

## Spotlight on Andy Chapman: Leveraging Bridging Innovation

### *Bridging Innovation SME Interview*

When Andy Chapman joined MITRE four years ago as a retired Marine, he started working on unmanned systems, a completely new area to him. When he talked about his 3D printing hobby during his interview, he had no idea it would turn into a specialty in advanced manufacturing. Joining forces with other subject matter experts to leverage the commercial, off the shelf, market, he brought drone capability to his sponsor, the Marine Corps, leading to more experimentation on modular, scalable, unmanned autonomous systems.

Andy puts everything in the context of capability development for his sponsors, from prototype to concept of operations all the way through to experimentation. Finding out what technologies they could bring together, how to simulate operations with human-in-the-loop experiments, and finally scaling that to testing out autonomous systems in the real world: “All of those things inform all the other things, ultimately on the end you kick out something that is operationalized and useful to the warfighter.” When he initially meets with a sponsor, he first tries to find out where they fit in that continuum.

The Bridging Innovation network has introduced Andy to some startups that help demonstrate the art of the possible. He’s leveraged the network for connections in a particular technology area. Since his sponsor is very focused on emergent technologies, MITRE is able to uncover gaps and opportunities to connect. “The sponsor relies on us to expose them to new technologies.” Since they know the limitations of the technology they’re working with, seeing a startup’s new idea can be inspiring and helpful. Andy says that working with startups helps to spur their imagination and solve hard problems.

One thing he’s learned in connecting sponsors with the innovation community: “The warfighter is inherently innovative. The traditional way of looking at things is that they don’t have the tools to innovate. They’ll get a system, be trained how to use it in a specific way, and it may/may not help with their mission in a direct way...when they adapt, that spirit of innovation, they can harness that to build their own capability to do more mission-focused things.”

Andy faces a common challenge: making time to connect with the Bridging Innovation community. Whenever he attends a meeting though, Andy always feels it was well worth his time. “To know that there are organizations that will help float somebody through the bathtub, get venture capitalists, get exposure in the defense network... helps everybody and is very valuable.” If anything, Andy said he wish he got involved in Bridging Innovation sooner. Take this as his nudge to get involved today!