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NEWSLETTER

Accreditation of PROFIBUS design and installation companies

PROFIBUS is a proven networking technology with many years of robust application in industrial environments around the world. While the majority of customers report little or no problems with system operation or uptime even after years of continuous use, a few report continuous struggles with network stability. Something does not add up!

Inconsistencies and network instability

The answer has nothing to do with the technology itself but can rather be traced to serious inconsistency on the part of network installers in the quality of network design, layout and installation. Often personnel with general wiring experience, but no particular training in the requirements for robust PROFIBUS network operation, are tasked with designing or installing expensive, production critical systems. The results are seen by the PROFIBUS Competence Centre on numerous site visits where apparently simple network requirements, such as using PROFIBUS compliant cable or remaining within prescribed cable lengths, are ignored - resulting in network instability.

Solution

The first stage in the solution to this problem was achieved in 2004 with the establishment of South Africa's first internationally accredited PROFIBUS Competence Centre. The Competence Centre provides the South African Industry with internationally certified PROFIBUS training to increase the skills' level of those installing and maintaining PROFIBUS systems. The difference was soon noticed and many PROFIBUS end-users have started requesting installation companies to prove that they have attended the Certified PROFIBUS Training before commencing work. However, there was still no simple directory for an end-user to find companies that had

trained PROFIBUS staff or an easy method for them to make sure that the correctly trained people were involved in the necessary stages of installation.

'PROFIBUS Accredited Company'

To this end the Southern African Regional PROFIBUS Association (SARPA) has vastly simplified this process through the creation of a 'PROFIBUS Accredited Company' concept. PROFIBUS Accredited Companies are installation and design companies which have signed a simple code of conduct agreement with SARPA to follow acceptable PROFIBUS installation principles and which use personnel with the necessary level of training for PROFIBUS tasks. Any complaints with installations or designs carried out by such companies should be directed to SARPA. SARPA has committed to assisting in sorting out all such problems even where this may require sending PROFIBUS Competence Centre engineers to inspect the site installation.

How do companies become accredited?

SARPA has made the process of becoming a PROFIBUS accredited company as painless as possible. The basic requirements are:

- The company will use only certified PROFIBUS engineers for network design work.
- The company will use only certified PROFIBUS installers for network installation and should have at least one PROFIBUS Installer or Engineer in its employ.
- The company will have all completed installations inspected by a certified PROFIBUS engineer.
- The company will be a member of SARPA.

For more information, contact the PROFIBUS Competence Centre on 011 548 9960.

Progress towards common wireless interface

One year after its formation, the Wireless Cooperation Team (WCT), has achieved a number of milestones towards the development of an interface specification and compliance guidelines to integrate a universally accepted wireless solution into HART, Foundation fieldbus, PROFIBUS and PROFINET communications networks. The common interface is intended to make it easier for end-users to take advantage of evolving wireless technologies.

The collaborative effort of the WCT is sponsored by the Fieldbus Foundation, HART Communication Foundation, and PROFIBUS Nutzerorganisation e.V. (PNO), to facilitate the acceptance of wireless technology in the manufacturing and process industries worldwide. These organisations are represented by team members from leading industry suppliers.

"The Project Team has made good progress this year toward the ultimate goal of a specification for a common interface to a wireless gateway with the output supporting HART,

FOUNDATION fieldbus, PROFIBUS and PROFINET communications' technologies," said Martin Zielinski, chairman of the WCT Project Steering Committee. "We are on track to validate a new specification and compliance guidelines in 2009."

Among the milestones achieved in 2008 were the establishment of requirements and architecture for PROFIBUS, PROFINET and Foundation fieldbus.

The three sponsoring organisations have been collaborating on the Electronic Device Description Language (EDDL) since 2003, forming the WCT in September 2007.

About the organisations

The HART Communication Foundation (www.hartcomm.org) is an international, not-for-profit, membership organisation supported by more than 200 companies worldwide. Founded in 1993, the Foundation is the technology owner and central authority on the HART Protocol and provides global support for more than 24 million devices installed worldwide. The Foundation manages and controls the

HART standards including new technology developments and enhancements that benefit and support the needs of the industry.

The Fieldbus Foundation (www.fieldbus.org) is a not-for-profit corporation consisting of over 350 leading process and manufacturing automation companies worldwide whose major purpose is to provide an open and neutral environment for the development of a single, international, interoperable fieldbus.

The Profibus Nutzerorganisation e.V. (PNO) was founded in 1989 as a non-profit organisation. The PNO is owner of the PROFIBUS and PROFINET technology and responsible for further developments (www.profibus.com). With 25 regional organisations all over the world, 1 400 member companies and about 2 500 different products, **PROFIBUS & PROFINET International** is currently the world's largest interest group for industrial communication covering all key aspects of industrial automation. More than 28 million PROFIBUS products are currently installed worldwide.