



MARK RUSHTON

Time to Jump on the AI Bandwagon?

"If you can't beat them, join them," the saying goes. And it seems that now is the time to jump onto the Artificial Intelligence band wagon as it captures headlines all over the world, dominates and even creates content at news outlets. The hype is over, and the operational substance of AI is now shining through.

In the US alone, President Trump has recently launched "Stargate," a private sector investment initiative in AI of \$500 billion which will see the launch of 20 new data centers and the creation of up to 100,000 jobs. And of course, it's not just the US. AI is also taking the rest of the world by storm, with new entities and technologies erupting across the globe. Most recently, Chinese company DeepSeek launched onto the world stage and is being seen as a real threat to the US dominance of AI technology.

AI IN THE TISSUE INDUSTRY

But what about AI in the tissue industry? Is there a place for it? Well, not only is there a place for it, but the technology is already alive, kicking, and in action at various companies and mills in the industry. In this issue we have an excellent article about how AI is being applied in production planning, particularly in the area of demand forecasting. Here AI is enabling tissue manufacturers to anticipate demand with precision, align operations across departments, and strengthen partnerships with suppliers and distributors.

In a case study within the article, a producer using an AI program, I-Plan, recorded a 20 percent increase in forecast accuracy, a 50 percent reduction in planning effort, reduced inventory costs, improved on-time delivery rates, and a reduction in waste.

TALKING TO YOUR MACHINES—REALLY?

Further on down the pipeline, it will soon be possible to actually talk to tissue machines in your own preferred language via a chatbot on your desktop. This will enable operators to receive instant feedback on questions about efficiency issues in real time and make any adjustments necessary. Andritz has already launched such technology for the pulp industry in the shape of Metris Copilot in collaboration with Microsoft, and soon the technology will

be applied across its range of machines and equipment, including tissue machines.

A more sober view of digital technology and AI is given by tissue industry veteran Doug Sweet in a new *Tissue360°* segment called "My Industry." Here, Sweet states that well-trained personnel and hands-on experience are still the only way to run an efficient tissue making operation "where touching, feeling, and even smelling" the final product are the only true ways of guaranteeing a successful output.

What an interesting future we have in front of us!

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Tissue360°*. Your own feedback on the future of technology in the tissue industry would be most welcome.

MARK RUSHTON

Editor, *Tissue360°*

ESKO UUTELA



It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Esko Uutela, a good friend of *Tissue360°* editors over the years. Uutela, who had recently retired, was often to be seen on the main stages of tissue and

paper conferences all over the world, presenting in his enigmatic Finnish style, and delivering vital information for producers, suppliers, and consumers of tissue.

Working first for Pöyry, and then Fastmarkets RISI for a number of years, Uutela was deeply knowledgeable about the industry, but it was his openness and skill of engagement that made him a unique and prominent member of the tissue community. After the work was done, he was a hugely entertaining dinner companion, and he is already greatly missed.

Our thoughts continue to be with his family, friends, and colleagues all around the world.

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