

Looks the same, works better:

Updated controls for heat-treating furnaces

New software and hardware for factory-floor automation let **Ipsen International**, Cherry Valley, Ill. (www.ipsen-intl.com), standardize on a single user interface and controller for its heat-treating furnaces.

Before Ipsen consolidated on a single system, the company offered two levels of control and human-machine interfaces (HMI) on its machines. The standard level just monitored and controlled equipment via DOS-based software running on a touchscreen computer, both from **CTC**, the factory automation division of **Parker-Hannifin** based in Rohnert Park, Calif. The more sophisticated Level II version used the same hardware but includes supervisory Scada features for such tasks as uploading process recipes (i.e., heat and pressure profiles the furnace followed).

In the last few years, however, most customers shifted to the

... Continued on p. 30



Technicians control and monitor Ipsen's heat-treating furnaces using a computer and display from CTC, a division of Parker-Hannifin Automation. The computer and display are flexible enough that Ipsen could make the current controls look like their older ones, but with more capabilities.

... Continued from p. 29

more-sophisticated system. But the cost of software for the Level II system was a problem. It ran \$4,200 for a runtime license and \$1,800 to \$2,500 for the PC to run it. Yearly support fees were also significant, says Alex Hagler, Ipsen software engineering manager.

"We wanted to offer the same architecture of the more sophisticated system, but at a lower cost," says Hagler.

"We explored different options, but could not afford to switch until the release of InteractX, and upgraded version of the Interact software we were already using for our Level I system."

Ipsen now uses Windows-based InteractX running on PX Powerstation PCs, both from Parker-Hannifin Automation's CTC. Ipsen has long used touchscreens from CTC. "We knew PX industrial com-

puters would be reliable, and cost less than alternatives. And because they come bundled with the software we wanted to use, we save time and money," says Hagler. The computers are dedicated machines running only InteractX, so customers never need upgrade the Windows OS.

InteractX let Ipsen standardize on a single control package. The software and HMI is flexible enough to keep the look and feel of earlier control displays. Thus operators and field technicians need no retraining.

"And the InteractX programming language is easy; none of our engineering staff needed training," says Hagler. "So I no longer split my engineering staff to handle both systems."

"The software made it easy to consolidate to one system," says Chris Muldowney, spokesperson at **Tek-matic**, Loves Park, Ill., the distributor that worked with Ipsen in converting to CTC systems. "The software ultimately added more functions and made it more open. For example, operators can now switch displays between German, English, Chinese, and even Japanese, at the touch of a button, a big plus in international markets. And while the old system would store 60 recipes, the new system is virtually unlimited."

Hagler agrees that the new system is more flexible and open. "We can now meet customer's networking demands using Ethernet to interface with whatever plant system they have. And we can provide any data they need from the PLCs because the system is an open gateway."

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