AUTOMATE Conference Speaker Sessions 2026

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Keynote

The Automation Impact: AI, Automation and the Human Element

Grand Ballroom S100

Tuesday, June 23, 2026
9:00-9:45 AM (CDT)

For decades, manufacturing has relied on deterministic automation and incremental improvement. Today, rising global competition, productivity pressure, and a shrinking technical workforce have fundamentally changed that model. Manufacturers can no longer bolt AI onto existing systems and expect transformation. Without context, guardrails, and orchestration, AI adds risk instead of value.

This keynote explores the "Automation Impact", a shift toward integrating industrial AI with automation to build more resilient, adaptive operations. Drawing on real-world examples, it examines how manufacturers can move from being data-rich but insight-poor to creating a connected digital thread that turns insight into action. The session also highlights why workforce enablement is essential to scaling AI responsibly.

As artificial intelligence accelerates across industry, manufacturers face a new reality: innovation is no longer constrained by what technology can do, but by how safely, reliably, and effectively it can be deployed in real production environments. This keynote argues that the next era of automation will not be won by the fastest AI model, but by the strongest foundation beneath it. Rising energy constraints, workforce shortages, and growing system complexity are colliding on the factory floor, demanding a more disciplined approach to scaling intelligence. Drawing on real-world examples—from Siemens' own transformations in Amberg, Germany, and Fort Worth, Texas—to broader industry trends, this session explores how connected digital threads, simulation-first strategies, and trusted orchestration layers allow intelligence to move seamlessly from insight to action. By aligning people, process, and technology, manufacturers can scale AI responsibly, preserve trust, and turn today's pressures into a competitive advantage—without disrupting what already works.

Presented by:
Chris Stevens, President, US Automation for Siemens Digital Industries
Annemarie breu, Senior Director, Automation Software Deployment & Incubation Siemens Digital Industries

Panel Discussion

Bridging the Gap: A Multi-perspective Reality for Modern Automation

Automate Show Theater
Booth 2884

Monday, June 22, 2026
1:00 PM - 1:30 PM (CDT)

As automation systems grow more software-defined and AI-enabled, the gap between strategy and execution is widening, often due to unspoken concerns about trust. Trust becomes the limiter to scale. Organizations can build impressive pilots, yet they hesitate to let AI influence operations because the path from recommendation to action is rarely deterministic, governed, or auditable. This session brings voices from the top floor to the shop floor to unpack what it really takes to bridge strategy to execution: a shared operating model and an orchestration approach that standardizes how machines behave, how data flows, and how AI can influence decisions safely.

In this panel discussion, an industrial operator, an automation technologist, and a business leader examine how modern automation decisions impact real facilities. The conversation surfaces where intentions break down, and what must change for automation initiatives to succeed at scale. Rather than focusing on products or promises, the discussion centers on lived experience: how control decisions affect operators, how AI transforms responsibilities and the nature of human-machine trust, and how leaders can align teams around outcomes instead of abstractions.

Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of:
- Why AI-enabled, software-defined automation often stalls between pilot and production
- How to build human-machine trust through governance, transparency, and clear decision rights
- What must change across people, processes, and technology to scale automation beyond experimentation

Presented by:
Sabrina Joos, Director, Program and Lifecycle Management for New Systems, Siemens
Jason Henning, Senior Key Expert, Solution Delivery, Siemens
Caleb Eastman, Field CTO for the Americas, Siemens
Fabio Sala, Vice-President, IndX

Technology Presentation

Open up the Future

Automate Innovation Stage
Booth 19046

Monday, June 22, 2026
2:15 PM - 2:45 PM (CDT)

Machine builders are facing unprecedented challenges: rising machine complexity, increasing demands for flexibility and automation, stricter regulations — from sustainability to cybersecurity and safety — and ever shorter time-to-market. Traditional, siloed engineering approaches are no longer sufficient to stay competitive.

In this session, we share how Siemens addresses these challenges with Advanced Machine Engineering, a holistic, end-to-end approach powered by three strategic levers: Seamless Engineering, Best Value Automation, and Digital Business Boost. By connecting engineering disciplines through a consistent digital backbone, enabling modular and scalable automation, and unlocking data-driven services and AI-based use cases, complexity can be transformed into a true competitive advantage.

Discover how machine builders can simplify engineering, increase flexibility, and future-proof their machines — turning today's challenges into tomorrow's opportunities.

Presented by:
Kevin Wu, Portfolio Sales Enablement Manager for Motion Controllers, I/Os and Robotics, Siemens
Eben Shelton, Sales Specialist, Motion Control and CNC Systems, Siemens

Technology Presentation

Safety and Security Innovations for Drive Systems in Motion Control Applications

Automate Innovation Stage
Booth 19046

Tuesday, June 23, 2026
1:30 PM - 2:00 PM (CDT)

Drive systems are widespread in automation, robotics, and industrial manufacturing, where safety and security are increasingly becoming critical components. Recent innovations focus on advanced protection of both operators and equipment while ensuring uninterrupted production from threats.

Functional Safety standards such as IEC 61508 and ISO 13849 have driven the integration of safety features directly into drive systems, resulting in numerous benefits. Drive safety integrated functions like Safe Torque Off (STO), Safe Stop, and Safe Limited Speed prevent unintended motion and reduce hazards during maintenance or emergency stops. These features minimize downtime while safeguarding personnel as well as increasing productivity.

On the security front, the rise of Industry 4.0 and connected devices introduces cyber risks. Drive systems now incorporate secure communication protocols, encryption, and authentication mechanisms to prevent unauthorized access and data breaches. Firmware integrity checks and secure boot processes ensure that only trusted software runs on the hardware. Additionally, predictive diagnostics and real-time monitoring enhance protection by detecting anomalies as early as possible.

Combined with incident reporting and fail-safe designs, these innovations create a robust framework for operational safety and security.

By merging functional safety with cybersecurity, modern drive systems deliver high availability without compromising protection — essential for smart factories and critical applications.

Presented by:
Craig Nelson, Portfolio Sales Enablement Manager, High-Performance Drive Systems, Siemens

Conference Sessions

Predict, Simulate, Act: GenAI-Assisted Operations and Maintenance with a Living Factory Twin

Monday, June 22, 2026
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM (CDT)

What if manufacturing engineers, operations leaders, and maintenance teams could all work from the same living digital model of the factory — one that learns, predicts, and explains? In this innovation session, discover how Digital Twin, AI, and Generative AI are being applied from engineering to the shopfloor and beyond. See how the Siemens Factory Twin is continuously synchronized with real operations through Edge, enriched by Insights Hub, and enhanced with Senseye for AI-driven asset intelligence — creating a true closed-loop digital twin and delivering high-value outcomes at scale.

What questions will we answer together?

- How can GenAI support manufacturing engineers in validating changes before deployment?
- How do operations teams use live digital twins to optimize throughput in real time?
- How can maintenance teams predict failures earlier and act with confidence?
- What does it take to scale this across lines, plants, and teams to deliver high-value outcomes?

Powered by data, AI, and digital twins, join us to see how these roles come together.

Presented by:
Francis Vatakencherry, Product and Solutions Development Team Leader, Siemens
Steve Minniear, Director, Manufacturing Engineering, BorgWarner
Krishna Tulugu, Simulation Engineer, Global Manufacturing Engineering, BorgWarner

Beyond the Basics: Cultivating a Continuous Automation Mindset for Scalable Impact

Tuesday, June 23, 2026
2:30 PM - 3:15 PM (CDT)

Are you already leveraging automation but feel there's more potential to unlock? This session is for you. Many organizations achieve initial automation wins, but truly transformative gains come from a shift in perspective — moving from isolated tasks to a culture of continuous automation discovery. Join us to explore how to systematically identify new opportunities, scale your initiatives, and maximize productivity across your operations. We'll delve into diverse approaches, from quick-win solutions to more complex, integrated strategies, ensuring you leave with actionable insights tailored to various needs. Discover how to empower your teams to see automation not just as a tool, but as an ongoing journey towards sustained efficiency and innovation.

Presented by:
John DeTellem, Automation Product Portfolio Manager, Siemens
David Berno, Senior Manager Automation, DMC, Inc.

Software-Defined Automation and the Future Factory

Wednesday, June 24, 2026
11:15 AM - 12:00 PM (CDT)

Manufacturing is undergoing a profound transformation driven by rapid market change, increasing customization, and an evolving workforce. Traditional hardware-centric automation models are no longer sufficient to meet these demands. Software-Defined Automation (SDA) introduces a software-first approach that decouples automation software from physical hardware, enabling greater flexibility, scalability, and continuous improvement in industrial systems.

This panel will explore how SDA is shaping the future factory by allowing manufacturers to adapt more quickly to changing customer and business requirements, optimize operations over time, and reduce the cost and complexity of change. Beyond the technological shift, the discussion will examine the impact of software-centric automation on the industrial workforce, including the emergence of new roles, skills, and collaboration models as IT and OT continue to converge.

Panelists will share perspectives on how organizations can prepare both their technology and their people for this transition — empowering engineers, accelerating innovation, and building a resilient foundation for the factories of the future. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of why Software-Defined Automation is becoming a strategic cornerstone for modern manufacturing. **Hitting on the following points:** • preparing for the future factory since industrial complexity is increasing • decoupling of hardware and software, and the importance of this • impacts on the workforce and skill shortages • convergence of IT and OT **Presented by:** **Dr. Ariane Sutor,** Head of Unified Elements Business, Siemens AG, Digital Industries **Jan Bajorat,** Senior Director, Software-Defined Automation, Siemens **Kristen Quasey,** Architecture and Portfolio Sales Manager, Siemens **David Nichols,** CEO, Co-founder, Loupe and SASE, Loupe and SASE	Wednesday, June 24, 2026 11:15 AM - 12:00 PM (CDT)