



Fifteen Years of Modern Grid Solutions: A Journey of Reinvention, Resilience, and Relationships

By Dr. Mani Vadari, President, Modern Grid Solutions

In late April 2011, I boarded a flight to Atlanta for what I thought would be the next step in a long corporate career. I had spent two and a half years at Battelle — a place I fully expected to retire from — and was interviewing for VP roles, including one at GE. The interview went so well that the business leader asked me to stay and meet his entire leadership team. There was only one catch: I would need to relocate to Atlanta after nearly 30 years in Seattle.

I still remember calling my wife Anu from the hotel. She listened quietly and then said the words that changed everything: *“Why do you want to work for someone else? Start your own company. Be your own boss. You can do it — I believe in you. Come home.”* Those words redirected my life.

On May 2, 2011, after a whirlwind of name-searching and logo-sketching, Modern Grid Solutions (MGS) was born. I will always be grateful to our earliest clients — Mitsubishi, Alstom Grid, and Brookhaven National Lab — who trusted a brand-new company and gave me the confidence that MGS could become something meaningful.

Junji Kitaguchi of Mitsubishi asked me to help shape their U.S. demand response strategy, which ultimately contributed to their acquisition of Smarter Grid Solutions. Michael Atkinson at Alstom Grid welcomed our new venture with the words, *“Finally, we can just work with you,”* and helped us sign our first MSA with Alstom Grid — a relationship that continues to this day. And Jim Misewich at Brookhaven brought us in for a series of projects, including the end-to-end design for New York’s Center for Grid Innovation and my role as technical architect for the NY REV initiative.



The Early Years: Doing Everything, Everywhere

In the beginning, we said yes to everything, and I mean everything.

EMS/ADMS/OMS requirements. Process redesign. M&A support. Distribution automation in Dubai. Smart Cities work around the world. PMU placement for NYPA. Control center metrics for East China Grid. If it touched the grid, we were there.

Around 2012–2013, I joined forces with JD Hammerly and The Glarus Group (TGG), a friend and valued colleague of over 30 years. Together, we built something greater than either of us could have done alone. Whether a project was MGS-led or TGG-led, clients always experienced one unified team. That partnership began with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) and Seattle City Light and has continued across dozens of engagements. I remain deeply appreciative of JD's partnership and the role it has played in the Modern Grid Solutions journey.

The Strategic Pivot

By 2016–2017, it was clear the industry needed something different. Consulting had become heavy on process and technology, but light on deep domain knowledge. I made a deliberate pivot toward strategic advisory work, helping utilities and vendors position themselves for transformation, not just implementation. That shift allowed us to grow beyond our core expertise in system operations and expand into utility gas and electric planning, wholesale and retail markets, and now the rapidly evolving world of data centers.

That shift changed everything. Over the next decade, our work expanded dramatically with Exelon, Duke, Puget Sound Energy, and others. And today, we find ourselves at the center of one of the most consequential shifts in modern infrastructure: the intersection of utilities and data centers.

Fifteen Years Later: What I Still Think About

Anniversaries invite introspection. I often ask myself:

- Did we start too small?
- Should we have taken bigger bets earlier?
- Should we have built technology offerings instead of focusing solely on knowledge and content?
- What if we had continued our early global training and eCommerce platform — what might it be today?

These questions don't come from regret, but from curiosity. They remind me that growth is never linear, and that reinvention is part of our DNA.

The Scoreboard

What we *have* built over 15 years is something I'm deeply proud of.

Clients and Markets Served

- 22 utilities across the U.S., Canada, the Middle East, and China
- 4 wholesale power markets
- 32 utility product and service suppliers
- 5 National Labs
- 2 data center clients and 3 energy-sector innovators

Leadership, Service, and Industry Roles

- 3 nonprofit organizations founded
- Advisor/board member roles with 4 companies

Publications, Thought Leadership, and Knowledge Creation

- 3 books published, with a fourth on the way
- An organically grown newsletter — State of the Grid — from 61 subscribers to more than 6,000
- 30+ issues of “Watt’s on Mani’s Mind”
- 40+ industry blogs
- 30+ papers and articles
- 4 industry-acclaimed white papers

New Ventures and the Expanding MGS Ecosystem

- Modern Grid Academy (launched in 2025)
- Modern Grid Simulations (in development)
- Modern Grid Press (home of *OMS Unlocked*)

Together, these pieces form something larger than any single project: an enviable brand, a trusted voice, and a team of deep experts with no equal in the industry.

What Comes Next

Fifteen years in, I feel the same excitement I felt on day one, but with far more clarity. The grid is transforming faster than at any point in modern history, shaped by the convergence of energy, computing, data, and intelligence. MGS is not simply adapting to that future. We are working to stay ahead of it to actively shape the future of the grid.

Our role has always been to connect the dots between people, information, technologies, and strategies so that our clients can navigate complexity with confidence and clarity. We have built a team of deep domain experts who understand not just where the industry is, but where it is going. That ability to bridge worlds, to translate across disciplines, and to see the system as a whole is what defines the Modern Grid Solutions brand.

As new challenges emerge, from extreme weather to AI-driven operations to the unprecedented demands of digital infrastructure, MGS will continue to lead with the same principles that shaped our first 15 years: passion, curiosity, and a commitment to building a smarter energy future.

To everyone who has been part of this journey, including clients, partners, colleagues, and friends, thank you. Your trust built this company. Your challenges sharpened our expertise. And your belief in our work made these 15 years possible. Your friendship and support strengthened us at every stage of this journey.

Here is to the next chapter, and to the connections still to be made.