

# 2024 International Conference of

**Matthew Carrara** is President of Doble Engineering and ESCO Utility Solutions Group (USG) and leads Doble's vision and growth strategy.



**Matthew Kennedy** is Senior Director, Solutions & Project Management at Doble Engineering.



# Doble Clients



**Robert Brusetti** leads Doble Engineering's professional services organization, including client service, field testing, transformer consulting and lab services in North America.

**Nicholas Chiccarelli** is Laboratory Operations Manager at Doble Engineering.





**Alan Ross:** My first interview is with Matt Carrara, the President of Doble. Matt, thank you for inviting us here to the Doble Client Conference 2024.

**Matt Carrara:** Our pleasure Alan. We appreciate you and APC Media being here.

**AR** Matt, we met a year ago when you first joined Doble and did an interview. What has changed in that year and how has the experience been?

**MC** Yes, you and I met, I think it was at DistribuTech, when we did the interview and I was three months into the role, new to the industry, wondering what you were going to ask me and how I was going to respond. My main focus for the last 12 months was to learn about the business and the people first and then focus on the industry. The first six months was really an internal learning for me, getting to know the people, getting to know the culture

and for the last six months I've been really focused on learning what's going on in the industry.

**AR** Before we talk about the client conference, let's talk about the industry. I believe that our industry, the power industry, has gone through more change in the last 5-7 years than we have in the past 50 years, maybe even 100 years. Where is the industry today?

**MC** We celebrated our 100-year anniversary in 2020, and 2023 was the 90th year for the client conference, so a lot of history, a lot of legacy, and a lot of knowledge.

I think where we are right now, we know that the infrastructure is a challenge, and we know there's a huge amount of demand that is required of the grid. One of the things that I spoke about in my opening at the conference was last year they had forecasted a demand increase for the grid over the next five years.



It came out at the end of last year that the actual growth was twice what was forecasted. One of my messages was the challenge of creating budgets for OpEx, CapEx, managing hiring practices; all while the government is bringing down funding for utility companies. All of a sudden, you realize, I need twice as much. So right now, I think the challenge in the industry is on funding, on components, on people, and on how we continue to grow and expand the grid, balancing the need for more power when budgets are not keeping up.



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**Matt Carrara**

**AR** You have a perspective from other industries that might be very helpful for where we are. Do you see capital coming into the industry that might make up that gap, between government investment and the need for expansion?

**MC** Well, we certainly see a lot of capital coming in on wind and solar. As you know, we have a group that is in that space right now. What we're finding is it's not about investment, it's not about money. It's the time for the permitting to take place. Again, there's another chokehold in that area. But yes, a lot of wind farms and solar farms are being handled and managed by private organizations.

There is a graphic that I recently saw that shows how long it takes for the money, once a project is identified, to roll down in the organization. It showed 70 to 80 steps, and they can stop anywhere along the way. So, it's not just the available money but funneling the project through the process. That's a big thing we have to fix. 70 to 80 steps for permitting. That is a huge bottleneck.

**AR** Where do you see the industry going over the next 5-7 years?

**MC** Well, I think the challenge is the same as when we spoke last year. It's what to do with the data. Because part of the issue is you have a group of individuals in the industry that are now retiring and moving on to the latter part of their life or their career, and you have all these new people coming into the industry. There is a big knowledge, expertise, and experience gap between those who are retiring and the new people coming into the industry. What we find is that they are coming to us for training, for information. What can we do with all the data for them? Can we do the analysis for them? I think you're going to see a big migration of data continuing over the next one to five years. But the challenge is that someone needs to find a way to aggregate all that data, which makes sense to the utility company because we're being tasked with making the decision for them that they could then validate before they make a change or make an adjustment. To me, it's data.

**AR** Matt, we will be publishing our entire interview in February 2025, but for this Special Feature on the International Conference of Doble Clients, how has it been thus far and what has stood out for you?

**MC** I just looked at it before I came over to the interview and we have 1,400 people who came this year. That is huge, the biggest we've had ever in the history of the event.

**AR** You must have a message, for what you want internally your people to focus on. Just give me a quick rundown.

**MC** The quick message for me was getting people that attend this show and those who did not attend the show, to come next year. We're trusted partners. We're helping the utility system get through this journey. We're giving them the data and the information and the testing they need to secure and make sure that their assets are reliable and resilient.

But at the end of the day, the message was, "We want to be your partner". We have done a really good job this year. This is, like I said, the biggest show ever. At the end of the day, people are coming to this show, so we're pushing the learning, the conferences, the training.

There is a lot of collaboration, with over 642 specific clients in the utility industry, sitting in sessions, exchanging ideas, talking about storm preparedness, and how to react for when a transformer goes down. Also, we are sharing about how to react to another situation via

domestic terrorism, or maybe when someone puts a virus in the system. All of those conversations are going on here. For us, we hope the show gets bigger and bigger, and we want to show that our 100 years of data and experience can help them as we move forward.

For us, the Doble message is trust and partner.

**AR** Is there cross-collaboration between utilities that are here? Are they being able to share with each other?

**MC** Most of the committees that people are sitting in are people from various types of utility companies. I've noticed that the collaboration and the discussions are open because they're all facing the same challenges. If they can learn from each other, help them see the grid and help them keep the lights on and can be part of it, I think it's wonderful.

**AR** Thank you so much, Matt.

**MC** Thank you, Alan. Let's do this again next year. Every year.

**AR** My next guest is Robert Brusetti, the Vice President of Professional Services in North America at Doble.

Robert thank you for joining us at the 2024 Doble Client Conference. I understand it's the largest attendance you've ever had.

**Robert Brusetti:** Yes, it is. It's a very impressive attendance that we have this year. It covers a lot of the North American client base.

In the fall, we have a smaller meeting, about 150 people, primarily managers and asset managers, engineers. We get together and we decide on the program for this event. It's a full week of sharing experiences and challenges. We put that all together and it ends up creating this program.

We have 51 technical papers throughout the week here with Doble presenting about a third of them. Another third are papers that Doble engineers and clients collaborate on, and the other third are our clients themselves or an OEM that has been asked to address an issue and possibly a solution.

It all goes back to why it is so successful. There's an appreciation that there's not a lot of avenues for power engineers to continue to evolve in their profession. And the people in the industry realize this is an opportunity to grow professionally.



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**Robert Brusetti**

**AR** What do you think is unique about this conference, Robert?

**RB** Because we don't build the products that generate, transmit, and distribute electricity, it affords us the opportunity to take an independent view of the whole process. This is why there are a lot of people here because we set expectations, and we review every presentation before it is presented to make sure it is technically solid.

**AR** Robert, thank you so much and thank you for putting this conference on and inviting us to come here and film.

**RB** Thank you, Alan, for the opportunity to present our point of view.

**AR** My next guest is G. Mathew Kennedy, Senior Director, Solutions and Product Management at Doble. Matt, thanks for joining us. As mentioned previously by some of your fellow leaders at Doble, this is the largest conference you have ever had. What are some of the key ideas you are hoping to share with your clients, focusing on the solutions component of your job?

**Matthew Kennedy:** Thanks for having me, Alan. There is so much to share. Let's start with a few key principles.

To use some of the "buzz" words for a moment, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning are things we are really looking at. If you can take information that is already there and you can layer and analyze it in a machine learning environment, you can start to really predict

how that asset is going to perform over time. I used to think that was going to be an impossible thing. I don't think that anymore. You see it. I can see it. I can taste it. I want it so bad. But I think we're going to start small. We're going to start with smaller components, the higher mechanical systems, like load tap changers that are inside of the transformer that are a little more problematic, some of the higher stress devices like bushings we can start to model, but we'll start to build that model out. Then we can interconnect models together. That is where digital twins become essentially digital twin maps. You're mapping systems together,



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**Matthew Kennedy**

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and that is going to be where you really start. That will become very operationally important to a utility.

**AR** I've come to add to my simple "Safety and Reliability are two side of the same coin" talk, the idea that sustainability and resilience are the other two sides of the same cube. Talk a little about resilience and what you are seeing presented here at the conference?

**MK** Our goal at Doble, when it comes to resiliency, is that we have to make sure that when we are providing our analysis, our tools for a customer so they can analyze an asset, that they know that the systems that they are investing huge amounts of capital into are going to be able to provide that backup function into the system. Resilience, I see, is really about making sure that you have backup systems that can essentially feed around, bypass or hook into, whenever another system might fail.

But it's also about trying to predict when an asset might be switched out ahead of time, so you can make those decisions. Our role in that, providing resiliency, is making sure that they have the tools they need for those assets that are out of service. If you have a system that's out of service waiting to be put in place, you don't have a service monitoring on those. You have to go back to those first, the older methods of analyzing it. So that's important to have. We must make sure a customer is looking at that and saying, "What can I do if these assets are out of service?" Or maybe they are merely not as highly loaded, so what can I be doing to make sure that if they have to be put into a primary position, they're ready to handle the load?

**AR** My next guest is Nicholas Chiccarelli, Lab Services Manager at Doble. This is the best attendance you've ever had, 1,400 people. Talk a little bit about your role, your experience. What do you see here about halfway through the conference as we do this interview?

**Nicholas Chiccarelli:** I am seeing a lot of excitement. I think that's really what it's about. I see a lot of people connecting. I think this conference brings people together to have conversations, not just by email or phone calls. I just had a conversation with one of my customers that I've talked with for a while, and we have some key things that we want to work on together. I saw him stand up and he was asking a question in one of the sessions. I thought, "Oh, my goodness I need to introduce myself." I immediately made a beeline right for him. I think that is what it is all about. You are making that personal

connection. I think that's what really drives a lot of us is going out and making those personal connections. Now someone feels comfortable coming to me after we have put a face to a name. When they have a question, they think "I need to call Nick" or some other person they met here. Having that level of connection and driving innovation and making sure you're making the right decision, informed decisions on whatever it is you're working on, whether it's any of our protection products or any professional service question; those are the things that we offer here.



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**Nicholas Chiccarelli**

**AR** Are there any specific things that stand out based on your role at Doble?

**NC** Because our customers, our clients, don't know everything about the oil in their transformers, that is where they come to us. That is where we really fit in. We can then guide them in the right direction. And we can sometimes do that through our professional service staff and our client service engineers to communicate through them to make sure the customer gets what they want which most often is good information to make good decisions. They might not know how to express what they want. They know there is an issue, and then we can get involved in trying to figure out what that is and how to remedy it.

**AR** A big thank you to all the interviewees from Doble for sharing their insights. This was but a brief glimpse of the Doble Client Conference. The full video interviews, as well as other attendees, will be available on our YouTube channel.