Open Integration Partner Programme
enables IIoT exploitation

Softing industrial automation has joined the Endress+Hauser Open Integration Partner Programme, reinforcing this Open Integration network of 13 leading instrumentation, actuation and communication manufacturers. Endress+Hauser's Jörg Reinkensmeier and Thomas Hilz from Softing Industrial Automation explain the important role the partner programme plays for the ongoing success of IIoT solutions.

Jörg Reinkensmeier

How can field instruments and components be easily integrated into automation systems? The answer to this question is becoming increasingly important as the digitalisation of industrial production progresses. The Endress+Hauser Open Integration Partner Programme unites 13 manufacturers who want to ensure the streamlined interaction of their products and communication specialist, Softing Industrial Automation, joined the programme at the beginning of 2020.

These open Integration partners test and document the interaction of their products for typical process automation applications. Users profit in two ways, by being able to combine the best products for each application and through fast commissioning. Automation technology suppliers value the advantages of the Open Integration Programme as well. For these companies, it's important to be able to detect potential problems early and solve them prior to installing their products at the customer site.

"We go well beyond the established test methods within this programme, by scrutinising the functionality of complete system architectures in a lab environment," explains Jörg Reinkensmeier, marketing manager at Endress+Hauser. "We do that for specific fields of application or customer solutions. After successful completion of the tests, the so-called reference topologies are published in the form of mutual recommendations."

Thirteen companies currently belong to the programme. All the partners are suppliers of control technology, fieldbus infrastructures, measurement technology or actuator technology: Auma Riester, Bürkert, Festo, Flowserve, Hima Paul Hildebrandt, Honeywell Process Solutions, Mitsubishi Electric, Pepperl+Fuchs, Phoenix Contact, Rockwell Automation, Schneider Electric, Turck and, most recently, Softing Industrial Automation.

Softing Industrial Automation is a leading provider of software and hardware products designed to integrate technologies and data in factory and process automation environments. "Our companies have enjoyed many years of successful co-operation, which has now manifested itself in our decision to join the Open Integration Partner Programme," says Thomas Hilz, Softing Industrial Automation.

"The reliability and outstanding quality that we know from Endress+Hauser is also a top priority at Softing Industrial Automation. The company and I are looking forward to the coming years in which we will be helping our partners with the connectivity of their sensors," Hilz adds.

"Softing Industrial Automation strengthens our partner programme with further expertise in the area of data exchange and providing information at the field level," continues Reinkensmeier.

"Apart from networking process control technology, connectivity is playing an increasingly important role for IIoT solutions. Our aim is to exploit this potential together with all of our Open Integration partners," he concludes.

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How AI can mitigate RSA's energy crisis

"The energy industry is rapidly expanding its use of mathematical optimisation across a wide array of business areas, from supply chain management to clean energy production," says Mark Collingwood, FICO vice president for decision management solutions in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. "The adoption of FICO Xpress Optimization at enterprise level will streamline and improve energy providers' existing decision processes, while building on the success of previous projects."

South Africa presents itself as the perfect candidate for Xpress Optimization as it has had an ongoing energy crisis leading to load shedding, dating back to 2007. According to the CSIR Energy Centre, load-shedding has cost the economy as much as R338-billion; in 2019 alone, the country experienced 530 hours without power, at a cost of up to R120-billion.

The Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme (REI4P) was introduced as part of the Integrated Resource Programme 2010-30. Its objective was for 17.8 GW of renewable energy to be produced in South Africa before 2030. The plan was later updated to diversify the energy mix to address the insufficient energy capacity problem. But despite these efforts, South Africa finds itself on the backfoot as the COVID19 outbreak has forced the country to pause load shedding, which was expected to continue for a further few months to ease the load on the energy suppliers.

But what are energy providers across the world doing to optimise energy efficiency in a world that faces this challenge in an ever-expanding global economy?

FICO® Xpress Optimization has the ability to move computing of even the largest energy providers to the cloud, develop new business opportunities and power up global decisioning processes. With Xpress's flexible licensing model, global energy providers, such as Uniper, are now able to upscale cloud infrastructure as needed, delivering faster results and creating new business opportunities.

"Uniper needs the smartest technology available to inform our energy production decisions, which is why Xpress models run at the core of a number of our decision processes," said Colin Silvester, senior modelling expert at Uniper. "The first-class service we've received from the FICO team for the past 20 years only cemented our recent decision to upgrade our Xpress solution to enterprise-level. FICO has earned its reputation as a leader in Optimization technology."

Uniper has used FICO® Xpress Optimization on seven previous projects to maximise value from volatile energy markets over the past 20 years, and with this enterprise-level upgrade, Uniper will be able to further expand its existing projects through better Energy storage modelling; Energy asset management; and Commercial optimisation of heat and power assets. ❑