

Jakob Kesteloot: 'SMEs need more visibility into their own production processes'

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Jakob Kesteloot

The Internet of Things (IoT) can help SMEs to increase efficiency and reach agile production. Recently, as an IoT expert I was given the opportunity to share my vision on the matter with the DIH² Network, a network that wants to accelerate factories through robotics.

The DIH² Network offers opportunities to see beyond borders and see what is happening in other RTOs and innovation centres across Europe. In a recent series of interviews, as an IoT expert I got to talk about my passion for all things IoT and what my Sirris colleagues and I did to bring the JS2SF Transfer Technology Experiment to life.

Agile production

One of the topics we discussed was agile production in manufacturing and the sort of challenges SMEs are facing when it comes to agile production. Here the biggest issue is transparency, or the visibility SMEs have into their own production processes. To be transparent, you need to know what is happening in production, why it is happening, and then use that insight for improvement actions on your shop floor. This allows your production to become more responsive, leading to increased productivity.

An example of how agile production can be successfully introduced in an SME is the JS2SF project, in which Renier Natuursteen, that uses CNC machines to produce high-end made-to-measure natural stone products for the building sector, wanted to transform its production facility from a job shop to a smart factory. The SME could count on the help of Optidrive, a technology innovator focused on user-friendly intelligent robots, and Sirris.

Renier's problem was that sorting needs to be performed multiple times during the production process in order to minimise waste at the point of cutting the stone. Done manually, it's time-consuming, expensive, and even dangerous. It's necessary, but also subjective. Optidrive's idea was to use robotics to bring faster error-free sorting to the process and to also enable sorting to be made from a quality perspective early in the production process.

Curious about agile production, its challenges, and the JS2SF project? Make sure to read our whole story, online or you can download it!

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