

Data is king. It is arguably the most important commodity that exists today. Without data there is no AI. Data is the foundation of knowledge and understanding. There is only one thing worse than no data and that is bad data. It is incumbent on all of us in the water business to ensure that good quality, valid data is published on a regular basis in order to move the industry forward in a positive manner.

When startup technology companies are created they generate new datasets that should be published as soon as possible. Once the data is vetted by the company and the customer, it can be provided to the general public for peer review. Publishing technology-related information can take many forms. Articles in magazines and in on-line forums can be prepared. Presentations at conferences can be given. Case studies can be developed for content to be used by the company as well as the customer. Peer reviewed articles and studies can be performed and published. All of these allow for the information to be spread through the industry, and, for valuable discussion about the technology's efficacy and value proposition to occur.

There are many reasons why new data should be published; providing multiple benefits to multiple stakeholders.

Innovative technology companies generate value by introducing their products and services to the marketplace, so as to gain traction and get noticed. It is essential for utilities to collaborate with the innovation company to ensure this is accomplished.

Utilities gain value by showcasing their innovative philosophy and new technology developments in order to reduce costs and better serve their customers.

There is value to venture capital companies whereby they can independently verify the potential of startups they are interested in investing in.

There is value to engineers, researchers, and designers in that this new knowledge can be used to inform how projects are approached and what is now possible in the industry.

There is value to other utilities whereby they can analyze the efficacy of the innovative technology, in order to determine if they want to evaluate it in their system.

Utilities have a responsibility to collaborate with technology providers and publish data. This work was performed with public or ratepayer funds. Public funds should be used to create content and knowledge that benefits society as a whole, not just the entity who performed the work.

It is important for new technology companies to show how their offerings are differentiated from other traditional products. Innovative technology companies need to create their "origin story" in the literature, so that the results they have achieved can be referenced and critiqued by others.

There are some issues with publishing data. Some utilities do not want specific information to be made public concerning their financial or operational situation. Some technology companies do not want to publish poor or average results even though this may be a value to the consumer.

Notwithstanding these issues, technology efficacy and value proposition content can be developed in a collaborative manner without jeopardizing any sensitive information. Utilities and technology providers should work together from partnership inception, to plan for the publishing of generated data. This will vet technological innovations and help move the industry forward.