Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
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George Lucas's three *Star Wars* films are very important to me. I had the pleasure of viewing each one in a large theater with my children. The films provided our family with entertainment experiences to be savored for the rest of our lives. The recent release of the *Star Wars Trilogy* special edition 20 years after the original film gave me an opportunity to relive those experiences. I was delighted to view the enhanced version of these films, again in a large theater, and with my adult children who were visiting.

Because *Star Wars* was such a big thing around our house 20 years ago and remembered so fondly, I followed the promotional hype about the enhancements to the films, including several interviews with writer, director, and producer, George Lucas.

Lucas had a grand vision of his project. He knew what he wanted to do and he went about doing it. But his vision was ahead of film technology at the time, so he pushed the envelope with special effects and the audience was blown away by the results.

I couldn't help but contrast Lucas's outlook 20 years ago with that of many maintenance and reliability managers today. Lucas pushed the technology envelope to achieve a grand vision, whereas maintenance organizations have affordable technology available everywhere but most lack the vision and commitment to use it effectively.

Fortunately, when Lucas was working on his visionary film 20 years ago, some maintenance professionals and computer professionals were working to render visionary maintenance information models in computer code. Those maintenance information models have evolved into truly spectacular client-server computer applications capable of bringing information on all aspects of the enterprise to the people who need it.

Control hardware also has evolved. It is estimated that 30 times more information is available from smart instruments than the simple variables required for process control. Control networks make this information available in the instrument maintenance shop as well as the control room. Modern rules-based software can take plant data, filter and analyze it, assess equipment condition, and take appropriate action without human intervention.

There is plenty of technology waiting for organizations with the vision to take advantage of it, and there is also the force of competition waiting to bury the organizations who don't.

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