Perspectives on Outsourcing vs. Automation

With the news regarding China and questions surrounding the safety of its manufacturing facilities, in addition to the constant concerns over intellectual property protection, some medical device manufacturers are looking for alternatives. This month, *MDT* asked several industry experts for their thoughts on using automation systems as one solution.

Q: Are automation systems a strategic alternative to outsourcing overseas and which (automation or outsourcing) do you think is a better option overall for medical device manufacturers?

By Craig Tomita
I think that companies should exercise care in working with offshore outsourcing primarily because of the increased risk of losing IP and falling under the laws of foreign countries. As an alternative, I think that OEMs should strongly consider using domestic outsourcing.
[Regarding outsourcing or automation,] I don't think that it is one or the other. What I mean is that I think that the trend is toward the use of domestic contract manufacturers that use automation in terms of both device assembly and machine vision inspection to help increase efficiency, reduce unit costs, and assure proper assembly. In addition, using a contract manufacturer skilled in automation enables the OEM to benefit from the increased efficiencies without the huge capital outlay or the need to continually keep up with the technology or maintain equipment.

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Source URL (retrieved on *04/17/2014 - 3:42pm*):
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