



Starter Kits Make CC-Link Adoption a Simple Step

Engineers considering developing CC-Link Open Network enabled versions of their own products can now use starter kits developed by the CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA), designed to make the process simple.

Open networks allow field devices made by many different manufacturers to communicate freely within an automation network. One of the leading protocols in this field, CC-Link, has over 250 companies making thousands of enabled devices. The global installed base is almost 9 million devices and in Asia, it's considered a de-facto standard in many industries including automotive and flat panel displays.

"CC-Link enabled products are proving a valuable asset for western companies building a presence in Asia's booming manufacturing economies," observes CLPA's Acting General Manager John Browett.

"To help new companies get on board and keep this momentum going, the CLPA has produced a range of starter kits that make developing devices for the network as easy as possible."

"We figure that if you are trying to get your head around Chinese culture and business practice, import and export requirements, finance and cashflow, you don't also want the headache of also having to learn all about a new communication protocol that is essential for access into this market. The starter kits mean engineers are free to concentrate on their core competence of designing their field devices – we take care of the protocols."

There are three levels of kit. Kit 1 is an evaluation kit for 'first timers' and aims to teach them the technical basics and benefits of CC-Link. It includes an embedded network adaptor, which is simply added to a field device to make it compatible with a CC-Link network. It also includes registration with the CLPA to provide access to technical and commercial support. Browett explains that this is really a 'learning' kit, allowing potential users to test the waters and evaluate the potential of CC-Link.

The Intermediate Kit (Kit 2) includes CC-Link network ASICs and is intended to allow an actual product that handles digital I/O only to be developed. Hence companies whose main product lines are devices such as I/O, valve blocks and other simpler "on-off" type of devices will want to take this route.

The Advanced Kit (Kit 3) opens up the full capabilities of CC-Link, by using a more sophisticated ASIC to handle word and bit data handling. "This is complete CC-Link device functionality. Yet despite the advanced features, implementation is straightforward as the ASIC handles all the network communications transparently, allowing the designer to concentrate on the product features. For companies who are looking to implement devices that handle more complex data, such as analogue values, this would be the kit to choose.

"Some of CC-Link's key strengths are its ruggedness and interoperability. These are maintained by an emphasis on thorough conformance testing. This testing is included in each applicable starter kit. With the kits you can go from basic evaluation of the network to developing more complex devices that communicate data with a master controller. All kits include the necessary basic components to do the required development."

"The kits are not just a box of components; they also contain appropriate documentation and technical support from the CLPA. Kit 1 provides a registered membership with the CLPA; Kits 2 and 3 offer full regular membership of the CLPA, including access to its Gateway to China Programme which helps companies penetrate deep into the heart of China's diverse and complex manufacturing infrastructure." Gateway to China includes the support of leading network technology companies, Hilscher and HMS. Their netX and Anybus technologies also provide a rapid way to implement CC-Link into products."

Browett concluded by noting that full details of each kit are available by visiting the CLPA website www.the-non-stop-open-network.com and selecting the "Technical Resources" section.



About the CLPA

The CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA) is an international organisation with over 1,600 member companies worldwide. The partners' common objective is promotion and technical development of the family of CC-Link open network technologies. Over 1,100 certified products are now available from over 250 manufacturers. CC-Link is the leading industrial fieldbus in Asia and is becoming increasingly popular in Europe and the Americas. The European headquarters is in Germany, with offices throughout the continent.

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