

TRANSFORMATIONAL GROWTH LEADERSHIP

From Automation to Autonomy: How Momenta Is Powering a Smarter, Greener Industrial Future

An Exclusive Interview with

Ken Forster

*Founder and Executive
Director of Momenta*

in conversation with

Karthik Sundaram

Research Director at Frost & Sullivan





As traditional industries embrace digital transformation, one venture firm is leading the charge — not just with capital, but with conviction. **Ken Forster**, Founder and Executive Director of **Momenta**, shares how his team is shaping the future of energy, manufacturing, and supply chain systems—using industrial AI and automation to unlock both economic and environmental impact.

Key Transformations Impacting the Industry

Karthik Sundaram: Ken, how has Momenta's mission evolved as the industrial landscape transforms?

Ken Forster: We are living through one of the most profound industrial shifts in decades. AI, automation, and robotics are rewriting the playbook. At Momenta, we define ourselves as venture industrialists—

investors with deep operating experience who guide and scale digital-first startups across critical industries like energy, manufacturing, smart infrastructure, and supply chains.

Our mission is clear: **to create outsized economic and environmental value** by accelerating industrial innovation. By 2030, we believe this space will represent over **\$6 trillion** in economic value—and we are helping build the companies that will lead it.

Where Innovation Is Accelerating Fastest?

Karthik Sundaram: *Where do you see the biggest opportunities for growth in the next five years?*

Ken Forster: We are focusing on three major areas: Industrial AI, software-driven automation, and integrated robotics. Let me break that down for you.

Industrial AI: AI is moving from the IT world into the heart of industrial operations—predicting outcomes, optimizing systems, and driving decision-making across supply chains and production lines.

Software-driven automation: We're shifting from fixed-function machines to cloud- and edge-enabled systems that are adaptable, scalable, and far more efficient.

Integrated robotics: Collaborative, modular robotics that can flex across industries and break free from proprietary ecosystems. This opens the door to agile manufacturing at scale.

Together, these trends are pushing us toward autonomous operations—a shift that's closer than many think.

Technologies Industrial Leaders Are Overlooking

Karthik Sundaram: *Which emerging technologies do you think most industrial leaders aren't paying enough attention to?*

Ken Forster: The biggest one that stands out to me is industrial AI. Whether it's generative AI or embedded AI, it's creating a layer of intelligence that automates processes and optimizes systems before they even go live. This technology is already improving resilience, reducing waste, and driving operational efficiencies. What we're seeing today is just the beginning; its impact is going to accelerate rapidly.

Frost & Sullivan's **Transformational Growth Leadership Program** aims to honor visionary business leaders who possess the foresight and leadership acumen to drive positive change within their organizations. The leaders we celebrate hail from diverse sectors and company sizes, yet they all share an unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence.



From Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0: Why is it significant?

Krishna Srinivasan: *How do you see the transition from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0 and why is this shift so significant?*

Ken Forster: We've been part of the European Union (EU)'s Industry 5.0 initiative from the very beginning. To us, Industry 5.0 is about more than just automation, it's about putting people at the center. Industry 5.0 is essentially Industry 4.0 with a conscience. It's built on three main pillars:

Human-centricity: It's about using technology to enhance human capabilities, not replace them. The goal is to create work environments that are fulfilling and empowering.

Sustainability: Ethical manufacturing, renewable energy, and reducing waste are core to Industry 5.0. It's not just about profits; it's about making the world better.

Resilience: In today's uncertain world, flexibility is key. Industry 5.0 focuses on creating production systems that can rapidly adapt to changes in demand, consumer shifts, and global crises.

We believe this shift is long overdue, and its importance is becoming more apparent every day.



Spotting AI Startups That Will Last

Karthik Sundaram: *How do you differentiate AI startups that are built to last from those that are simply chasing trends?*

Ken Forster: This is a critical question. It's similar to previous technology waves, like the hype around blockchain. But for us, the key differentiator is industry expertise. All the companies we invest in are led by founders with deep knowledge. AI isn't a magic wand for them—it's a tool to drive real-world solutions. For instance, companies like **Edge Impulse** (edge AI), **Composabl** (industrial AI), and **Luffy AI** (embedded adaptive AI) are led by founders with decades of experience in their respective industries. They understand that AI is only as good as the problem it's solving. Startups are gaining momentum and surely changing the competitive landscape.

Europe's Strategic Role in Industrial Tech

Karthik Sundaram: *How do you see Europe's position in the industrial tech ecosystem, especially compared to Silicon Valley, given the growing interest in AI?*

Ken Forster: Europe plays a massive role in industrial tech. In fact, it generates more than half of global revenue in this space and is home to many of the world's largest industrial companies. However, Europe faces some challenges, particularly when it comes to scaling. European startups have strong foundations but often lack the networks and capital needed to expand globally. For example, we have companies in our portfolio like **Spray Vision** from Prague, **NODE Robotics** from Germany, and **AICA** from Switzerland, all of which have great potential but need more global exposure. Europe's industrial fundamentals are strong, but it needs a better ecosystem for scaling and global reach.

“We are not just investing in automation—we are enabling autonomy, sustainability, and human-centric innovation at scale. The next industrial era won’t be defined by technology alone, but by how wisely we apply it to solve the world’s toughest challenges.”

— Ken Forster, Founder and Executive Director of Momena

Where Disruption Will Hit Hardest

Karthik Sundaram: Among your focus domains—energy, manufacturing, smart spaces, and supply chains—where do you see the greatest opportunity for disruption?

Ken Forster: Energy and supply chains have already seen digital transformation. Manufacturing is next—especially as geopolitical pressures drive reshoring and localized production.

This shift demands **smaller, smarter, and more resilient production systems**. Medium-sized manufacturers, in particular, are now aggressively adopting digital tools to stay competitive.



Responding to Uncertain Trade Policies and Geopolitical Chaos

Karthik Sundaram: With the challenges posed by uncertain trade policies and geopolitical uncertainty, what is your vision for the future?

Ken Forster: Winston Churchill once said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” In our experience, crises often accelerate the adoption of new technologies. For example, during the Ukraine conflict, we saw drones and other digital technologies rapidly deployed. Similarly, during the pandemic, the shift to remote work was much faster than anyone expected. In terms of our investments, we’re well-hedged, with a strong presence in both Europe and North America. Our partnerships with companies like Nippon Steel and Advantech also provide strong support in Asia-Pacific (APAC), allowing us to stay flexible and seize emerging opportunities.

Looking Ahead: Megatrends to Watch

Karthik Sundaram: *What do you think will be the future of digital industries over the next five years?*

Ken Forster: We are moving from **automation to autonomy**—and it will happen faster than most people think. In industrial sectors, we are already on that path.

The real leap will be when systems can **optimize and adapt in real time**, with minimal human intervention. That's where productivity and sustainability intersect—and where innovation will truly scale.

Final Thoughts: Building the Next Industrial Era

Digital transformation isn't just an opportunity, it's a responsibility. As Ken Forster and Momenta demonstrate, the future of industry lies not just in smarter systems, but in sustainable, resilient, and human-centered solutions. The companies they're backing today are reshaping how the world powers, produces, and provides—and laying the foundation for the next industrial revolution.





Ken Forster | Founder and Executive Director of Momena

Ken Forster, a digital industry veteran with 30+ years of experience, is the Founder and Executive Director of Momena, a top venture capital firm. He has led 100+ investments and scaled 150+ industry leaders. Momena was named one of PitchBook's top 10 venture firms in 2023. Ken also contributes to the European Commission's Industry 5.0 initiative.



Karthik Sundaram | Research Director at Frost & Sullivan

Karthik Sundaram is the Research Director at Frost & Sullivan with 18+ years of experience. He established the Industry 4.0 program and now leads research on digital industries. He has authored 75+ reports and led 50+ advisory projects, focusing on industrial AI, digital twins, automation, and robotics. Karthik is based in Frankfurt, Germany, and holds an electrical engineering background.

Join the Movement: Stay Ahead in this Rapidly Evolving Industrial Landscape

At Frost & Sullivan, we're inviting industrial leaders to collaborate and shape the future of automation-driven transformation. Our Transformational Growth Leadership Program equips organizations with the insights and expertise needed to thrive through these changes.

Next steps on your growth journey:

- ▶ **Book a Growth Strategy Session** – Align your industrial transformation strategy with Frost & Sullivan's proven frameworks for success.
- ▶ **Engage with Growth Experts**—Work with our coaches to discover tailored solutions that address your organization's unique challenges.
- ▶ **Join the Growth Council**– Become part of an exclusive network of forward-thinking OEMs, suppliers, and ecosystem innovators shaping the future of the industry.
- ▶ **Explore New Growth Opportunities**– Unlock untapped potential through strategic partnerships, data, and cutting-edge technologies.

Annexure: Key Trends Shaping the Future of Industrial Technology and Sustainability

As Momena leads the way in driving smarter, greener industrial solutions, a broader landscape of technological innovation is unfolding across energy, manufacturing, and supply chain systems. To deepen your understanding of these pivotal trends and explore the future of industrial technology, we invite you to explore these curated thought leadership resources and market analyses from Frost & Sullivan:

- ▶ [Frost Radar™: Electronic Computer-Aided Design, 2025](#)
- ▶ [Global Open Automation Growth Opportunities, 2025](#)
- ▶ [Industrial Inspection Robotics, Global, 2024–2029](#)
- ▶ [Growth Opportunities in the Industrial AI Market](#)

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Frost & Sullivan's Growth Pipeline Engine, transformational strategies and best-practice models drive the generation, evaluation, and implementation of powerful growth opportunities.

Is your company prepared to survive and thrive through the coming transformation?

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