Tapping into the hive mind

Bry Dillon of AVEVA explains how radical collaboration between organisations across the industrial sector could help to solve the world's greatest challenges

BY REBECCA GIBSON

Leafcutter ants work as a team to cut and transport fragments of leaves to underground nests, where they cultivate fungal 'gardens' to provide sustenance for the full colony. Together, they use their collective strength and intelligence to overcome challenges.

The industrial sector is now exploring how radical collaboration can help it to harness the power of a similar 'hive mind' to solve business and real-world challenges. Bry Dillon, senior vice president of partners and commercial strategy at AVEVA, explains more.

Why is it crucial for partners within the industrial sector to collaborate?
Businesses want to collaborate, especially if they share common goals and complementary solutions. In these cases, partnering is straightforward – both sides work together to create shared value for the customer. However, radical collaboration goes further. It encourages partnerships with potential competitors and peers, embracing a balance between cooperation and rivalry.

Through radical collaboration, organisations of all types can co-develop software solutions tailored to local or global needs. This kind of joined-up intelligence is essential for reimagining how we address some of the world's most pressing sustainability goals.

Working openly and collaboratively helps us tackle universal challenges, like resource management and global carbon emissions, on a faster and more efficient timeline.

What is radical collaboration and what are the key benefits?
Radical collaboration involves securely sharing data with partners, vendors, government bodies and customers to accelerate innovation. For example, oil and gas companies, which are usually fierce competitors, have collaborated on initiatives like the Offshore Safety Data Sharing Programme, where they pool data on safety incidents and near misses. By analysing this combined data set, companies can identify patterns, reduce accidents and enhance safety standards for the entire industry.

We should universally embrace this approach, even if it challenges the status quo. Innovation thrives when diverse minds – and data sets – come together. Major breakthroughs often stem from building on each other's ideas. For example, the collective hive mind can support innovations in cost reduction and operational efficiencies, as well as improved industry practices and increased sustainability. The more we collaborate, the greater our capacity for true innovation.

How can the CONNECT platform and ecosystem help with radical collaboration?
AVEVA supports industrial customers throughout the entire asset lifecycle – from design and build to operation and optimisation. This

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unique market position enables us to support the unlocking and extending of data across all phases for partners, vendors and customers.

CONNECT, our open industrial intelligence platform, aims to foster sustainability and efficiency. We're committed to offering end-to-end solutions – leveraging artificial intelligence, distributed computing and data analytics – to help companies tackle previously unsolvable problems.

Photo: iStock/FG Trade

AI, in particular, offers new capabilities that can help us solve complex challenges more quickly. With advances in computing power, it's possible to overcome obstacles that were once too difficult or time-consuming. However, achieving this goal requires access to well-structured data that can be used across multiple environments.

CONNECT offers a seamless digital experience across the entire asset lifecycle. Our hybrid approach allows customers to utilise the tools they've always used, while enhancing data reusability and accessibility across the platform. This strategy supports innovation and empowers the industry to collectively tackle challenges head-on.

How is AVEVA exemplifying radical collaboration in its own operations?
Radical collaboration lies at the heart of AVEVA's ethos. We acknowledge that some partners have overlapping capabilities with us, including competing product lines. This is natural and expected within any technology stack. For instance, partnerships with companies like Microsoft often require a balance between collaboration and competition. We embrace this approach in our partner ecosystem.

Our guiding principle is to act as a steward of data across the asset lifecycle, empowering customers with choices to select solutions that best fit their unique environments. This flexibility enhances customer value and helps to strengthen our impact on their operations.

How are AVEVA and Microsoft working collaboratively for collective progress?
One major example is CONNECT data services, where AVEVA is co-innovating with Microsoft to create a partner shortcut to Microsoft Fabric.

Fabric is a unified data analytics platform that brings together multiple tools on Microsoft Azure, simplifying data management and accessibility. This partnership combines AVEVA's industrial data expertise with Microsoft's cloud and data capabilities to offer enhanced solutions for industrial companies.

One key advantage of Fabric is its integration with AI assistant Microsoft Copilot, which directly supports customers with problem solving. Our partnership with Microsoft ensures that data within our systems is natively accessible across the entire Fabric ecosystem.

Traditionally, our main data users have been plant floor personnel, who frequently use Microsoft Office but may not directly engage with our applications. Now, additional users like business analysts and data scientists, who prefer working within Microsoft's ecosystem, can seamlessly access our data within Microsoft tools without transferring it across platforms.

This aspect of our partnership demonstrates how we can jointly deliver greater value to our customers, enhancing accessibility and utility across diverse user groups. ■

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