

# NEC/XON Summit 2017: Embrace automation - you have no choice



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

8 Nov 2017

Mark Hosking from Juniper shared some thoughts on the journey from automation to autonomy in his presentation, 'The self-driving network: From automation to autonomy', at the sixth annual NEC/XON Summit.

Hosking says there's a lot of fear and misunderstanding around the topic of automation. He shared with delegates Juniper's vision of how we can label that in the world of networking under the banner of the self-driving network. He says automation is going to happen and urged delegates to open their minds to the idea and to start thinking about it in another way if they are uncomfortable with the idea.

To illustrate this point, he showed this picture:



Some people will read 'opportunity is nowhere', while others will read 'opportunity is now here'.

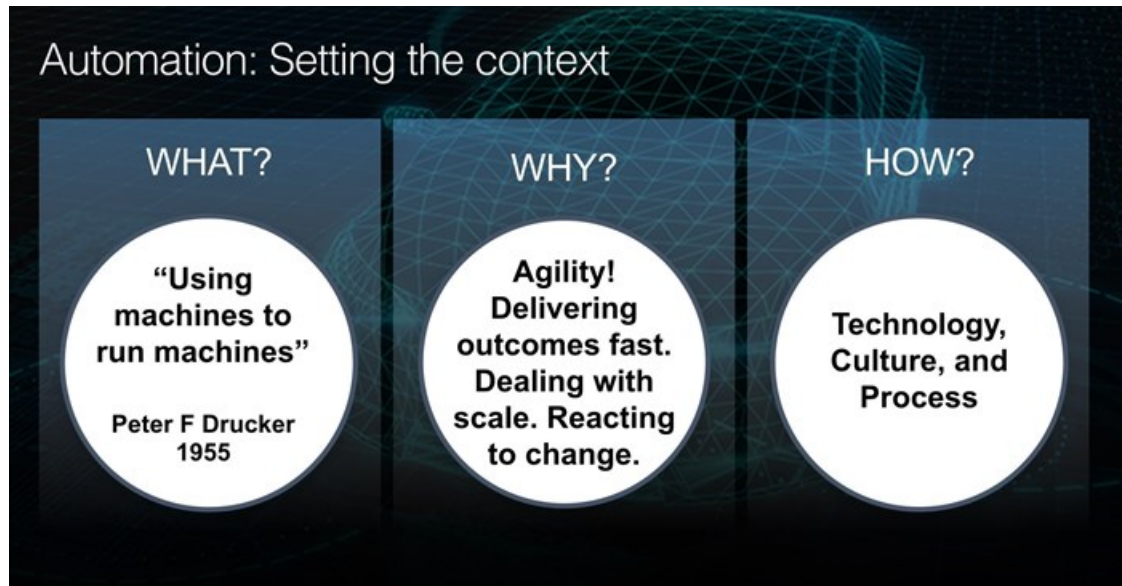
"I used that as a very simple example of a paradigm shift," he said. "Looking at the same thing from a different perspective often changes it completely. And that is something that has to happen with automation in IT," he continued.

“ What is automation, why are people doing it, and how does it happen? ”

According to Hosking, it's very simple. He gave a definition from Peter F Drucker from the 1950s: "Using machines to use machines."

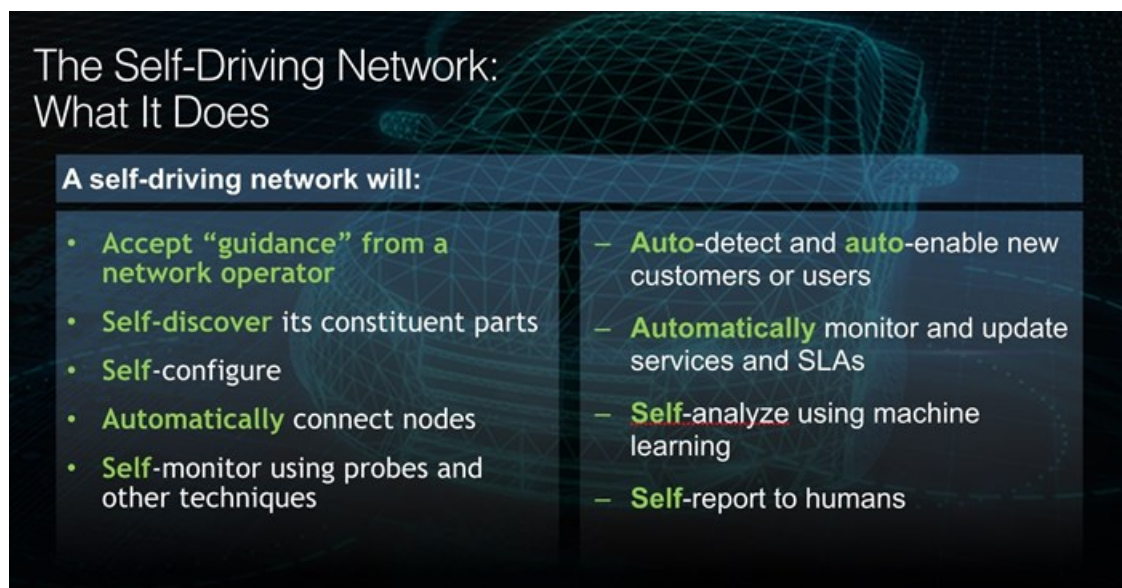
Why do we have to do it? "Well, it depends on your specific requirements, but this is about agility. This is about being able to react more quickly to the demands of the business and being able to capitalise on opportunities in the market."

How do you achieve it? Hosking is of the opinion that technology alone will not get you there. When it comes to automation, what it comes down to is people, process, and technology - not technology alone.



## What will a self-driving network do?

It's not going to drive on its own, it will accept direction from humans who are declaring where they want the network to go but then the network will take over and do a number of things:

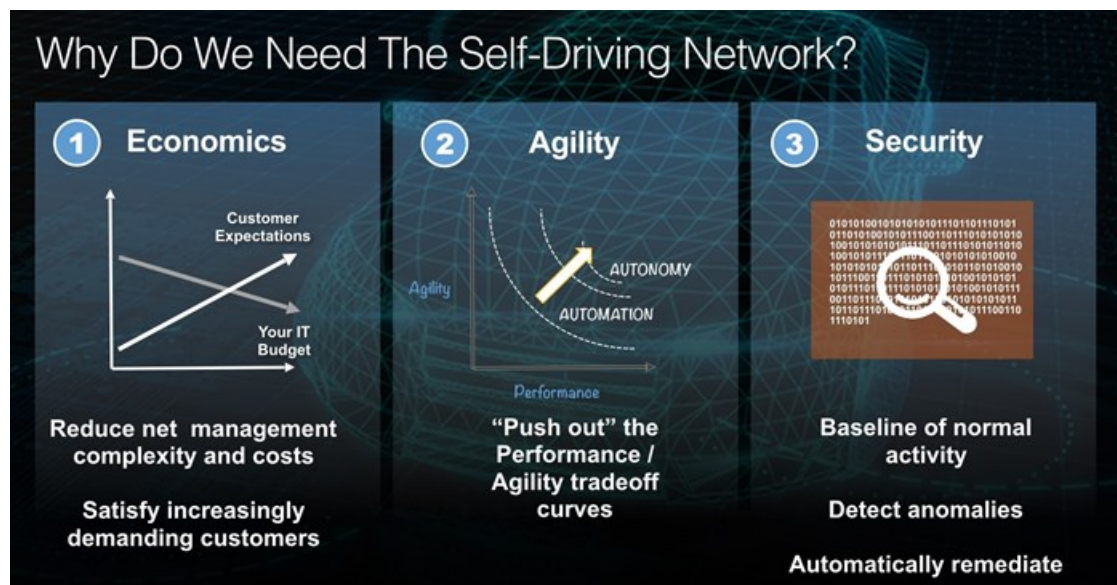


He showed delegates a very simple schematic of a self-driving network but said that when they talk to customers about self-driving networks, they're not saying they will make things simple. The complexity will always exist. The trick behind a self-driving network is to shield the humans from that complexity. Hosking says that is what Juniper's technology is helping

customers to achieve on this journey to a self-driving network.

## Why do we need the self-driving network?

"You have no choice, you have to embrace automation," said Hosking.



Customers' expectations are rising and the reality is, IT companies are facing a challenge to become more and more efficient with the resources they have at their disposal. At some point, if you're not embracing automation, your customers' expectations will exceed your ability to deliver. "At that point, there's going to be big problems. So economics are absolutely driving the need for automation," he said.

Secondly, there's agility. Agility means different things to different people. "We'll often meet customers who have exceptional performance networks, that are very robust and whose compliance with security are all on standard, but they're not very agile. And then we'll meet customers that are extremely agile, who can do anything, but it is a mess - there is no compliance, and performance is best endeavours."



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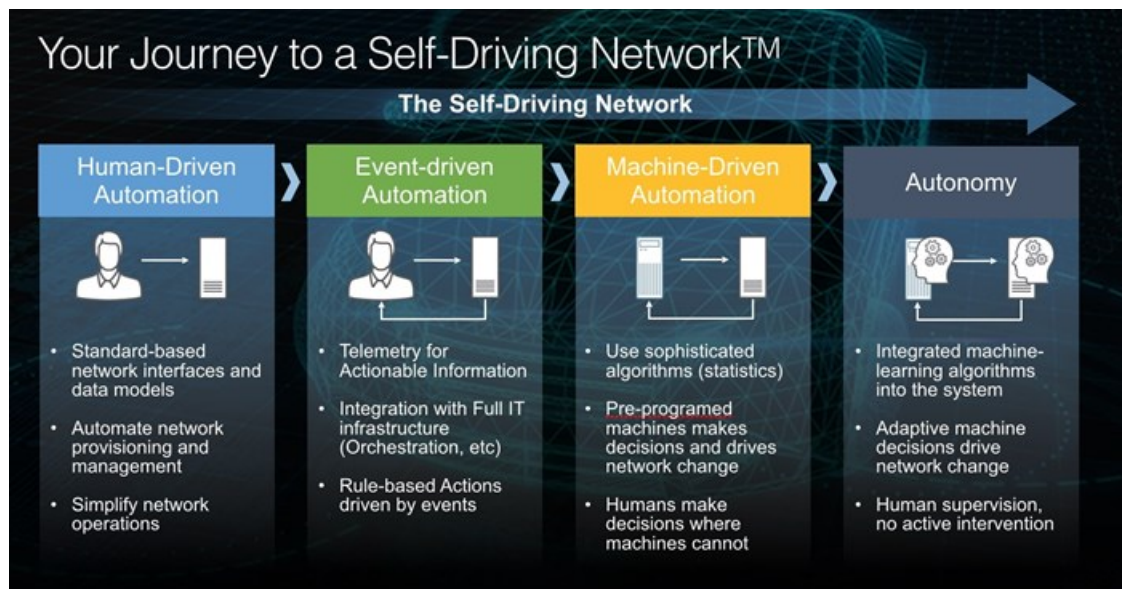


When it comes to automation, it's about the ability to push out the trade-off curve between performance and agility until you reach a point where you'll have high performance *and* high agility. That's what automation will help you achieve.

Lastly, there's security. Hosking says automation is the only way that you have any chance of defining a benchmark for your business, being able to minor that across a wide variety of assets, and being able to enforce that.

Automation needs to be thought about in four very simple steps: human-driven automation, event-driven automation, machine-driven automation, and autonomy.





## Five technologies

Juniper focuses on five technologies for self-driving networks:

1. Automation
2. Telemetry
3. Multidimensional views
4. Declarative intent (eg. getting into a self-driving car and telling the car where you want to go, that's where your job ends. You just declare the outcome you want)
5. Decision making (where AI capability comes in)

Once again, he says it's all about a paradigm shift. Don't focus on the *what*, focus on the *how*. If Henry Ford would have asked people what they needed before he invented the first car, they would have probably said faster horses.

Hosking ended off by saying there's something you can do today.

**“ You need to get going with automation, otherwise you are going to become extinct. ”**

## ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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