Written by Barbara Hulit, President, Fluke Corporation
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Today's maintenance and operations technicians and engineers hold their facility in the palm of their hand. Compared to even 10 years ago, a far smaller number of technicians are now responsible for a significantly more complex workload—*and the stakes are high.*

Fluke Corporation has extensively studied the availability and need for skilled operations, maintenance and engineering professions in the industrial workforce. It's our mandate to design and deliver the particular test and measurement capabilities that today's workforce requires to keep its facilities up and running.

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There are, at this point, many, well-documented phenomena occurring simultaneously, including the retirement of highly skilled baby boomers, a marked difference in interests and skills of new technicians coming into the job market, the pace of systems automation and the lingering impact of the Great Recession on team size and composition. These factors are having enormous impact on the workforce and the way it works.

It's unlikely that facility operations teams will return to previous sizes. Some of that will be made up for by automation. The rest of the gap has to be cleared by what smaller teams are prepared to do on the floor. They need a broader set of applications and system training. They need to think systemically. They need information at their fingertips. Unfortunately, newer technicians probably won't have the same equipment-specific knowledge as their predecessors. So, how do they close the gap? They might call on outside experts, but with costs still closely managed, that might not be an option. The real answer is better technology and training, in-house.

Fluke is actively helping both the existing and incoming technical workforce bridge these two gaps. We support technical and vocational schools, colleges, universities and apprenticeship programs across the nation with tool donations, discounted tools, tool loans and supplemental curriculum, to ensure that apprentices as well as continuing-education participants have the chance to train on current technology. We are working alongside other business, community and education leaders in our area to help make advancements in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education to ensure that today's students are well-prepared for their future.

In addition, Fluke has increased the amount of training it offers directly, especially on the newer, more advanced tools required for troubleshooting automated systems. Technicians and engineers are taking advantage of self-paced Webinars on predictive maintenance, vibration analysis, thermal imaging, power quality, field calibration and digital signal analysis all from Fluke.com. We also offer in-person training in cities across the nation on thermal imaging, power quality and motor/drive troubleshooting—*with more topics to come.*

And, to help technicians and engineers facing problems right now, Fluke innovation has delivered multiple new tools with the new workforce in mind: Digital multimeters and clamp meters with remote displays that only require one person—*not two*—to take a measurement…Diagnostic vibration testers that mimic the capabilities of a knowledgeable consultant or mechanical expert… Portable oscilloscopes tough enough for the industrial environment and easy enough for troubleshooting control signals. The list grows on.

At Fluke, our end-user customers are an integral part of our product-design process. We count on their feedback to help spark our next innovation—*just as they count on our tools to help them through whatever maintenance curveball their day serves up*
. We're all in this together.
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