energy investment group of the Sultanate of Oman. Within the group, OQ RPI operates a complex refining and petrochemical environment containing both older and recently constructed assets.

Tamás's position reflects a deliberate view of reliability. Although his work is highly technical, he reports directly to the CEO rather than sitting inside a conventional maintenance department. "Reliability is influenced by culture, human competence, operational practices, maintenance, learning from failures, engineering and many other organisational processes," he explains.

His role is to act as a catalyst and independent challenger while operational responsibility remains with the businesses. Attila works at the other side of the same bridge: connecting asset management with long-term strategy and shareholder expectations. "That involves linking asset management objectives to business targets and translating technical improvements into financial value, risk reduction and more predictable performance."

The question that changed the conversation

Following a difficult turnaround in 2023, Tamás was asked to lead a structured learning-from-failure review. In his first discussion with the CEO, he expected questions about technical causes or departmental performance. Instead, the CEO asked: "Tamás, what mistakes did I make?"

For Tamás, the question revealed an essential condition for sustainable improvement: leadership itself must be part of the system under review. Reliability cannot simply be delegated to maintenance. If it truly belongs to the whole organisation, procurement decisions, operating practices, engineering choices, competence development and management behaviour must all become part of the conversation.

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From separate initiatives to a reliability journey

Before Tamás joined OQ RPI, important steps had already been taken. Dedicated reliability responsibilities existed, and work had begun on equipment strategies and learning from failures. The challenge was not a lack of activity, but the risk that worthwhile initiatives would continue beside one another without becoming a coherent management system.

Tamás therefore assessed the wider processes that influence reliability, extending beyond maintenance planning to leadership, operations, engineering, culture, competence, work execution and performance management. The organisation then had to decide which weaknesses required immediate attention, which changes would take several years and where stronger coordination was needed.

OQ deliberately calls the result a reliability journey rather than a project. A project suggests a finish line; a journey recognises that assets, risks, people and priorities continue to evolve. "The organisation still has challenges," Tamás says. "Progress inevitably includes both improvements and setbacks."

Reliability in the language of business

Long-term sponsorship requires more than evidence that technical performance is improving. Reliability must also be connected to the measures that shape strategic decisions. "When we reviewed the company's long-term strategy, we concluded that reliability was one of the main factors determining the long-term value of the business," Attila explains. "It was not simply a maintenance subject. It was something on which the entire business depended."

At OQ, the conversation therefore moved beyond maintenance cost to availability, business risk and the ability to generate stable results. "Improved reliability reduces performance volatility," Attila says. "It makes operational and financial results more consistent and predictable. The difficult part is creating a credible line of sight between plant-level activities and enterprise value. That requires more than attaching a financial estimate to every initiative. It requires clarity about how technical decisions, operational risks and business outcomes are connected. The approach OQ uses to make that connection will be one of the central themes of the conference session.

Proving that the programme changes daily operations

Employees who have experienced several improvement programmes are understandably sceptical. New terminology and dashboards can create momentum, only for performance to return to its previous level once attention moves elsewhere. OQ therefore needed visible proof that its approach could influence daily operations and that the gains could be sustained.

Maintenance execution became one of the first areas in which the difference could be demonstrated. The organisation focused on whether planned work was completed when required, how often schedules were disrupted and whether the work-management system was producing the intended operational effect. The improvement became visible beyond maintenance. "These were not merely results presented in

> "IMPROVED RELIABILITY REDUCES PERFORMANCE VOLATILITY... IT MAKES OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL RESULTS MORE CONSISTENT AND PREDICTABLE

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reports," Tamás says. "They became visible in the actual performance of the business."

For Attila, a key enabler has been the alignment between leadership, asset management and operational teams. The central programme provides challenge and assurance, while the businesses remain responsible for implementation. That balance is intended to prevent reliability from becoming another temporary campaign.

Who really owns the asset?

One of the most consequential questions in the OQ journey concerns accountability. In a traditional functional organisation, operations operates, maintenance maintains and engineering provides support. Each department may perform well while no single leader feels accountable for the complete performance of the asset.

OQ is challenging that division through an asset-owner concept, reflected in the use of the title Asset Vice President rather than Operations Vice President. The shift asks operational leaders to consider technical integrity, maintenance performance, risk and long-term asset health as part of their own accountability, while maintenance and engineering retain responsibility for their specialist work.

"The asset owner remains accountable for the overall performance of the assets," Tamás says. Instead of debating whether a result belongs to operations or maintenance, the organisation can ask what the asset requires and who must act. The model also puts a familiar tension on the table: how to balance immediate production demand with long-term asset health.

The part no dashboard can solve

The OQ programme includes technical strategies, performance indicators and work-management improvements, but Tamás believes that at least half of the challenge lies elsewhere: "The human component represents at least 50 per cent of the challenge."

Failure analysis showed that behaviour and compliance with standard operating procedures contributed to unreliability. The answer could not simply be another procedure or a demand for more discipline. OQ also had to examine how leaders communicate, whether employees understand the purpose behind standards and why people deviate under pressure.

Reliability culture therefore began to include leadership behaviour, psychology and the ability to create commitment rather than temporary compliance. OQ has also worked to establish a shared reliability language across functions and management levels, so that procurement, operations, commercial teams, engineering and maintenance understand how their decisions influence the same system.

The architecture behind the results

OQ RPI has already seen meaningful operational progress, but Tamás and Attila do not present the journey as complete. The value of the case lies not in one KPI or organisational change, but in the architecture connecting leadership, business strategy, asset ownership, maintenance execution, data and culture.

At the Asset Performance Conference, Tamás Balla, Attila Kiss, the Asset Management Vice President and their OQ colleagues will take participants behind those decisions: how OQ decided where to begin, how reliability was translated into language that can influence senior leaders and shareholders, and how technical improvement is being embedded across the organisation.

The achievements described are ultimately the result of a collective effort, from senior leadership to front-line teams. Because the most difficult reliability failures do not always begin in the equipment. Sometimes they begin in the space between departments, priorities and decisions.

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Turning reliability into a measurable EBITDA driver: A structured asset management transformation at OQ RPI

Thursday 19 Nov

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SAPA

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BEYOND PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE: HOW MULTI-TECHNOLOGY CONDITION MONITORING IS REDEFINING ASSET PERFORMANCE

For decades, predictive maintenance has been recognised as one of the most effective strategies for preventing unexpected equipment failures and improving industrial reliability. However, despite significant investments in sensors, monitoring platforms and digitalisation, many organisations continue to experience unplanned downtime.

The issue is no longer the availability of data, but the ability to transform large volumes of information into meaningful engineering decisions.

Modern industrial assets continuously generate electrical, mechanical, thermal and operational data. Individually, these data sources provide valuable insights into equipment condition. Combined, they create a far more complete understanding of asset health. As industrial operations become increasingly electrified, automated and interconnected, organisations must move beyond isolated monitoring techniques and adopt integrated Asset Performance Management strategies that combine complementary technologies and engineering expertise.

The Limitations of Single-Technology Monitoring

Every condition monitoring technology has strengths, but none can identify every failure mode.

Vibration analysis is highly effective for detecting mechanical defects such as imbalance, misalignment, looseness and bearing degradation. Infrared thermography identifies abnormal heating, overloaded components and poor electrical connections. Oil analysis provides information about lubricant degradation, contamination and internal wear, while ultrasound helps detect compressed-air leaks, electrical discharge and early-stage bearing defects.

Although each technique delivers valuable information, they observe equipment from different perspectives. This becomes particularly important in electrical assets, where many failures originate inside windings, insulation systems, magnetic circuits or power-electronic components. These problems often develop long before they generate measurable vibration or temperature changes, meaning that traditional monitoring techniques may only detect them once degradation is already advanced.

Many maintenance teams therefore rely on several disconnected monitoring systems, each producing independent alarms, reports and trends. Engineers are forced to manually correlate information from different platforms, increasing diagnostic complexity and the risk of false positives.

The future of condition monitoring does not lie in selecting one technology over another. Instead, it depends on integrating complementary techniques into a unified diagnostic strategy capable of providing greater confidence and earlier fault detection.

Electrical Intelligence: A Critical Layer of Asset Monitoring

Electrical Signature Analysis (ESA) has become an increasingly valuable technology for monitoring electrical and electromechanical assets.

Unlike traditional techniques that require sensors mounted directly on equipment, ESA analyses current and voltage signals to assess the behaviour of the electrical supply, the machine itself, its mechanical load and, in many cases, the industrial process being driven. This enables early identification of rotor defects, stator winding degradation, electrical asymmetries, air-gap eccentricity, power-quality disturbances and mechanical transmission problems.

The same diagnostic principles can be applied across multiple asset types, including electric motors, generators, transformers and power-electronic systems. Because measurements are typically acquired from existing electrical panels, ESA is non-invasive and can monitor equipment located in inaccessible, hazardous or remote environments without additional mechanical instrumentation.

However, ESA should not be viewed as a replacement for vibration analysis, thermography or lubricant monitoring. Its greatest value comes from complementing these technologies, adding a critical electrical dimension to the overall assessment of asset condition.

From Isolated Alarms to Integrated Diagnostics

The integration of multiple monitoring technologies provides a much more accurate representation of equipment health than any individual method.

Consider a critical electric motor. A change in its electrical signature may indicate rotor degradation or

abnormal loading. Vibration analysis may confirm associated mechanical behaviour, thermography may reveal localised overheating, and lubricant analysis may detect contamination or wear. Viewed independently, each indication may appear inconclusive. Evaluated together, they reveal the underlying degradation mechanism with far greater certainty.

This transition from isolated alarms to correlated diagnostics fundamentally changes maintenance decision-making. Rather than simply identifying abnormal behaviour, maintenance teams can determine probable failure mechanisms, evaluate operational risk, estimate degradation rates and schedule interventions based on actual equipment condition.

Improved diagnostic confidence reduces unnecessary inspections, prevents premature component replacement and enables better coordination between maintenance, operations and management.

Artificial Intelligence as an Engineering Multiplier

Artificial Intelligence is becoming an increasingly important component of modern condition monitoring, but its role extends beyond generating alarms. Industrial assets rarely operate under constant conditions. Load, speed, production demand and environmental factors continuously influence equipment behaviour. AI helps distinguish normal operational variability from genuine signs of degradation by identifying patterns, establishing dynamic baselines, correlating multiple measurements and prioritising the most critical events.

These capabilities significantly reduce false positives and enable reliability teams to focus their attention on the assets presenting the highest technical or operational risk.

Nevertheless, AI alone is insufficient. Effective diagnostics require engineering expertise capable of understanding equipment design, operating conditions and failure mechanisms. The most successful approach combines automated analytics with experienced engineers who validate findings, determine root causes and translate insights into practical maintenance recommendations.

Scaling Condition Monitoring

One of the greatest challenges facing industrial organisations is scaling condition monitoring programmes across large asset populations.

Monitoring a small number of critical machines is relatively straightforward. Extending the same level of visibility to hundreds or thousands of assets requires a structured strategy based on asset criticality, operational impact, redundancy and economic value.

Not every machine requires continuous multi-technology monitoring. Highly critical assets justify permanent monitoring and detailed diagnostics, while lower-criticality equipment may be managed through periodic inspections or automated screening.

Equally important is the integration of condition data into centralised platforms. When electrical monitoring, vibration analysis, thermography and lubrication programmes operate independently, organisations lose visibility and diagnostic efficiency.

Consolidating information into a unified asset environment improves historical analysis, facilitates collaboration and supports more consistent maintenance decisions across plants and operational teams.

From Reliability to Business Performance

The benefits of integrated condition monitoring extend far beyond maintenance departments.

Earlier fault detection reduces unplanned downtime, prevents secondary damage and increases equipment availability. More accurate diagnostics optimise labour allocation, spare-parts management and shutdown planning while reducing unnecessary preventive maintenance activities.

There is also a strong relationship between equipment condition and energy performance. Electrical imbalance, lubrication degradation, poor power quality and mechanical defects frequently increase energy consumption long before functional failure occurs. Detecting and correcting these conditions simultaneously improves reliability, operational efficiency and sustainability.

Extending equipment life further reduces the environmental impact associated with premature replacement, emergency logistics and inefficient operation, making Asset Performance Management an important contributor to both business resilience and sustainability objectives.

A Combined Vision Within the Dynamox Group

Within the Dynamox Group, ENGING contributes specialised expertise in Electrical Signature Analysis and advanced diagnostics for motors, generators, transformers and power-electronic assets.

This expertise complements Dynamox's broader condition monitoring ecosystem, which includes vibration analysis, temperature monitoring, thermography, lubricant analysis, inspection management and AI-supported analytics.

Together, these technologies create a multi-technology framework that combines electrical, mechanical, thermal and lubrication intelligence into a unified understanding of asset condition. Rather than simply collecting more operational data, this integrated approach transforms condition information into prioritised engineering insights that support faster, more accurate and more confident maintenance decisions.

Looking Ahead

Industrial maintenance is entering a new phase. The discussion is no longer about choosing between vibration analysis, thermography, oil analysis or Electrical Signature Analysis. Each technology contributes unique information, but the strongest diagnostic results emerge when they work together.

The future belongs to organisations capable of integrating complementary monitoring technologies with intelligent analytics and engineering expertise. Predictive maintenance will remain a fundamental element of industrial reliability, but its purpose is evolving. The objective is no longer simply to predict failures—it is to optimise asset performance, manage operational risk, improve efficiency and extend equipment life.

By combining electrical intelligence with mechanical, thermal and lubrication diagnostics, ENGING and the Dynamox Group are helping industrial organisations move beyond isolated monitoring towards true Asset Performance Management, transforming operational data into better decisions, more reliable assets and more resilient industrial operations

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An AI-Based Platform for Automated Fault Diagnosis in Electric Motors

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Future of Asset Performance Management: From Predictive Maintenance to Autonomous Operations

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EMPOWERING TRANSITIONS

FROM INSPECTION DATA TO ASSET INTELLIGENCE: IMPROVING RELIABILITY WITH FLIR ASSETLINK

Asset intensive industries have never had more data available to support maintenance and reliability decisions. The challenge is turning that data into meaningful action.

As networks expand, infrastructure ages, and resources remain constrained, utility organizations are looking for practical ways to improve asset performance, reduce unplanned outages, and make maintenance decisions with greater confidence. While thermal inspections remain an essential part of condition monitoring, many organizations still struggle with disconnected workflows, manual reporting, and fragmented asset information. Flir Assetlink was developed to address exactly this challenge.

Connecting Condition Monitoring to Asset Performance

Flir Assetlink is a browser-based condition monitoring platform that organizes inspection data around assets rather than individual images or reports. Thermal images and inspection results are automatically linked to a structured asset hierarchy, creating a centralized source of asset condition information that can be accessed, reviewed, and analyzed over time.

For utility teams responsible for substations, transformers, switchgear, distribution equipment, and other critical infrastructure, this asset-centric approach provides a more effective way to manage growing volumes of inspection data. Instead of searching through folders and manually compiling reports, inspectors and reliability teams can view asset history, monitor trends, and identify developing issues before they impact operations.

Assetlink also supports route-based inspections, helping organizations standardize data collection and ensure critical assets are inspected consistently. Dashboards, trending tools, and reporting capabilities make it easier to communicate findings and prioritize maintenance activities based on asset condition rather than assumptions.

Better Decisions Start with Better Data

Asset performance depends on reliable field data. Flir's professional handheld thermal imaging cameras, including the Exx-Series, T5xx, T8xx, and iXX-Series, enable utility inspectors to identify overheating connections, load imbalances, deteriorating components, and other early indicators of failure while assets remain in service.

When integrated with Assetlink, these inspections become part of a structured, long-term asset performance strategy. Inspection data is captured in the field, linked directly to the asset, and made immediately available for review and analysis. Trending capabilities help reliability teams understand how asset condition changes over time, supporting more informed maintenance planning and helping shift organizations from reactive maintenance toward a more predictive approach.

The result is a streamlined workflow that reduces time spent on administration and reporting while providing greater visibility into asset health. By connecting inspection activities with asset performance objectives, companies can make better use of maintenance resources, improve reliability, and strengthen operational resilience.

Learn More

Discover how Flir Assetlink and Flir handheld thermal imaging solutions can help transform inspection data into actionable asset intelligence: www.flir.com/assetlink

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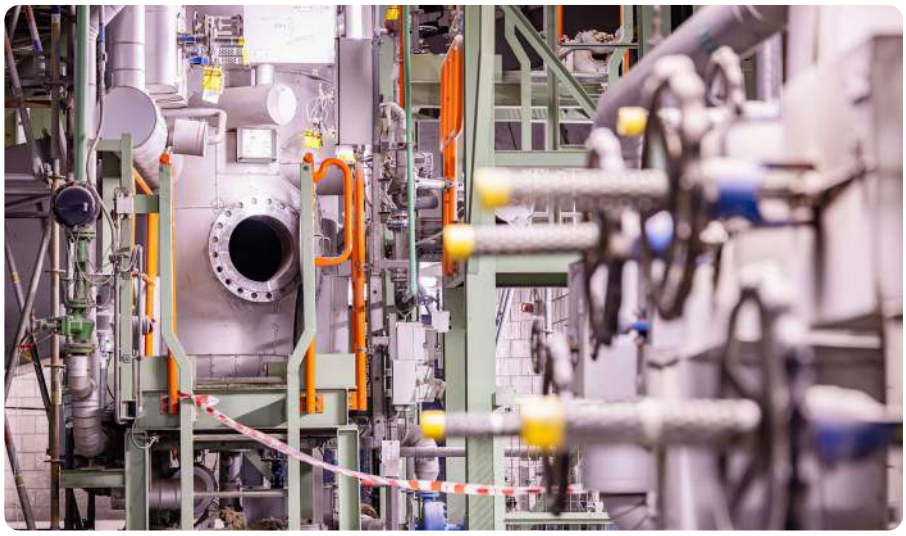
ideo

TWENCE BUILDS FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT WITH SAP APM



From isolated data points to insights we can build on

Every day Twence is committed to creating a more sustainable and circular society by converting waste streams into energy and reusable raw materials. Behind this social mission lies a complex network of facilities, including waste treatment plants, composting facilities, manure processing plants, and solar farms.

The continuity of assets is essential for efficiently processing waste and producing sustainable energy and raw materials. To further professionalize asset management and establish a foundation for data-driven decision-making, Twence implemented SAP Asset Performance Management (SAP APM).

A circular mission requires reliable assets

Twence's operations never stop. Every day, hundreds of trucks carrying waste drive onto the site and are directed to different facilities depending on the composition of their loads. The facility portfolio is constantly growing and evolving, in part due to investments in waste processing, post-separation, CO_2 recovery, and other sustainable processing technologies.

Innovation is therefore not a one-off project, but an ongoing process. New facilities, changing laws and regulations, and new sustainability goals require an organization that is constantly looking ahead. This also applies to asset management. The availability and reliability of the facilities have a direct impact on operational performance and on Twence's contribution to the circular economy. Proper maintenance is therefore a strategic pillar within the organization.

Better insights start with better data

At Twence, data is playing an increasingly important role in maintenance and asset management. Sensors and IoT solutions continuously provide information about the performance of systems. This data is consolidated into dashboards, which provide insight into maintenance costs, disruptions, and asset performance, among other things.

To determine the right maintenance strategy, Twence conducts FMECA analyses. For a long time, these analyses were largely recorded in Excel. Peter Bekker, Maintenance Engineer at Twence, explains: "With Excel, everyone could develop their own way of working. That provided a lot of freedom, but it also led to varying results. One person would enter data one way, while another would do it their own way. That makes it difficult to compare data accurately."

> *"One person would enter data one way, while another would do it their own way. That makes it difficult to compare data accurately."*
>
> ***Peter Bekker, Maintenance Engineer***

Standardizing maintenance data actually creates a consistent dataset on which reliable analyses and reports can be based. This not only forms the foundation for better insights into maintenance and

risks, but also for future optimizations of the installed base.

Migration from SAP ASPM to SAP APM

The switch to SAP APM was prompted by the phase-out of SAP ASPM, but at the same time it provided an opportunity to further professionalize asset management. Stef Haverkate, Senior Business Analyst at Twence, explains:

Whereas Excel left a lot of room for individual interpretation, SAP APM helps to record maintenance information in a standardized way. In addition, SAP APM supports risk-based maintenance. By assigning risk profiles to assets and centrally recording FMECA analyses, Twence can make increasingly effective use of the available data and better substantiate its maintenance strategies.

Working together to build a future-proof solution

For the implementation of SAP APM, Ideo's team worked closely with the Twence team. Peter: "We've known each other for years. That means we don't have to keep explaining how our organization works. Communication channels are short, and if something comes up, we can respond quickly." The implementation was carried out in stages. Through short sprints, we worked toward a solution that aligns with the day-to-day operations of Twence's maintenance team.

The biggest change following the implementation of SAP APM may not be technical, but organizational. Peter: "At first, it feels like you're losing freedom. But precisely because everyone makes the same choices and records the same data, you end up with data you can actually use." According to Stef, that's exactly where the benefit lies: "Standardization can sometimes feel restrictive, but ultimately it leads to better insights. You're laying a foundation that allows you to analyze data more intelligently and make better decisions."

> *"Standardization can sometimes feel restrictive, but ultimately it leads to better insights"*
>
> ***Stef Haverkate, Sr. Business Analyst***

SAP APM as a solid foundation

For Twence, the implementation of SAP APM is not an end in itself, but rather the beginning of the next phase in the digitization of asset management. The organization is continuing to work on standardizing maintenance processes, using tools such as SAP Fiori and the 9-phase model. At the same time, it is exploring the next steps on the roadmap, such as further integration of SAP solutions and new functionalities that further support asset management.

By continuing to develop step by step, Twence is building a maintenance organization that operates in an increasingly data-driven manner.

Control your data, control your future

With SAP APM, Twence is building a solid foundation for strategic asset management. Not by focusing directly on short-term results, but by standardizing processes, recording data in a uniform manner, and continuously improving the basis for decision-making.

FACTS

Implementation Partner: Ideo
Customer: Twence
Branche: Utilities
Service: SAP Consultancy

PRODUCTS

SAP Fiori
SAP Asset Performance Management (SAP APM)

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EVENING KEYNOTE

SENDING SPARE PARTS TO MARS IS A BAD BUSINESS CASE

— STEFAAN DE MEY

Head of the Strategy Team for Human and Robotic Exploration, ESA

What space exploration can teach industry about reliability, autonomy and long-term asset performance

When downtime is more than a cost issue

In most industries, downtime is expensive. In space exploration, downtime can be existential.

That difference changes everything. When a critical component fails on Earth, we can often send a technician, ship a spare part, revise the maintenance plan or redesign the system for the next production cycle. But when the asset is orbiting Earth, operating on the Moon, or travelling towards Mars, maintenance becomes a radically different challenge.

Distance, time, harsh environments and limited resupply opportunities turn reliability from an operational objective into a survival requirement.

This is the central idea behind Stefaan De Mey's keynote at the Asset Performance Conference 2026: "Sending Spare Parts to Mars Is a Bad Business Case."

Europe's ambition in space exploration

As Head of the Strategy Team for Human and Robotic Exploration at the European Space Agency, Stefaan De Mey takes the audience beyond the boundaries of conventional industry and into the strategic reality of European space exploration.

His keynote introduces Terrae Novae, ESA's European exploration programme spanning low Earth orbit, the Moon and Mars. The programme reflects Europe's ambition to extend human presence steadily farther into the solar system, while developing the systems, technologies and partnerships needed to make that ambition sustainable.

This is not only a story about rockets, astronauts and distant planets. It is also a story about engineering discipline, long-term thinking and the ability to design systems that continue to perform when easy intervention is no longer possible.

Reliability at extreme distance

Space exploration confronts many of the same questions that asset-intensive industries face today, but under far more extreme conditions.

How do we design systems that continue to perform when maintenance is difficult, expensive or impossible? How do we combine human expertise with robotics and autonomy? How can simulation, digital engineering and digital twins reduce uncertainty before assets are deployed? How do we manage lifecycle performance when assets must operate for years in unpredictable environments?

In space, these questions are not theoretical. When the next resupply window is measured in years, or planets, every design decision matters.

The Moon and Mars are therefore more than destinations. They are test environments for a new way of thinking about assets, missions and long-term performance.

Robots, astronauts and autonomous systems

The keynote will explore the strategic challenge of exploration at distance: sending robots, humans, or both together into extreme environments where reliability, longevity and sustainability are essential.

Robotic systems can go where humans cannot yet safely operate. Astronauts bring judgement, adaptability and experience. The future of exploration will increasingly depend on how these capabilities are combined.

For industry, this raises highly relevant questions. What tasks should be automated? Where is human intervention still essential? How can autonomous systems support safer, smarter and more resilient operations? And how can organisations build trust in technologies that must perform reliably under complex conditions?

These are questions that resonate far beyond space exploration.

A renewed race to the Moon and Mars Stefaan also places Europe's ambitions within a rapidly evolving global context. A renewed international race to the Moon and Mars is reshaping priorities worldwide. Space agencies, governments and private companies are investing in new capabilities, new partnerships and new technologies. The objective is no longer only to visit space, but to operate there sustainably.

For Europe, this creates both opportunities and strategic responsibilities. Autonomy, resilience, sustainability and international collaboration are becoming decisive factors in the next phase of exploration.

This broader perspective gives the keynote a strong strategic dimension. It connects engineering challenges with geopolitical realities, long-term capability building and Europe's role in an increasingly competitive global landscape

What industry can learn from space

For the Asset Performance Conference audience, the value of this keynote lies in the bridge between space and Earth. Technologies developed for space often begin as solutions to extreme constraints: limited mass, limited energy, long distances, harsh operating conditions and almost no margin for unscheduled maintenance. Yet the thinking behind them is increasingly relevant to sectors such as energy, chemicals, food production, infrastructure, transport and heavy industry.

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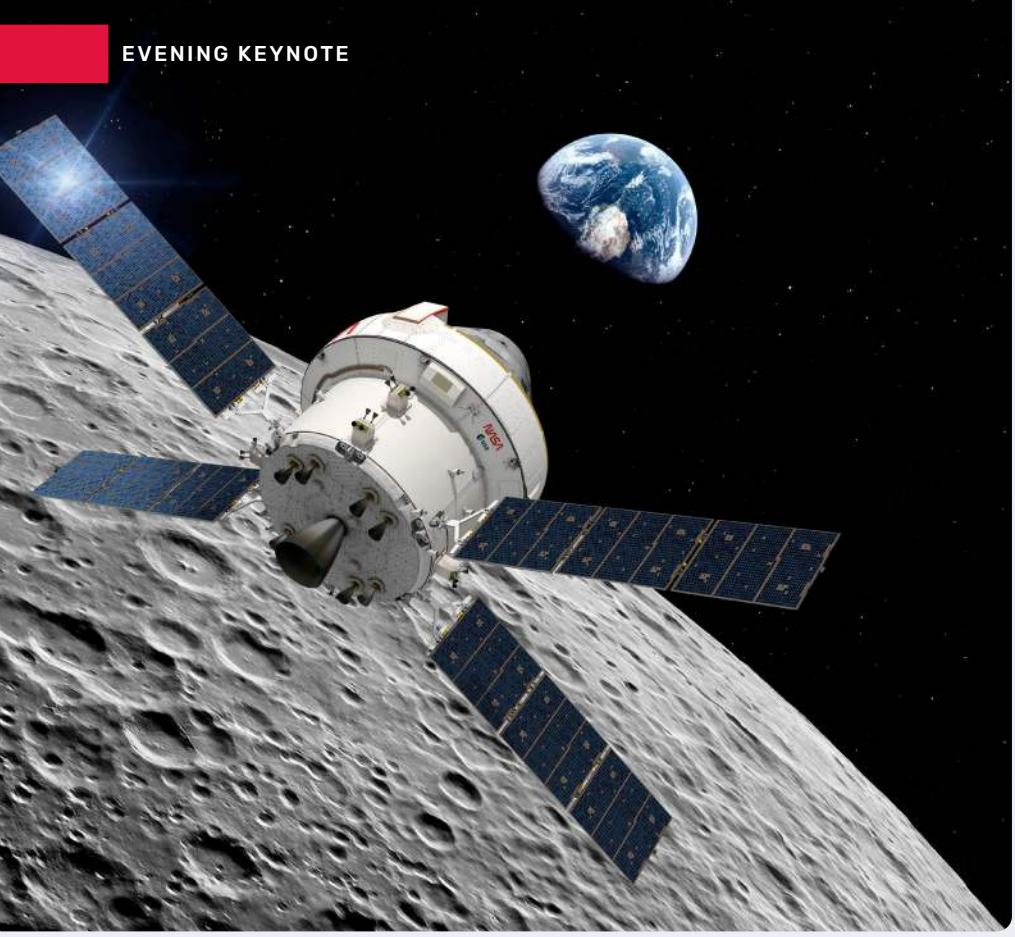
These industries also depend on complex assets operating safely, efficiently and reliably over long periods of time. They too are looking for smarter ways to predict degradation, optimise maintenance, extend asset life, reduce risk and make better decisions under uncertainty. Space exploration forces engineers and strategists to think differently. A spare part is not simply a logistics item. A maintenance concept is not merely an operational procedure. A design decision is not just a technical preference. Every choice has consequences across the entire lifecycle of the mission.

From replacement thinking to lifecycle thinking

That is why the keynote title resonates so strongly: sending a replacement to Mars is a bad business case.

It is also a powerful reminder for industry. The further away an asset is from easy intervention, the more valuable it becomes to design for reliability, autonomy and lifecycle performance from the start. For maintenance and reliability leaders,



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this keynote offers inspiration on how to move from reactive intervention to built-in resilience. For asset managers, it highlights the importance of lifecycle thinking when assets must perform over long time horizons. For digital transformation leaders, it connects space exploration with simulation, autonomy, digital engineering and data-driven decision-making. For executives, it frames reliability and sustainability as strategic capabilities, not just technical concerns.

From Antwerp to Mars, a keynote designed to inspire

This evening keynote offers a high-level, narrative-driven perspective, with examples from ESA's human and robotic exploration activities, and reflections on astronaut training, space stations, lunar missions and Mars ambitions.

The session will not be a technical deep dive into one specific technology. Instead, it will invite participants to step back and look at asset performance through a different lens.

What can industrial organisations learn from mission planning in space? How can extreme environments sharpen our thinking about reliability? What role will robotics and human-machine collaboration play in the future of maintenance? And how can long-term sustainability become a design principle rather than an afterthought?

Ultimately, this keynote is about more than space. It is about the future of performance in any environment where assets matter, intervention is costly and failure has consequences.

On Wednesday evening, 18 November 2026, Stefaan De Mey brings the audience from Antwerp to low Earth orbit, the Moon and Mars — and back again to the industrial challenges we face here on Earth.

Because whether you are managing a production line, an offshore installation, a transport network or a mission beyond our planet, one principle remains the same:

The best replacement strategy is designing systems that do not need one.

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Sending Spare Parts to Mars is a Bad Business Case

Wednesday 18 Nov

18.50

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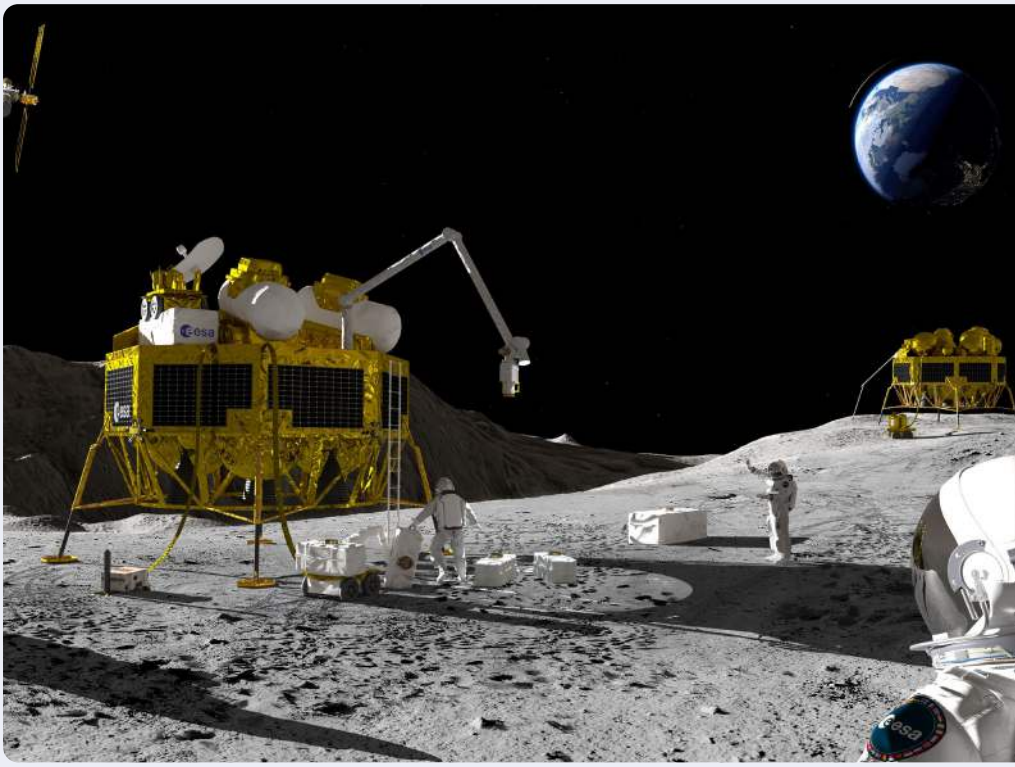

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WE MAINTAIN THE FUTURE. TOGETHER.

Keeping industrial plants safe, reliable and competitive requires more than maintenance alone. It requires a deep understanding of assets, operations and engineering – combined with the ability to turn expertise into effective execution.

Across the process industry, companies are facing increasingly complex challenges. Ageing assets, changing market demands, a shortage of skilled technical professionals and growing requirements for safety, efficiency and sustainability are putting pressure on industrial operations. At the same time, production facilities must continue to perform – safely, reliably and cost-effectively.

The **Ebert HERA Group** supports industrial companies in meeting these challenges throughout the entire lifecycle of their production assets.

As a family-owned group specialising in industrial services, with a strong focus on the process industry, Ebert HERA combines comprehensive plant and operational understanding with engineering expertise, integrated management and powerful operational execution.

One partner across the asset lifecycle

Our services range from **Engineering and Asset Lifecycle Services to Maintenance, Turnaround Management and Turnaround Execution, Modification Projects and Safety Services.**

Depending on the challenge, Ebert HERA can provide individual specialist services or bring together multiple disciplines into one integrated solution. This allows us to look beyond individual projects or maintenance activities and focus on what ultimately matters to our customers: the overall performance of their industrial assets.

By combining expertise across disciplines and managing interfaces effectively, we create clear responsibilities, safe processes and efficient collaboration – from engineering and preparation through execution and long-term maintenance.

From technical expertise to plant performance

Our specialists operate every day in complex industrial environments where safety, quality and continuity are non-negotiable. This hands-on experience gives us a deep understanding of both the technical condition of an asset and the operational environment in which it must perform.

Our capabilities also include **in-house industrial fire brigade and safety services,** providing our customers with direct access to specialised emergency response and safety expertise as an integral part of our industrial services portfolio.

The objective is not simply to keep installations running. It is to continuously improve **plant availability, safety, cost and risk control, and sustainable long-term asset performance**. At the same time, we create predictability in complex industrial environments through disciplined preparation, effective execution and clear control of schedules, costs and risks. This enables us to consistently **deliver on time, within budget and without incidents.**

Whether supporting daily maintenance, preparing and executing a major turnaround, modifying existing installations or developing an asset lifecycle strategy, Ebert HERA brings together the people, knowledge and operational capabilities required to move from analysis to execution.

The strength of a family-owned industrial group

With more than **2,700 highly qualified employees at over 45 locations throughout Europe,** Ebert HERA combines the proximity and commitment of a family-owned company with the expertise and capabilities of an internationally active industrial services group.

Our network enables multidisciplinary teams to work across locations and technical disciplines, while short decision-making lines and close customer relationships allow us to remain flexible and responsive.

Because the future of industry is not only about maintaining what exists today. It is about making the right decisions now to ensure that industrial assets remain safe, efficient and high-performing tomorrow.

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INTERVIEW

HOW AQUAFIN IS RETHINKING ASSET DATA MANAGEMENT THROUGH AI-SUPPORTED EXTRACTION

— JORIS DIRCX

Manager Asset Data at Aquafin

— JAKUB NOWAK

Manager Asset Data Installations at Aquafin

Every pump, motor, valve or electrical component installed in an industrial facility arrives with information that will influence its operation for years. Flow rates, electrical characteristics, tolerances and maintenance intervals are documented in manuals, drawings and dossiers. Before this information can support maintenance, it must be found, interpreted, validated and entered into the organisation's systems.

That apparently administrative step is becoming a hidden bottleneck, consuming technical resources and delaying the transfer from projects into operations. At Aquafin, Asset Data Teams process AsBuilt dossiers, transfer structured information into SAP and archive plans and electrical diagrams in systems such as Autodesk Vault. Much of that work still requires manual searches.

At Asset Performance, Joris Dircx, Manager Asset Data at Aquafin, and Jakub Nowak, Manager Asset Data Installations, explain how Aquafin is moving from manual data input towards AI-driven extraction. Their case is not simply about using technology to read PDF files. It addresses a more fundamental question: how can organisations transform unstructured project documentation into reliable asset information without removing human expertise from the process?

When more data does not mean better information

"Efficient data management is no longer purely an IT matter," Dircx explains. "We are facing a combination of increasingly complex infrastructure, ageing assets and an ageing technical workforce. That makes the availability of reliable information a strategic concern."

As infrastructure ages, maintenance and asset management teams must decide which equipment requires intervention and which assets can remain in service. Without trustworthy information about characteristics, history and condition, those decisions become more dependent on assumptions.

Organisations are also generating more information than ever through sensors, BIM models, specifications and digital maintenance records. Yet more data does not automatically lead to better decisions.

"Data must become a reliable source on which an asset manager can base decisions," says Dircx. "Otherwise, the organisation is not working with usable insight, but with a large volume of fragmented and unstructured information." That fragmentation will be familiar to many technical managers. Asset information is often distributed across EAM systems, engineering databases, network folders, document-management platforms, spreadsheets and personal archives. Individual systems may each contain part of the truth, while experienced employees provide the context needed to interpret it.

This creates data silos, spreadsheet proliferation and uncertainty over which version is authoritative. It also makes organisations dependent on knowledge

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> THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN EXPERT SHIFTS FROM PROCESSING DATA TO VALIDATING DATA

held by individual employees. As experienced technicians and asset managers retire, decades of practical knowledge risk disappearing with them.

Efficient data management is therefore not only about storing more information. It is about structuring technical knowledge so that it remains accessible, dependable and usable throughout the asset lifecycle.

The fragile bridge between projects and operations

This weakness often becomes most visible during project handover. A completed infrastructure project is not necessarily an operationally ready asset. Before Operations can maintain newly installed equipment, information must be extracted from project documentation and translated into the organisation's data structures. A manual may contain hundreds of pages, while the asset management system requires only a limited set of critical parameters, such as a flow rate, electrical specification, maintenance interval or operating tolerance.

"Our objective is to make the information flow from projects towards Operations and Asset Management faster, smoother and more efficient," Jakub Nowak says. "Today, we still have to search through technical specifications, identify the information relating to our assets and translate it into structured data. It is a process that requires time and is susceptible to error."

A single installation may contain many pumps, drives, valves, instruments and electrical components. Manual processing can delay complete asset information and create a risk that values are omitted, entered incorrectly or linked to the wrong equipment. An error during handover can later affect maintenance preparation, spare-part selection or operational risk assessment.

Aquafin is therefore investigating how AI-supported extraction can identify relevant parameters and present them for review before they enter the appropriate systems. The objective is a faster and more controlled connection between technical documentation and operational asset information.

Supporting rather than replacing the expert

Technical documentation is rarely standardised. The same parameter may appear in different units or sections, while tables may contain several values requiring interpretation. Fully autonomous extraction is therefore neither the immediate objective nor necessarily the most responsible approach.

"When we apply AI to technical asset data, the role of the human expert shifts from processing data to validating data," Nowak says. "Technical knowledge remains extremely important. What we are trying to remove is the repetitive part of the work."

Instead of manually reading every page and transcribing each value, data specialists can concentrate on assessing proposed information, resolving exceptions and applying technical judgement where it adds the most value.

Human validation remains the final quality gate. AI can locate, recognise and structure information, but a competent employee must still determine whether the result is plausible, complete and applicable to the installed asset.

The resulting model is one of augmented expertise. The technology carries out repetitive search and extraction work, while employees remain responsible for validation, exceptions and contextual interpretation.

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Building stronger foundations for advanced asset management

Predictive maintenance, advanced analytics and digital twins all depend on the quality of the underlying asset information. An algorithm cannot compensate for incomplete characteristics, inconsistent naming or incorrect relationships between equipment and documents.

"Correct and structured asset data forms the bridge between the construction phase and several decades of safe and efficient operation," Dircx emphasises. "Without that data, an EAM system has very limited value."

When AsBuilt information is processed correctly, planners retrieve specifications faster, technicians access the correct manuals and reliability engineers connect failure histories with the right technical context.

"Better asset data first creates operational calm," Dircx says. "Technical employees know where to find information during work preparation or in the event of a failure, and they know that the information is reliable."

Over time, structured data supports better maintenance intervals, more reliable predictive models and more thorough root cause analyses. It also helps identify recurring problem assets, extend asset life and direct resources towards the greatest risks.

From experiment to operational discipline

Many organisations have tested AI through predictive models, document recognition or automated classification. The harder challenge is turning those experiments into repeatable operational processes.

"The greatest opportunity for AI in asset-intensive sectors is not necessarily another, even more complex predictive model," Dircx says. "The real transformation is the move from technology experiments towards an automated operational discipline."

A straightforward application integrated into daily work and scaled across projects may deliver more value than an advanced pilot disconnected from operations.

For organisations still dependent on manual input, Aquafin's advice is pragmatic: think big, start small and automate as close to the source as possible.

"You do not need to wait for the perfect AI agent," Nowak observes. "Apply the 80/20 rule. Identify the asset categories that generate most of the AsBuilt documentation and start with those."

Introducing AI also forces organisations to clarify which information is needed, where it should be stored, who owns it and how exceptions will be handled. Technology can therefore become a catalyst for better data governance.

A practical case with broad relevance

The Aquafin presentation at Asset Performance starts from a problem found in virtually every asset-intensive organisation. New and modified installations are delivered, final project dossiers arrive, and technical teams must convert extensive documentation into information that can support Operations and Asset Management.

The case examines how AI can assist that process without removing the human expert from the loop. Participants will gain insight into the bottlenecks Aquafin encountered, the potential of automated extraction and the controls needed to preserve data quality.

The broader message reaches far beyond document processing. Digitalisation in maintenance does not begin with the most advanced algorithm. It begins with ensuring that the organisation can trust the information on which its people, systems and models depend.

For technical managers, the case offers a practical view of how one of the least visible parts of asset management may become one of the most consequential applications of AI: converting technical documentation into dependable operational knowledge, while allowing human expertise to focus on the work that genuinely requires it.

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Efficiency in data management: the shift from manual data input to AI-driven extraction

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MACHINE DATA HAS NEVER BEEN MORE AVAILABLE. WHY DO FAILURES STILL HAPPEN?

Industrial organizations have never had more machine data at their disposal. Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), AI-powered analytics, and digital platforms have transformed the way asset health is monitored. Yet failures continue to disrupt production, increase costs, and strain maintenance teams.

The reason is simple: collecting data is only the first step. The real value lies in interpreting that data, turning it into informed maintenance decisions, and ultimately into measurable business performance.

The Gap Between Data and Decisions

Predictive maintenance has become a key pillar of modern asset management. Many industrial sites now continuously monitor the condition of their rotating equipment, collecting large volumes of vibration, temperature, and process data.

However, more data does not automatically lead to better maintenance.

Maintenance teams are increasingly challenged to distinguish critical issues from background noise, prioritize interventions, and decide how and when to act. Without the right combination of analytics, reliability expertise, and structured decision-making, valuable insights can remain unused while equipment continues to deteriorate.

Predictive maintenance should therefore be viewed as more than a technology initiative. Its real value lies in helping organizations bridge the gap between machine data and better maintenance decisions.

Closing the Gap

At I-care, closing the gap between machine health data and maintenance decisions starts with connected technologies, artificial intelligence, and reliability expertise.

High-quality machine health data is collected using Wi-care™ wireless vibration sensors and analyzed by the AI-powered I-see™ platform to detect anomalies. Every critical alert is then reviewed and validated by I-care's reliability engineers before customers receive a diagnostic report with prioritized, practical maintenance recommendations.

But closing the gap is only part of the story. At I-care, we believe reliability doesn't end when the maintenance work is completed. Every intervention generates new insights that help validate the effectiveness of corrective actions and improve future maintenance decisions.

By continuing to monitor equipment after maintenance and gathering new machine health data over time, organizations continuously refine their maintenance strategies.

Reliability is not a linear process that ends with a repair. It is a continuous cycle of measurement, analysis, decision-making, continuous improvement, and maintenance skills development.

Today, I-care supports more than 3,000 industrial customers across 55 countries, helping them transform machine health data into better maintenance decisions, improved asset reliability, and lower operational risk through an integrated Predictive Maintenance and Reliability ecosystem.

As industrial operations become increasingly connected, competitive advantage will not come from collecting more machine data. It will come from interpreting that data to make faster decisions, build better maintenance strategies, and continuously improve asset performance. That's how machine data becomes measurable business value.

Discover how I-care helps industrial organizations build a continuous reliability strategy.

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From Detection to Prediction: Mars Snacking's Digital Evolution in Predictive Maintenance

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FROM COST CENTRE TO VALUE DRIVER: HOW SANOFI IS TRANSFORMING MAINTENANCE GLOBALLY

For a company that develops medicines and vaccines for millions of people, reliable manufacturing is non-negotiable. Yet across Sanofi's global manufacturing network, maintenance teams faced a familiar challenge: how do you create a consistent approach to maintenance across sites with different technologies, processes and priorities?

To address this, Sanofi developed a global Maintenance & Reliability Program that combines its SMS 2.0 Maintenance & Reliability Ecosystem with Value Driven Maintenance (VDM). The objective is clear: create one maintenance philosophy, standardise best practices and connect maintenance activities directly to business value.

Challenging

"We started this journey in 2016. Because we were already using the VDM methodology, we knew that maintenance could add value to Sanofi's business results. We set up the Program to better understand and apply this concept on a global scale", says Gunnar Markus, Head of Maintenance & Reliability EMEA & APAC at Sanofi. To create consistency without ignoring local realities, Sanofi introduced its Maintenance & Reliability Ecosystem within the Sanofi Manufacturing System (SMS). "SMS defines how everyone in our plants works," he explains. "It standardises processes and procedures and gives our workforce the tools and insights to actively drive performance."

Involve the shopfloor

A key lesson from Sanofi's transformation is that successful change cannot be imposed from above. "Change management is indeed a challenge, especially when sites have different processes," says Markus. "We included the wishes, needs and requirements from representatives of the shopfloor. That way the Program was developed with the shopfloor, for the shopfloor." By actively involving technicians and site teams in an early phase, Sanofi created an approach that works for both smaller and larger facilities and across the full pharmaceutical value chain, from API production - manufacturing the active ingredients used in medicines - and device manufacturing to packaging and finished products. This involvement has been critical in building acceptance and accelerating adoption.

Making maintenance value-driven

Alongside standardisation, Sanofi wanted maintenance decisions to be guided by business impact by prioritising activities that create the greatest value. For this purpose the Sanofi International Maintenance Course (SIMAC) was developed together with Mainnovation. The programme helps maintenance professionals refresh and strengthen their understanding of VDM principles, align them with the Sanofi Maintenance & Reliability Ecosystem, and develop the competencies needed to apply them effectively in practice. Nearly a decade later, SIMAC remains a cornerstone of Sanofi's reliability journey, supporting the continuous standardisation of maintenance practices and ensuring a common approach across its global manufacturing network.

Preparing for the future

The Program continues to evolve. Today, Sanofi is increasingly using AI to support maintenance and reliability teams. "We use AI within our maintenance organisation for bad actor analyses and clustering events to drive potential root cause analyses," says Markus. "AI is an enabler for reliability engineers supporting their daily work."

By combining global standards, value-driven decision-making and digital innovation, Sanofi is creating a maintenance organisation that is proactive, data-driven and continuously improving. "It is a never-ending journey," Markus concludes. "The next generation of best practices is already emerging through AI, automation and new technologies."

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INTERVIEW

WHEN THE ASSET STARTS TAKING CARE OF ITSELF

Predictive maintenance has taught us to detect what is going wrong and estimate when failure may occur. But what happens when an asset can also decide what should happen next? In his closing keynote at Asset Performance 2026, Professor Diego Galar will explore the move from predictive analytics to agentic AI, and introduce a concept that could fundamentally change maintenance and asset management: the self-preserving asset.

— DIEGO GALAR

Professor at Luleå University of Technology and R&D VP at SISTEPLANT

At first, self-preserving assets sound like something from science fiction. Machines that understand their own health, anticipate threats and take action to protect themselves seem a considerable step beyond the dashboards, condition monitoring systems and predictive models used in industry today. Yet Diego Galar, Professor at Luleå University of Technology and R&D VP at SISTEPLANT, argues that the building blocks are already emerging.

"A self-preserving asset can understand its own condition, anticipate threats, evaluate the consequences and initiate the most appropriate response within clearly defined boundaries," he explains.

The important words are not only understand and anticipate. They are initiate a response. For Galar, that distinction marks an important shift in the evolution of maintenance technology. For years, industry has become increasingly capable of detecting anomalies, diagnosing faults and predicting failure. But knowing that something will happen is not the same as deciding what to do about it.

Prediction was never the final destination

Predictive maintenance has created enormous progress in the ability to understand asset condition. Sensors, condition monitoring, advanced analytics and machine-learning models can increasingly tell organisations what is happening inside their equipment and, in certain applications, how much useful operating time may remain.

But this still leaves a gap. "Predictive maintenance is focused on accurate diagnosis and prognosis," says Galar. "It tells us what is going on and when a failure is expected to happen. But it is disconnected from the action."

That final step is often still left to people. An engineer interprets the prediction, checks the operating context, considers production requirements and evaluates the consequences of different interventions. Should the machine be stopped immediately? Can it continue until the next planned shutdown? Should its operating conditions be changed? Could production be rescheduled? Is another maintenance action possible?

The prediction is therefore only one input into a much broader decision.

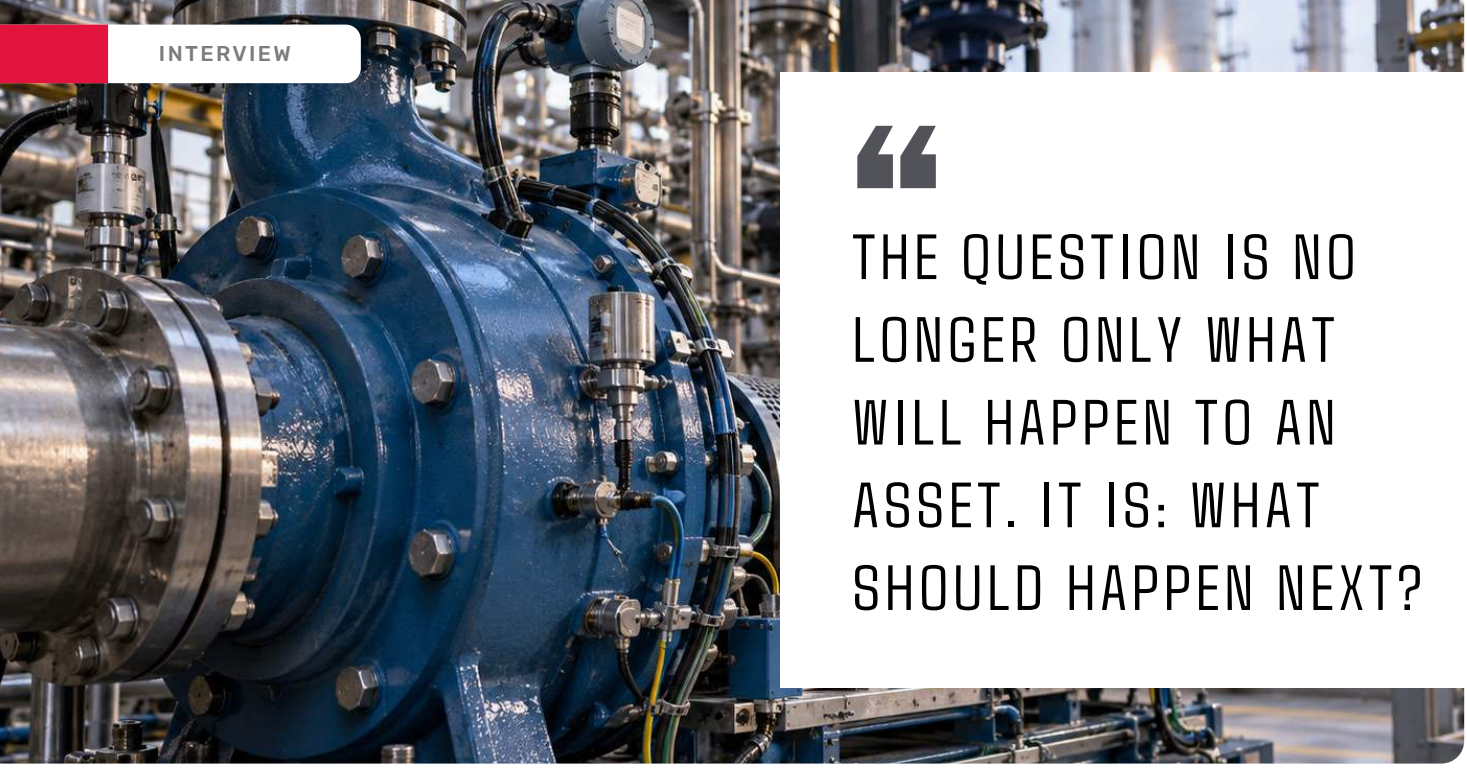
Prescriptive approaches started to address this by adding scenarios: What happens if we choose option A rather than option B? Self-preserving assets go another step further. According to Galar, the question becomes: what action should now be taken to preserve both the health of the asset and the mission it is expected to perform?

It is this connection between information, decisions and ultimately action that makes the concept fundamentally different.

Agentic AI closes the loop

The rapid development of AI is making that connection increasingly realistic.

The first wave of industrial AI was largely analytical. Machine-learning algorithms helped identify patterns in large quantities of operational data. More recently, large language models have created an intuitive interface between people and complex information. Now agentic AI adds another capability: AI systems that can work towards a defined objective and determine the steps needed to reach it.



> THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER ONLY WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO AN ASSET. IT IS: WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN NEXT?

AI-generated illustration

"The clear difference with agents is that they connect the information to the action," Galar says. Within a carefully defined framework, an AI agent can gather information from different sources, interpret the situation, evaluate alternatives and initiate an appropriate next step. Applied to maintenance, that creates a very different proposition from an algorithm that simply raises an alarm.

A future asset could combine knowledge about its current condition with its operating requirements, maintenance history, reliability models and information about the wider production context. Rather than merely reporting that a component is deteriorating, the system could help determine how the organisation should respond.

That does not necessarily mean immediately sending a robot to replace a bearing. The appropriate response might be much less dramatic: adjusting operating parameters, changing the production schedule, requesting an inspection or preparing a maintenance intervention.

The important shift is that the system begins reasoning towards an operational objective rather than stopping at the diagnosis.

And that is where Galar believes AI becomes particularly interesting for asset management.

Autonomy without governance is not autonomy

Allowing AI to participate in operational decisions immediately raises another question: how much freedom should it have?

Maintenance decisions have consequences far beyond equipment health. An intervention can influence safety, product quality, production output and cost. An AI system optimising one variable without understanding the wider constraints could therefore make a technically rational decision with unacceptable business consequences.

For Galar, this is precisely why the discussion about autonomous maintenance cannot begin with AI alone.

One of the misconceptions surrounding industrial AI, he argues, is the belief that a sufficiently advanced technology can compensate for weak maintenance fundamentals.

It cannot. "If you have a really bad maintenance policy, artificial intelligence will not suddenly make maintenance good," he says.

The intelligence of an agent depends on the environment in which it is allowed to operate. Companies need solid maintenance policies, reliable sources of data and clear rules defining acceptable risk. Those principles become the boundaries within which an agent can act.

Risk management therefore moves from being a parallel management discipline to becoming part of the architecture of autonomous decision-making. The organisation must translate its policies into constraints: what can the system decide independently? When should it request approval? Which risks are acceptable? Which decisions must remain outside its authority?

Without that framework, more autonomy does not necessarily produce better decisions. It can simply produce faster uncontrolled ones.

For maintenance organisations attracted by the possibilities of agentic AI, that is an important reality check: the road towards autonomy starts with governance, not with an algorithm.

The human does not disappear — but the job changes

The obvious response is to assume that a person must therefore remain at the end of every decision loop. Galar does not necessarily agree.

Some decisions may continue to require human judgement because they involve uncertainty, broader consequences or contextual knowledge that cannot easily be encoded. Other decisions, however, could eventually be taken autonomously.

"The question is not whether we always put a human at the end of the loop," he says. "It is where human knowledge, the human view of the context and understanding of the consequences are most valuable."

That distinction could have major implications for maintenance organisations.

Highly qualified people still spend considerable time moving between fragmented information: checking work-order histories, comparing measurements, searching documentation, gathering data and reconstructing context before they can actually make a decision. AI agents could take over part of that preparatory and coordinating work.

Human expertise would then move towards the situations in which it adds the greatest value.

And as autonomous technologies develop further, some actions may no longer stop at a recommendation. Agents could potentially interact with automated systems — and eventually autonomous robots — allowing selected decisions to move from detection through reasoning to execution without requiring human intervention at every intermediate step.

Where exactly those boundaries should lie is not a purely technological question.

It is one of the issues maintenance and asset-management organisations themselves will have to define.

The companies that start with the basics may move fastest

For organisations wondering how close all of this really is, Galar's advice is surprisingly traditional.

Do not start by looking for a self-preserving asset.

Start by strengthening the foundations that such an asset would need.

Maintenance policies must be clear. Data about asset health must be available and trustworthy. The system also needs information about the asset's mission and operational context. Structured and unstructured information must become accessible in a form that AI can use. Above all, the organisation needs a clear approach to risk.

These are hardly new maintenance principles. What changes is their importance when software is no longer merely presenting information but potentially acting upon it.

"The maintenance policy needs to be provided by humans," Galar stresses. "AI is not going to replace that foundation." That may ultimately separate useful industrial AI from technology demonstrations. The organisations best positioned for agentic maintenance may not be those experimenting with the largest number of AI tools, but those capable of combining new technology with decades of reliability and maintenance knowledge.

A new generation will redefine maintenance

Looking ten years ahead is risky in a field moving as quickly as artificial intelligence. Yet Galar sees another development that may prove just as significant as the technology itself.

Within the next decade, an increasing proportion of maintenance professionals entering operational roles will have been born entirely in the digital era. Unlike previous generations who moved from analogue to digital technologies during their careers, these engineers and technicians will have grown up interacting naturally with digital systems and AI.

Galar describes himself as a "digital immigrant". The coming generation will be different.

"They are not simply going to be replaced by AI or by robots," he says. "They are going to have a relationship with AI that allows them to achieve their goals in a much more professional way."

But there is an important warning attached to that prediction. Being fluent in AI does not remove the need to understand maintenance. Quite the opposite.

As AI becomes increasingly capable of transforming information into action, domain knowledge becomes crucial for determining whether that action makes sense. Reliability engineering, maintenance strategies, asset behaviour and risk management provide the knowledge and constraints within which intelligent agents can operate.

The maintenance professional of the future may therefore combine two worlds: a natural ability to work alongside intelligent systems and a deep understanding of the engineering principles built up over decades. That combination, rather than AI alone, may ultimately determine how far autonomous maintenance can go.

From intelligent predictions to intelligent assets

The concept of the self-preserving asset raises uncomfortable as well as exciting questions. How much autonomy should an asset receive? How can organisational risk policies be translated into boundaries an AI agent can understand? Which maintenance decisions still need human judgement and which ones are we keeping manual simply because they have always been manual?

There are no universal answers.

And Galar does not intend to provide all of them in advance.

During his closing keynote at Asset Performance 2026, he will take the concept beyond the theoretical framework and show a concrete example of an AI agent performing self-preserving actions. Exactly what that agent does — and how far the chain from information to decision and action can already be taken — is something he is saving for Antwerp.

What is already clear is that the discussion about AI in maintenance is entering a new phase.

The question is no longer only whether we can predict what an asset will do next.

It is becoming whether the asset itself can decide what should happen next.

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