

Albert Chou:

This is IT Visionaries, your number one source for actual insights and exclusive interviews with CIOs, CTOs and CSOs, and many more. I'm your host, Albert Chou, a former CIO, former sales VP and now podcast hosts.

Jeff Burnstein:

We want better, safer and higher paying jobs. And those are the kind of jobs that automation is helping enable.

Albert Chou:

Will automation replace the current jobs in the market? Well, it's an age old question. It's proven time and time again that it's not. Today on IT Visionaries, we have Jeff Burnstein. He's the president of the Association for Advanced Automation or A3. He's going to be here to share his thoughts on how automation is going to help create even more job opportunities. And with over 40 years of experience in automation and robotic technology, Jeff brings a unique perspective to the conversation about automating the workplace, in enhancing the experience of the workplace.

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Jeff Burnstein:

Thanks for having me. I'm looking forward to the discussion.

Albert Chou:

Listen, for all of our audience members who may not be familiar with A3 and what it does, let's start there. What is A3? What does it do? Who's a part of it? Give us an idea of what it's all about.

Jeff Burnstein:

All right. Well, we are the largest trade association for companies involved in robotics, AI, machine vision, and motion control. The largest in north America for sure, likely the largest in the world. We have over 1,100 company members. And these are people who not only supply the technology that we cover, but also major users, anybody in the ecosystem of automation.

Albert Chou:

Okay. And when you say automation, you mentioned robotics, does it also handle like software automation? There's going to be companies that, for example, RPA, which many people call robots, but they're not actually robots. They just work inside of machines. Is that part of your trade as well?

Jeff Burnstein:

No, we don't really have a lot of RPA companies in the association. It's more companies that are making hardware and software for robotics and artificial intelligence in industry and in warehousing and distribution, agriculture, construction. Just about any industry you can think of is automating right now with these tools.

Albert Chou:

No, that makes total sense. Now, one of the things we hear from previous guests that work in the hardware, they work in heavy equipment or whatever the case may be, when they talk about automation, they always talk about, "This is new frontier. We are building things today that don't exist to do things, to accomplish tasks that have never been accomplished before in an automated fashion, smarter technologies." What are some of the top things you hear your trade members talk about the most? What are they most concerned about? What are they most excited about? I think this is one of the things where these are the people literally inventing the future. So I always think to myself, like, "Hey, what are their biggest challenges?" Because I think based on our guests, we know that everyone wants to automate, but there's always challenges, right? Implementations. Skill sets. Are they going to displace too much workforce? What are some of the things that are, I guess, standing in the way or hurdles that the team and the members are trying to overcome right now?

Jeff Burnstein:

Right now, the biggest challenge for companies is to find people. So if it wasn't for the automation, a lot of these companies would be struggling even more than they are. What we're looking at with these technologies right now is how do you apply them in applications that we really hadn't thought of before? I mean, if you look at the history of where robotics and automation was used, it was primarily used in the automotive industry. It used to account for 60 to 70% of the applications when the US went to automotive related companies.

It's all changing now because companies are able to take these tools that are, like you said, the innovations are making them much better and say, "Hey, what can we do to pick grapes? Or what can we do even in our homes or in a retail environment or in a restaurant so that applications are emerging well beyond factories, they're coming into closer contact with people which brings up all sorts of issues related to how do we work collaboratively with the technology? And how is the society do we benefit from these tools so that we're not doing the kinds of jobs we don't want to do? Dull, dirty, dangerous jobs. We want better, safer, and higher paying jobs. And those are the kinds of jobs that automation is helping enable.

Albert Chou:

You mentioned that. I think we saw the latest unemployment report. The numbers are pretty low, yet we also hear about the labor shortages that are currently going on in many industries and how, for example, if I were to think about the fast food industry is a good example of hourly wages, workers want higher wages. The restaurants themselves are offering higher wages, but still not able to fill that labor demand. Is this the main forcing function that's going to bring automation into these industries? Or was it already happening but this is just a little bit of acceleration? What do you think? Because I agree with you. People have options, right? There's plenty of work. People have options and they've just decided, "Hey, some of these jobs are not things that we're..." There's just not as many people interested in them anymore.

Jeff Burnstein:

Yeah. I think that's one of the driving forces right now. A great example I had recently, there's a company that makes a four robot system to change tires. So you go into a Discount Tire to get your tires changed, right?

Albert Chou:

Yeah.

Jeff Burnstein:

That's backbreaking work. There's not a lot of people who really want to do that eight hours a day. So this company found funding from Discount Tire who has a shortage of something like 5,000 technicians.

Albert Chou:

Wow.

Jeff Burnstein:

And that's the kind of thing that people are looking at. How would we automate that? Well, this may be one way in that particular application area. That's a job that maybe people really don't want to do for good reason.

Albert Chou:

Fun story. I was in motorcycle tech. That was my first job out of college. I just liked motorcycles. But someone told me, and then I didn't learn until I got there's the problem with being a tech is you actually do the things you dislike the most. Meaning you're going to do oil changes and tire changes. Like, you thinking that you're going to soup up bikes, not that many people come in wanting more performance upgrades on their motorcycle. They really just want they're oil change, tire change.

Jeff Burnstein:

Exactly.

Albert Chou:

And I can tell you, on the shop floor, that's pretty much what I did. You're right. It's hard work, but it also wasn't interesting. You know what I mean?

Jeff Burnstein:

Yeah.

Albert Chou:

I think most techs want to fix real problems. Like, that's not a real problem. They don't feel like that's a real problem.

Jeff Burnstein:

Right.

Albert Chou:

I think that's a killer, right? That makes total sense. Also, I'm imagining a NASCAR pit crew, like me rolling in, this robot lifts up my car, my tires get changed super fast and I'm out the door probably faster than what a human can do. What are some of the other exciting stories? Because you mentioned the dangerous jobs. I'm thinking of when... Because it happened just recently. I was at a hotel where someone was washing the window outside. I was like, "Man, that is dangerous." This guy every day puts

their life, that person's life on the line. And the whole industry does. It feels like that should be automated too. Could we put some type of Roomba thing going up and down the windows to clean that? I don't know.

Jeff Burnstein:

Actually, people have done that. There are robotic systems to clean windows, robotics in construction. So again, those are kind of oftentimes backbreaking jobs. You can't find a lot of people who want to do. You can think of just about any industry. Okay, here's one. So I talked about agriculture and picking strawberries. Well, think about what's happening in the US now. Tighter immigration laws. It's hard to find people who want to do that work. And so if you can automate it and use robotics that are artificial intelligence, that's a win.

Albert Chou:

This trade group, the A3 trade group, how do you best see yourself as accelerating this? I guess it's knowledge transfer. How would you best describe what it is you guys are doing? Because I get it, these groups, these people, whoever's in this industry, you need to learn from somebody. You're doing things that no one's done before.

Jeff Burnstein:

Exactly.

Albert Chou:

It makes total sense. Where do you see your role in accelerating this knowledge transfer? Or do you see you have a different role?

Jeff Burnstein:

No, that's exactly the most important role of the association, is to educate companies on how to successfully apply these technologies. Where do you turn to learn? Well, automate.org is our website. We've got all these papers. We've got all these videos, all the companies who make the stuff. We're the resource for companies who want to get started in automating.

You asked earlier what are the drivers of it. The pandemic helped open people's eyes to, "If I can't bring people into work, even if I had people, if I can't bring them into work side by side like in a food processing plant or something it's not safe to do, how can I keep production up?" Possibly using robots. These are the kinds of things that companies are looking at and they need to know, well, who's doing it already, and that's one of the key roles that we play.

Albert Chou:

For yourself, how long have you been, I guess, overseeing or been involved with A3?

Jeff Burnstein:

I've been with the association since 1983. So almost 40 years. I was actually working in robotics with another organization that our organization broke away from two years before that. So I've been involved in this over 40 years now. I've been leading it 15 years now.

Albert Chou:

You mentioned obviously the 2020 pandemic was a big catalyst and driver. What are some other historical events that really have accelerated, I guess, the pace or the desire or the appetite to invest in automation?

Jeff Burnstein:

Well, I think some of the advances in the technology itself, right? It's become easier to use, less expensive. You have robots now that are safe to work side by side with people. You have mobile robots working in warehouses and distribution centers. So there's been a lot of advances in the technology itself. Machines are getting smarter, thanks to artificial intelligence. They can see better, thanks to improvements in machine vision. So that's a really important advance, is that all these technologies are coming together now making them easier to use. So that's been really critical I think.

Another thing is the competitive global environment that we're in. So when I got started, the US was sort of second to the world to Japan who had taken the lead and maybe Western Europe was in there too. But now look what's happened. The biggest user of robotics in the world is China. Now, that's almost mind-boggling when you think about that because they had unlimited pool of labor.

Albert Chou:

Sure.

Jeff Burnstein:

And companies were shifting manufacturing to China because they were chasing low cost labor. Why is China now the leader in applying robotics technology? It's because they understand that you can't hold onto all that manufacturing if you don't have the best quality and the fastest delivery time and the best productivity. And how do you achieve all that? Through automating. And so they're afraid of other low cost countries like Vietnam or Malaysia taking away everything that they've earned. And so they want to be up front. They have a national government commitment to becoming the leader, not only in robotics use, but also in development of the technologies. Very interesting change is taking place in the world. So companies who are looking at that and trying to compete with players globally are saying, "How do we compete?" How about automating?

Albert Chou:

Now, I think that makes total sense. I mean, I think we saw the CHIPS act get past where the United States wants to invest in chip manufacturing in the United States. You saw firsthand, as you already mentioned, during the pandemic supply chains were completely disrupted, our dependency on other nations to make products for us became a serious problem. Arguably, it's still. We're still seeing residual effects.

Jeff Burnstein:

For sure.

Albert Chou:

There's still used car shortages because of chips and sensors or whatever products are made internationally. When you see this, I don't even know if they'll call it commoditization. We'll just call it investment. There's going to be more investment in robotics automation. I agree with you. Software has certainly made it even better because now the robots can think and they can probably do more jobs or

more tasks versus I think back in the day you could probably program a robot to do one thing. You know what I mean? And now you can program it to think and possibly do multiple tasks.

When you see that happening, what do you see it unlocking? Let's just start here in America because it's one of those things where I think that if this becomes more widely available and the knowledge is clearly transferred and many people understand it, we will see automation come to our shores in many different ways. And I think this is an effort. I think it's not just us. A lot of countries will start probably bringing their manufacturing back to their shores.

Jeff Burnstein:

That's true. It will enable more manufacturing to come back either to the US or Canada or Mexico. What's so-called nearshoring for us, other companies will try and do the same. The first industrial robot was introduced in a factory in 1961, right? Long, long time ago. And yet we're still in the very early days of robotics. We have so much further to go. And again, it's partially because so many industries haven't even thought about automating until recently. In the US, you have all these small and medium sized companies who are the backbone of manufacturing in the United States. Most of whom have never installed even one robot. So there's so much more opportunity for us to become more productive, to bring back more work. I think it's by far, you asked me how long I've been in it, 40 years, by far the most exciting period is right now.

Albert Chou:

What about when it comes to... You mentioned small business before. One of the things that you'll see in like, let's say any type of major production, typically you don't see a lot of startups. That's just how it is, right? So I'll use an example of cars. There's really not that many car startups. It takes so much funding. It takes so much cash to make investments and develop products. It's really hard. And so companies don't... It's not like software, right? Software. "Hey, you and me can learn how to code and start a software company immediately."

Jeff Burnstein:

Well, you can. Probably not me. [inaudible 00:14:15].

Albert Chou:

Point being is, the barrier to entry is much smaller. The trade knowledge, the software, the materials, the goods become, like you said, less expensive. Are you seeing more small companies get into this field? You would think from an outsider's perspective that it's just reserved for the biggest players. Only the biggest manufacturing companies are going to build automation capable robots. I don't think of it like a startup kind of thing. Do you see a lot of small groups trying to get into this business?

Jeff Burnstein:

Well, get into supplying robotics? Oh my God, yeah.

Albert Chou:

Okay.

Jeff Burnstein:

There's so many new startups because there's so many problems to solve. And now here's the new thing. So for decades, venture capital did not want to invest in robotics hardware, okay?

Albert Chou:

Yeah. Too expensive.

Jeff Burnstein:

It was just not something that would provide the payback. Right now, that's all changing. Companies are throwing a lot of money at startups in robotics, whether it's hardware or software or intelligence. So this is an exciting period for that reason alone, is that a lot of companies are coming from nowhere and raising a lot of money to become significant players.

Albert Chou:

What do you see when it comes to membership? Has membership to A3 just... What's happened in the last, let's say 10 years, where A3 membership? Are you seeing like-

Jeff Burnstein:

Well, one of the things that we did at A3, we used to have a lot of forward facing associations. We had the Robotic Industries Association. We had the Automated Imaging Association, the motion Control. They were all managed by the same people and under the umbrella of what was A3 or precursor of A3. But what happened was, major companies came to us and said, "Listen, why are you making us join multiple associations? We need all of these technologies. We need robotics, machine vision, motion control, AI, and more." So we ended up eliminating all those what I'll call now sub-brands and now there's one major brand. This just happened. We just incorporated it all last year. And so as a result, this 1,100 member companies is the most we've ever had. We used to have companies that were joining multiple associations. Now they only count once in our association.

So yes, to answer your question, we are seeing growth, and that will continue to grow. But it's also growth in the kinds of companies who join. So now we have the ability to get Microsoft and Intel and Google and all these companies, you said like, "We don't understand your system here. I don't want to join just a robotics association." So that's been a really important change. It's exciting because there's so many companies out there who we're still trying to reach. We are a global organization. We're not just a US-based organization though. Most our members are from the US, but I would say at least 20% of our members are around the world. And I'm talking about Japan, China, Korea. We've got members-

Albert Chou:

It's just going to grow.

Jeff Burnstein:

Yeah.

Albert Chou:

Like you said, it is just going to grow the... The way you described it makes total sense because if I'm a person that, "Let's use machine vision" and I'm making the optics, well, I belong in the Robotics Conference because my optics are going to be used there. And if I'm a software writer for that, if I write

software for machine vision processing, I'm going to want to be there because I'm going to want that be incorporated into more machines in the future.

Describe the scope size and scale of A3 for anyone out there who's not sure what they're talking about because I've been to a lot of conventions. I've been to NRA. And I'm not talking about the gun. I'm talking about National Restaurants Association.

Jeff Burnstein:

Okay. Yeah.

Albert Chou:

Yeah, it's pretty crazy. I was like, I went there and I was like, "This sounds like the gun place." Like, "No, no, no. It's for restaurants." I'm like, "Oh, okay." And I go. It's called NRA. This is straight up. It's called NRA. It's huge conference.

Jeff Burnstein:

I know.

Albert Chou:

Funny story about it is, the whole floor, it's kind of sad in my opinion because the whole floor was vendors showing that their food, how it tasted and how little preparation it took and how long it could last, which makes total sense that that's what restaurants want. But I was like, "Oh man, this is basically like a chemistry convention." But anyways, I got off topic. Give us an idea. What does A3 look like? Where is it held? What can a person who's coming for the first time? Where would they expect to see?

Jeff Burnstein:

You're talking about our Automate Show. So our Automate Show-

Albert Chou:

Yeah, the Automate Show. Yeah, sorry.

Jeff Burnstein:

That'll take place next May 22 to 25 in Detroit. This is the benchmark that tells you how fast the industry is growing. That Automate Show in 2011 had couple hundred companies that occupied maybe 40,000 square feet of exhibit space. In 2022, it had over 600 companies and occupied nearly a quarter million square feet of exhibit space.

Albert Chou:

All right. You just said it went from 40,000 to a quarter million. So 5X the floor space?

Jeff Burnstein:

6X.

Albert Chou:

6X. Sorry, 6X the floor space. Yeah. That's...

Jeff Burnstein:

Since 2011. And it'll be over 300,000 square feet in 2023. We have almost no space left. If you go to automateshow.com, if you look at that floor plan, you'll wonder, "Wow, how are they going to get more companies in here?" So that's the best indicator. We had 25,000 or so people register for the show in 2022, that number should grow in 2023. We had a line and out the door to sign up for exhibit space for 2023 after just the first day of the show. Our sales team never got to leave the office. They never even got to see the show that they sold.

Albert Chou:

I want to be on the sales team. That sounds like an easy job.

Jeff Burnstein:

Unbelievable. It's a hard job, but it's unbelievable how much demand there is because there's so many companies who want to automate. And automate became the show in north America. It's the largest show in north America for robotics and automation and these technologies. And we were nowhere... In 2011, we were a minor show. Now, we're a major event globally.

Albert Chou:

I've been to some pretty crazy trade shows and I know that the biggest booths are reserved for the people that have possibly the most elaborate things to showcase. So I went to IAAPA, which was the amusement industry show once. And people had actual rides, they brought rides in to kind of sell them. But when you see the demand for the floor space, do you have an idea of the scope, the floor space? Or the booths that people want to buy? Do you see it having any indication of the size and scope of projects people are trying to solve for and what they want to display? Or do you see innovations in all types of things? For example, nanorobots I know have been long been in part of sci-fi, but I don't know how close we are to get into those things. Give us an idea of where you see like what are people going to be displaying?

Jeff Burnstein:

Well, people are going to be displaying the products that they're trying to sell to industry. So you're going to see it automate. You're going to see robots that can lift heavy items. One of the featured exhibits last year was a robot lifting a Corvette, right? A red Corvette.

Albert Chou:

Wow.

Jeff Burnstein:

Demonstrating, "Hey, we can lift heavy things." Now that's a risky business, right?

Albert Chou:

Yeah.

Jeff Burnstein:

You better be accurate. Well, it was the highlight of the show. It was so cool. But then you have mobile robots showing what we're capable of doing, what we're capable of working around people, what we can do in terms of the amount that we can put on the robot. So, I mean, there's just depending on the industry that the company is in, you're seeing really cool demos. Or some companies have a wide range of... They want to show that their robots can do things like make coffee. Why? Not so much that they're selling robots into making coffee. They might be. You're trying to excite people about the capabilities of the technology so that someone like you, let's say you're a small business owner, you can say, "Hey, I have a task that that's basically what I need to do. I need to load this machine or I need to assemble something." You want to see something that makes you say, "Oh, if it can do that, it certainly can do this" or, "That's exactly doing what exactly I need it to do."

Albert Chou:

You saying that, it immediately started making me think about our production van. Our production van's got all kinds of equipment. It's got like C-stands, cameras. It's got a lot of expensive, sensitive equipment, and it's kind of hard to pack. I would love to have some help. So if anyone's out there listening, please make this for me so I can have a machine pack these vans.

Jeff Burnstein:

Packing and unpacking. And now that's one of the things. How do you unload the van? So there's a lot of advances there too.

Albert Chou:

The fun or terrible part about for anyone listening, loading a van with production equipment. C-stands are extremely oblong. They're long and they have this long legs to one side. So it's not like a box. You know what I mean? Anyway, I'm just being selfish now because I'm like-

Jeff Burnstein:

There you go. Well, come to the show to talk to people. You'll find out if you could have somebody do that for you.

Albert Chou:

For you personally, what are some of the things that you've seen that you just were like, "Wow, things are changing. A year ago, we would've never seen something like this." What are some of the things that you've seen over the years that let you know, like, "Wow, things are changing really fast"?

Jeff Burnstein:

Well, I think, again, the intelligence of the robotics. You can teach them something and then they can teach themselves now. They learn by doing. I also think the fact again that you can work side by side with the technology safely if you've done the proper risk assessment. There was a case recently that drew a lot of attention, a robot playing chess with somebody and who injured the child.

Albert Chou:

That's right.

Jeff Burnstein:

That was a terrible, terrible application of robotic. Technology. Never should have been allowed. If you don't do a proper risk assessment, all of this is unsafe. If I've got a robot, we used to have them behind cages for a reason. It was because you didn't want people getting hurt. One of the things that our association does is develop robot safety standards. We take this stuff very seriously. You have to do a proper risk assessment. You have to have the proper safeguards in place before you put a robot next to a person.

Okay. So the robot might not hurt you if it bumps into you. Well, what if it's holding a knife that will hurt you? So you really have to pay attention to these safety standards. But the fact that you could have a robot next to you not holding a knife and work collaboratively with it, that's a huge advance. These machines are there to help us. And if they can be close to us, that's another way that they can help us. We can have them do the task and we're overseeing it. Or we're doing part of the task and they're doing part of the task. That's the way to really leverage the value of these technologies.

Albert Chou:

When you were saying that, I was thinking immediately of my friend who owns a restaurant. He was talking about one of the hardest jobs of staff is the prep cooks because it's basically chopping. They're not actually chefs. It's like chopping all the food so it's easy to cook.

Jeff Burnstein:

Exactly.

Albert Chou:

It's like, why couldn't that be automated? It feels like it should.

Jeff Burnstein:

It can be. Some people are doing that in that space because there's a shortage of line cooks. And a lot of restaurants can't open now. I travel all over the country. You do too. You can't get into a restaurant on certain nights because they're closed. Why? There aren't enough people. The other thing is in a restaurant there's a lot of tasks, right? Clearing the table of the dishes, the dirty dishes, bringing the orders back from the kitchen to the table.

Albert Chou:

Yeah, food running. Yeah.

Jeff Burnstein:

I try and play restaurant tours sometimes and I say, "What would I do with this technology?" I would have the robots do that. I would have the people talking to the customers, "Hey, would you like to try this new appetizer we've got tonight or this new wine we just got in? How would you like to sample that?" And if you do that, more people are going to spend more money in the restaurant because the customer is going to feel like, "Oh, well, yeah, somebody told me that." The worst application in a restaurant in my opinion is the kiosk. Now I go to airports where they have the kiosk. I can't ask them any questions. Is this good? Is it not good? What should I be ordering? I can barely figure out how to use it because I'm not all that technical, but that's not the best use. The best use is to let the people do what they're good at, talk to the customers.

Albert Chou:

Well, I agree with you full-heartedly there. I've had the privilege... Or not privilege, whatever you want to look at it, but I think a lot of people have worked in the restaurant industry. And you're absolutely right. When I was a server, most of my time was spent running around. I know that if I spent time talking up the wine list, for sure, the wine list and the beer list, I would get tipped out bigger.

Jeff Burnstein:

There you go.

Albert Chou:

That's how it goes.

Jeff Burnstein:

Now there's another example. Robots in hotels, right? Delivering things to the room. Now, at first I talked to a company that makes a robot like that recently. They were saying at first the people in the hotel were resistant because like, "What's this robot going to do?" And then they realized, "If I have the robot deliver the toothpaste and the toothbrush or shaving cream, that's okay. Let me deliver the champagne." Why? Because the person delivering the champagne is going to somebody who's buying champagne and likely to give him a bigger tip.

Albert Chou:

Very smart. And listen, I think that for the longest time, a lot of people have been resistant to automation, meaning the public. That people say it's going to take up jobs. But I think history has already proven that technology doesn't take away jobs. It just creates new ones. Otherwise, we would still be using plows. I don't know. The hand drawn plows.

But the exciting thing I hear when I hear you talk about it is, number one, the small companies that are now being able to participate. Companies, more innovation from different people, I think that's going to accelerate things. The other thing that you said that I hang onto is the software element is going to make these products smarter. So in our chef example, basically you need the robot to recognize what it's cutting. It needs to recognize how to cut that thing. So it's got to have all these different... It's basically got to be smart because no one wants to come to the robot like, "We're doing carrots. Push a button." Then they're going to bring all... You know what I mean? "We're doing peppers. Do push a button." I know what you're thinking, is like, they're going to want it to cut on demand whatever needs to be cut in the way they need it cut without thought, without human intervention.

I think the way you describe it is exactly the future, which is going to be it's a blend. It's a blend of human interaction and machines are going to handle some of the things that it's not really... We're suited for repetitive tasks. People, inherently your mind gets bored of doing the same thing. That's just who we are.

Jeff Burnstein:

Yeah. And especially when you think about a system that has more automation in it, the people are still the most important component. This is what you have to understand. These technologies can do a lot, but somebody's got to decide what should they be doing and how do we take advantage of all the data that we can get from what they're doing and how do we improve because of the technology and how do we make our lives better because of the technology. Not just in our jobs, but our lives overall.

We're talking about elder care robots now. That's the one I'm interested in, right? So you have to really look at how to take advantage... They're tools. If you didn't call it a robot, if you'd call it a computer, you wouldn't be afraid of it now, right? As to the jobs issue, we've looked at this since 1996. We found something really interesting over this whole period of time. Whenever robot sales go up, unemployment goes down. And when robot sales go down, unemployment goes up. The economists tell us, "Oh, you're not proving causation. You're just showing a correlation." And I'm like, "Yeah, but you are not proving that robots are job killers if during the greatest period of robot expansion in the United States over the last decade unemployment fell from 10% to 3.5, where record lows right now but there's great expansion of robotics." How is that a job killer? That's a job enabler. Let's make our jobs better in creating more jobs.

Albert Chou:

I like that. I like that point right there. To anyone who's a nonbeliever, it's like you can't prove that it's killing jobs basically. Well, Jeff, it was awesome having you on the show, but before you go, it is time for the lightning round.

The lightning round is brought to us by Salesforce Platform. The number one cloud platform for digital transformation of every experience. Jeff, this is where we ask you questions outside the world of work so I can get to know you a little bit better. Are you ready?

Jeff Burnstein:

I'm ready.

Albert Chou:

Okay. If you could have something automated for you personally right now, what would it be?

Jeff Burnstein:

Oh, that one's pretty easy. I hate doing the laundry. I don't like doing it so I don't do it. My wife hates that I don't do it probably. So I would love a robot to come in there, throw this stuff in and fold it and put it up in our room.

Albert Chou:

Listen, we had LG. LG's leader of their innovation department on our show, that's the first thing I said to him. "You got to figure out a way to fold clothes because people hate folding clothes." It's just a tough one. Where are you based right now? Where do you live?

Jeff Burnstein:

Near Ann Arbor, Michigan. Our office is in Ann Arbor.

Albert Chou:

And we looked you up. You are a University of Michigan grad. Is that accurate?

Jeff Burnstein:

Go blue.

Albert Chou:

Okay. So you're a big Michigan fan.

Jeff Burnstein:

I am. Huge Michigan fan.

Albert Chou:

What is the best part about the University of Michigan? If someone were to perspective think "I want to go there"?

Jeff Burnstein:

The best part about the University of Michigan, incredible academics. I was an English major by the way.

Albert Chou:

Me too.

Jeff Burnstein:

Oh, wild.

Albert Chou:

Yeah.

Jeff Burnstein:

My brother's a professor of screenwriting there, so I'm very partial to the screenwriting program. So yeah, University of Michigan is a great place for academics. The sports of course. I mean, I'm a big sports fan. Great football teams. Basketball teams. So I mean, it's a beautiful campus. I just love the University of Michigan.

Albert Chou:

There you go. My son's an ice hockey player. He wants to play at University of Michigan, but I'm like, Hey, listen, they put-

Jeff Burnstein:

Great hockey team. Yeah, great hockey team.

Albert Chou:

They put out a lot of NHL dudes so I don't know.

Jeff Burnstein:

They do.

Albert Chou:

Well, Jeff, it was a lot of fun having you on the show. Thanks for describing what A3 is. Thanks for describing what Automate, the show, is. It sounds like an exciting place. For anyone interested in going, check out automate.org. You'll be able to see and get more information about the organization as well as the event.

Jeff, it was awesome having you on the show. Thanks for sharing some of the stories. I agree with you in your perspective on automation. I see it as a blend. It's always going to be a blend. And I agree, I think this is good. I think more automation is good for society, because the reality is we don't want to do repetitive things. We, people, we just don't like doing it. Listen, the next thing that we also need to solve is how to get kids to school because I've been stuck in some carpooling. It's a bigger problem. We got to figure this out.

Jeff Burnstein:

Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much. I enjoyed being here.

Albert Chou:

Awesome. Thanks for joining us today on IT Visionaries.

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