

My Take: Cooling Off With Some Cooler Heads

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
Friday, 19 August 2011 04:46



I can't tell you how great it has been to compile this month's issue. Against the ongoing, extremely heated backdrop and "noise" of our national production of *The Battling Bickersons Do Washington* (aka politicians considering the debt ceiling), it's been WONDERFUL to immerse myself in ideas coming from cooler heads (aka thought leaders participating in our "2011 Executive Outlook").

As in past years, the 2011 installment of our annual Outlook section features insight from top executives of leading suppliers to industry—*this time, 11 of them, to be exact*. You've seen and heard from some of them and/or their companies in previous Executive Outlooks; several are new this year. The questions we asked them are also new and, we feel, just as relevant to the issue of our economic survival as the debt ceiling controversy et al (maybe even more so). Here they are:

1. "As a top corporate executive, what did the respondent think should be done to address the growing shortage of technical skills and knowledge in operations, maintenance and engineering job roles in industry?"
2. "What, if applicable, was the respondent's company doing to help address such shortages with regard to its own operations and/or how was it helping end-user customers stay up and running despite the same types of shortages in their operations?"

We only had a couple of carved-in-stone guidelines for our invited participants: Try to answer the questions in a straight narrative style using 550 words or less; and keep your own voice. They all did. (Well, I guess we did let in a few more words here and there...)

What's so refreshing about the answers we received is the lack of "agenda" or "jockeying for position" or "politicization" in them. To a person, each of these executives appears to have

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written from his/her heart and offered suggestions for the good of industries and end-users everywhere, regardless of whose customers they might be. As I alluded to in my first paragraph, it's been a real treat for me to work on this editorial—and now it's a real honor to present it to you.

I trust you'll take time to read our entire 2011 Executive Outlook. The companies represented in this section aren't just working for themselves. They're working for all of us. **MT**

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P.S. Please join the discussion. If you have your own suggestions for what industry can do to overcome the loss of knowledge, skills and experience in operations, maintenance and engineering, please send them on in. I look forward to receiving your emails.