

## Possible, Probable, Preferred

Written by Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor  
Monday, 01 October 2001 09:53

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Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor There are three futures—the possible future, the probable future, and the preferred future. That's what [Glen Hiemstra](#) says. He is the futurist I quoted here last month. He dismisses the possible and probable views as interesting, and focuses on the preferred view as very important because your view of the future drives current actions.

Early this month I was able to hear all three futures discussed at a workshop on Tether-free Technologies for e-Manufacturing, e-Maintenance, and e-Service at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. The event was produced by the [Center for Intelligent Maintenance Systems](#), a National Science Foundation Industry/University Collaborative Research Center.

The attendees covered the spectrum: academia, government, industrial maintenance, research, equipment manufacturing, maintenance services, and software developers.

Three agendas were represented: people interested in learning what may be possible in the future, people looking to gauge the consensus of attendees on how things are likely to turn out, and people interested in boosting their preferred view of the future. Most attendees were working all three.

Workshop presentations covered the benefits of tether-free or wireless technologies in various

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industries, emerging technologies, and standards.

I was fascinated by various viewpoints represented in the breakout session on Emerging Technologies: Needs in e-Maintenance. All revolved around using technology to increase maintenance effectiveness while reducing its cost, with each constituency plotting a way to add the savings to its own bottom line, possibly at the expense of the others.

But all agreed that the formula for success is based on knowledge—knowledge of business processes, manufacturing processes, and reliability and maintenance processes. The trick, they said, is educating enough people in the enterprise about plant asset management so they see the benefits of investing in the technology needed to make it work.

In other words, technology by itself is not worth very much. Its value is derived from its ability to drive the enterprise business model toward an agreed upon preferred future.

I came away from the meeting vowing to remember that although people may agree that certain technologies are beneficial, their reasons for investing it may be vastly different. This suggests that you have to get to know the people you deal with and learn their interests before you can expect to appeal to them to support investment in the processes and technologies that are important to you. **MT**

