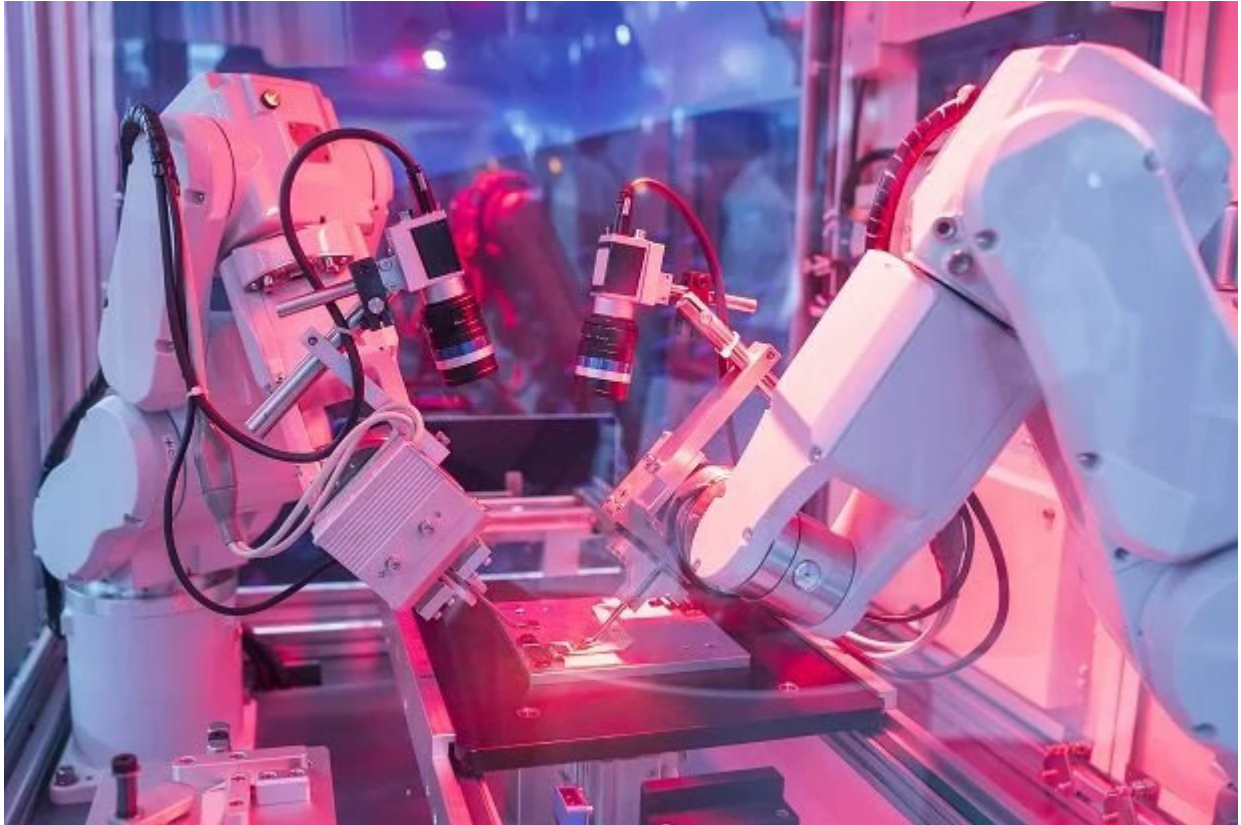


How the 'Great Resignation' is accelerating the use of robotics and AI-based tools | BenefitsPRO

By Katie Kuehner-Hebert | December 03, 2021 at 11:47 AM



(Photo: xiaoliangge/Adobe Stock)

The “Great Resignation” is expediting the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0 for short — which can bring welcome relief to the current labor shortage.

So says Steve Reinharz, founder and CEO of [Robotic Assistance Devices](#) based in Ferndale, Michigan, a wholly owned subsidiary of Artificial Intelligence Technology Solutions Inc.

Industry 4.0 stands to impact every business sector and includes the convergence of IoT, artificial intelligence with machine learning, robotics, high-speed data streaming and a slew of other technologies, Reinharz says. The revolution will include the use of autonomous remote services, commonly known as robotics, and will benefit industries currently bound by personnel.

We sat down with Reinharz to discuss how HR leaders should best leverage these trends now to help address their own labor issues.

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BenefitsPRO: How is the pandemic and the resulting “Great Resignation” spurring the advent of Industry 4.0?

Steve Reinharz: HR leaders in the US are grappling with hiring problems, just like the rest of the world. Prior to COVID, the country was already experiencing record low unemployment and now as the pandemic continues to linger, the very low unemployment rate is exacerbated by older workers not coming back to work — coupled with many younger workers now refusing to take entry-level or less desirable jobs. They learned during the pandemic that they could survive without those kinds of jobs in the new Industry 4.0 economy. This new economy offers new opportunities for younger people, so many never again will take those kinds of jobs.

What this means is that without automation, we’re really going to have some difficult societal challenges. The math just doesn’t add up — there’s no tidal wave of humans coming out of the hatch to take those jobs. Those days are over, and now we must develop and use technology to fill those jobs. HR leaders now have to jump wholeheartedly — and with sincerity — into leveraging technology.

More and more companies are now doing this. Robotic devices already deliver food, take care of the elderly, perform cleaning services, serve as cashiers and provide customer help and support. In the facility security industry, the shortage of labor is particularly severe — companies tell me if they need 100 guards they may get just 15, and so more and more companies are now trying new technology to help. HR leaders in other industries should also think out of the box and get support from the rest of the C-suite to try new things and solve labor problems.

In the future, about a quarter of occupations will be filled by robotics. Even during the last Olympics, AI writers were publishing results at sports events. I know there’s an element of fear that changes will come to people’s current jobs, but people should get ahead of the inevitable. It doesn’t mean that they are not going to have a job — it means that they may have a different job and so they have to be flexible.

Those organizations that are unwilling to aggressively think outside the box and educate themselves about new technologies and resources — and then devise better ways to serve their customers in these changing and demanding times — will soon be white elephants.

In addition to helping address labor shortages, you say that robotics and AI-based hardware and software solutions can empower organizations to gain new insight, solve complex challenges and fuel new business ideas at a reduced cost — how so?

Smart machines are the blending of AI — also called soft tech, with the physical tech. Companies like ours are scientifically analyzing different work tasks and using custom hardware and software to replicate that work. Some have introduced robotics to perform elements of surgery, which definitely requires a blending of AI-powered soft tech and physical tech.

This is a time of great innovation, and HR leaders can be agents of change and urge their fellow C-suite colleagues to determine which tasks can be automated, and then get companies to build custom robotics to meet their required needs.

Never in our lifetimes have we seen the entire world change course, in so many ways, so quickly. As we seek solutions on a multitude of dimensions in light of unprecedented challenges, few are as obviously 'right' as automated robotic services.