Revolutionizing Power Sector Maintenance: The Shift from Reactive to Predictive Strategies

Predictive maintenance, preventative maintenance, and proactive maintenance are all important strategies in the maintenance of equipment and systems in various industries, including the power sector. I've spent many years of my career as the President of the Electric Power Reliability Alliance (EPRA) watching how the maintenance industry began to grasp with, and eventually champion, reliability of equipment, especially electrical assets.

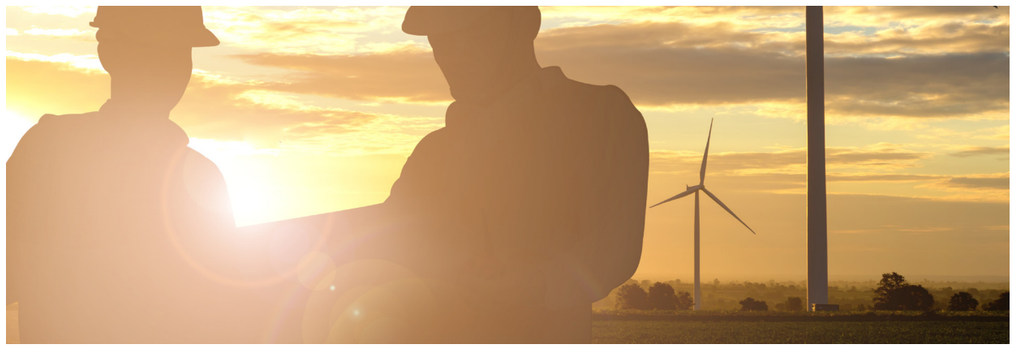
Predictive maintenance involves using data and analytics to predict when equipment is likely to fail so that maintenance can be performed just in time. This approach helps to minimize downtime and reduce costs associated with unexpected failures. By monitoring the condition of equipment in real-time, predictive maintenance can identify potential issues before they cause a breakdown.

Preventative maintenance, on the other hand, is a scheduled maintenance approach that involves performing regular inspections, tests, and servicing of equipment to prevent failures from occurring. This approach is designed to help extend the lifespan of equipment and reduce the likelihood of unexpected breakdowns, however there are too many situations where preventative maintenance has led to unnecessary work being done and is typically based on manufacturer recommendations and industry best practices, rather than condition. Given the state of lead times for major assets, especially transformers, condition monitoring and predictive maintenance must become the standard, as opposed to time- based maintenance. That increases the demand for monitoring and diagnostics.

Proactive maintenance takes preventative maintenance a step further by actively seeking out and addressing potential issues before they become problems. This approach involves analyzing data, conducting risk assessments, and implementing strategies to mitigate risks and improve the reliability of equipment.

Proactive maintenance aims to identify and address root causes of failures to prevent them from occurring in the future and both Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will play an increasing role since we know the advantages that AI and ML bring is the ability to analyze vast amounts of data in real-time, allowing for more accurate and timely detection of issues within the grid.

Why is this important and vastly better than scheduling maintenance based on time?



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By analyzing historical data on equipment performance and failure rates, AI algorithms can predict when a piece of equipment is likely to fail and alert operators to take preventative action. This can help reduce downtime and maintenance costs, as well as improve overall grid reliability.

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Additionally, AI and ML can be used for fault detection and classification. By analyzing data from sensors and other sources, AI algorithms can automatically detect when a fault occurs in the grid and classify the type of fault. This information can help operators quickly isolate the issue and take appropriate action to restore power to affected areas.

AI and ML technologies have the potential to revolutionize diagnostics in the electric grid by providing more accurate, timely, and cost-effective solutions. By leveraging these advanced technologies, utilities can improve grid reliability, reduce downtime, and ultimately provide a more efficient and resilient power system for customers.

Overall, the future of monitoring and diagnostics in the distribution system of the power sector is bright, with advancements in technology driving improvements in reliability, efficiency, and performance. By leveraging advanced sensors, artificial intelligence, remote monitoring and control systems, and proactive maintenance strategies, operators can ensure that the distribution system remains reliable and resilient in the face of evolving challenges and demands.

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Alan M Ross
CRL, CMRP
Managing Editor
APC Media
Technical Director

Alan has decades of experience in the power systems industry and is one of the greatest reliability experts out there.