A Look Ahead: Insights from Leaders

Martin Robinson
The founder & CEO at IRISS Inc.

Jon Bucciarelli
President at SDMyers

on 2025 & Beyond

Angelo Rizzo
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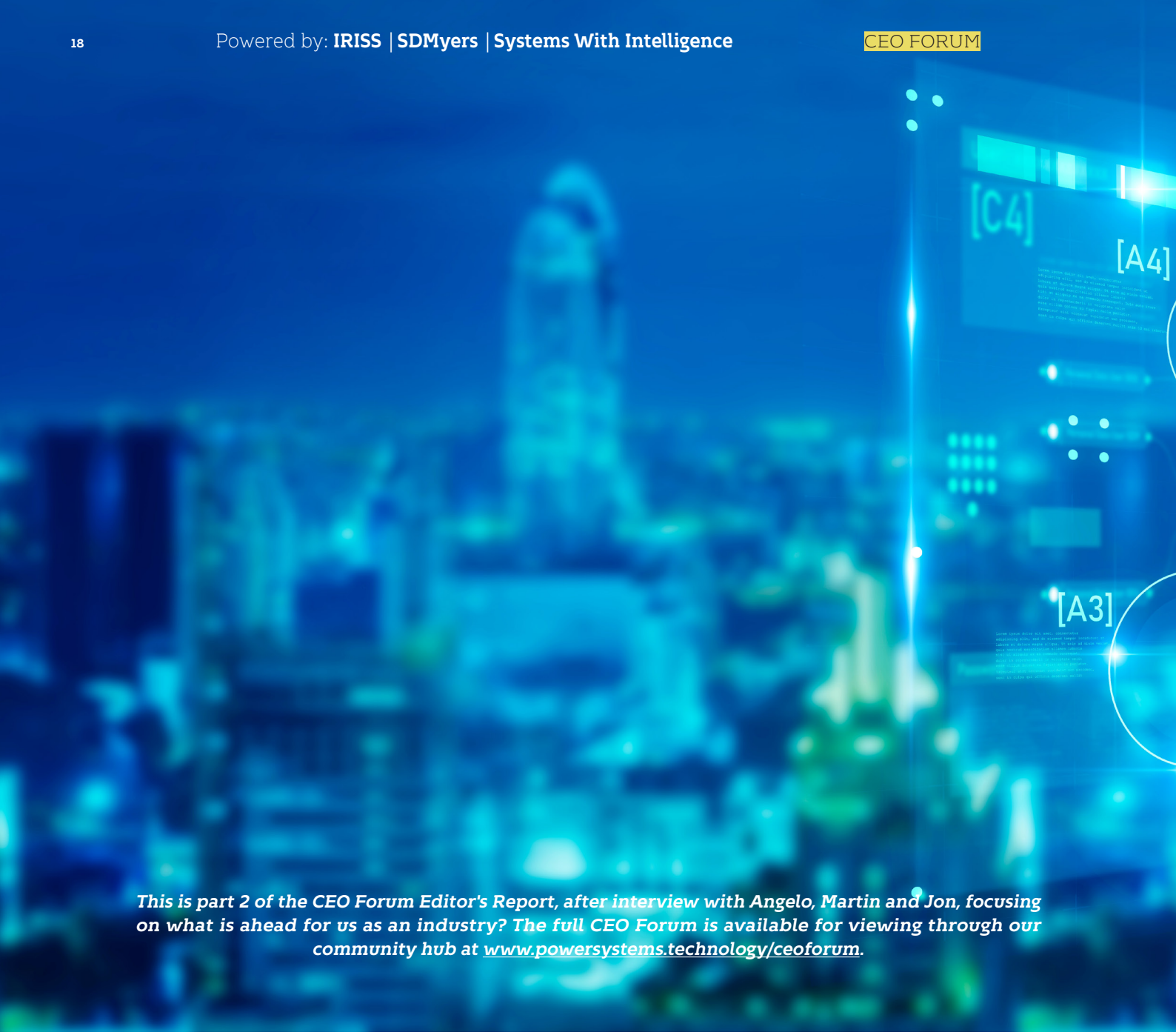

This is part 2 of the CEO Forum Editor's Report, after interview with Angelo, Martin and Jon, focusing on what is ahead for us as an industry? The full CEO Forum is available for viewing through our community hub at www.powersystems.technology/ceoforum.

The power industry stands at a pivotal crossroads, grappling with the weight of legacy infrastructure, accelerating technological disruption, and an urgent need for workforce adaptation. Interviews with key executives—Jon Bucciarelli of SD Myers, Angelo Rizzo of Systems with Intelligence, and Martin Robinson of IRISSS—reveal an industry that is simultaneously burdened by outdated norms and buoyed by a new era of digital potential. The present may be challenging, but the vision for the future is defined by intelligence, resilience, and a reimagined relationship between people, data, and machines.

A Sector Under Pressure

The interviews make clear that the current state of the power industry is reactive, under-resourced, and grappling with the persistent challenges of aging infrastructure. As Jon Bucciarelli from SD Myers puts it, "A large part of our business, about 50%, is reactive... Those cost the customers a lot more." Despite efforts to move toward more proactive models, many utilities and industrial operators continue to rely on time-based main-tenance—fixing problems only when they surface, rather than anticipating and preventing them.

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This model, according to all three executives, is no longer sustainable. With the rise of extreme weather events, from hurricanes to wildfires, as well as increasing loads on aging systems, utilities are under increasing pressure to evolve. "We try really hard to be proactive and not reactive," Bucciarelli emphasizes. His company is focusing more on “fleet reliability,” which means establishing comprehensive electrical maintenance programs that enable customers to manage risk before failures occur.

Bridging the Data Gap

One of the industry’s paradoxes is that utilities and asset managers are surrounded by massive volumes of data, yet often struggle to make sense of it. “What used to frustrate me is utilities have a lot of data and they do nothing with it or they don’t take any action,” explains Angelo Rizzo, whose company Systems with Intelligence is built on exactly this premise.

His team’s strategic focus is to use intelligent systems that transform passive data into actionable insights—moving from traditional, scheduled maintenance into condition-based models.

Rizzo emphasizes the importance of visibility: “We are giving the utility that visibility on the reliability and where they’re at with their assets.” Using thermal and visual sensors, his company enables early detection of problems without requiring manual inspection—something he refers to as “Touchless monitoring.” This doesn’t just save labor; it gives operators precious time and foresight, shifting the entire model of asset management from reaction to prevention.

Innovation with a Purpose

At IRISS, innovation is not just about adopting the latest tech for its own sake, but about building systems that are deeply integrated,

intuitive, and trusted by the people who use them. Martin Robinson describes how his company has evolved its original business—inspection windows—into a broader ecosystem of intelligent diagnostics and AI-powered platforms. "You bolt a window in and it's got sensors, software—it's a smart inspection system," he explains. But what stands out in Robinson's approach is the commitment to designing solutions that operators will actually use.

A key development at IRISS is the E-Centry system, a Gen AI-powered data management solution. Unlike traditional CRM or SCADA systems, E-Centry is designed to interface with any data source—from equipment sensors to enterprise resource platforms—and deliver actionable, conversational insights. "It will tell you what you need to know about any part of your business, not just the maintenance aspects," Robinson notes. This system is intended to serve not only engineers but also CEOs, offering clarity in decision-making at every level.

However, Robinson also acknowledges a fundamental barrier to adoption: trust. "The biggest problem is trust," he says, describing the skepticism operators often feel toward new systems—especially when there's a fear of job displacement. His approach is to engage these "troops" directly, ensuring that the systems serve as tools that empower rather than replace. "I have never found a program that can fix anything," he adds. "People have to fix it. This is a tool to make your job far more eventful, far safer, and far more beneficial to the operations."

The Human Element

While technology is a central theme throughout these conversations, there is a strong recognition that human expertise, training, and collaboration are indispensable. Jon Bucciarelli speaks at length about the importance of workforce development in addressing current labor shortages. "We use the word TED—Training, Education, and Development," he says. He emphasizes that utilities must either build their own expertise internally or partner with companies like SD Myers to access it. In an industry increasingly starved for skilled labor, this kind of investment is not optional—it is essential.

This need is echoed by Robinson, who points out that a significant percentage of failures in the power sector come down to human error. Whether it's improper switching sequences or missed warning signs, the cost of mistakes can be enormous. "Sometimes those mistakes, in the electrical industry... people die," he says gravely. His company uses technology to minimize these risks by walking operators through precision maintenance procedures and capturing "tribal knowledge" before it exits the workforce.

Designing for Resilience

All three leaders agree: the future of the power industry lies in building resilient systems. That means systems that can adapt to volatile weather, shifting demand, and the increasingly digital nature of grid management. "Reliability, resilience—it's all about design," Robinson says. At Systems with Intelligence, Rizzo talks

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about building a "resilient system" for their clients by providing infrastructure visibility that anticipates and avoids catastrophe. For SD Myers, resilience is about moving customers from “being fixed by others after the fact” to self-sufficiency through preparation and education.

The shift to resilience also aligns with global trends in automation and AI. As Robinson notes, traditional IoT and machine learning programs are already being eclipsed by Gen AI tools that make data actionable without overwhelming operators. “They said something like 87 to 92% of current IoT programs are failing to meet their mission directive,” he recalls from a recent industry event. The reason? Too much data, not enough guidance. Gen AI’s ability to interpret, filter, and communicate data in human language offers a new path forward.