

Connecting to Asia

How CC-Link connectivity paved the way for HMS's success on the Asian automation market

"If you want to sell industrial automation equipment in Asia, you need to make your products compatible with the predominant industrial networks on the Asian market, and CC-Link is definitely one of these networks," says Jörgen Palmhager, Chief Operating Officer at HMS Industrial Networks. And he should know. HMS is one of the few European electronics companies that has successfully managed to venture into the demanding Japanese industrial automation market, and is now expanding into China.



Jörgen Palmhager - Chief Operating Officer
- HMS Industrial Networks

Many industrial automation companies today want to tap into the vast Asian markets such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan and, perhaps most importantly, leverage on the enormous potential in China. But how do you make industrial equipment attractive on the Asian market? According to Jörgen Palmhager, Chief Operating Officer at the Swedish industrial communications firm HMS Industrial Networks, CC-Link connectivity will be a key factor.

Need to speak the language

"We make industrial connectivity products which act as translators between industrial devices and different industrial networks," explains Jörgen Palmhager. He continues: "Connectivity is definitely a key to success when establishing in Asia. If you want to do business in a certain country, you first need to speak the language. It's the same thing with industrial networks."

With the explosion of fieldbus networks in the 1990s, HMS quickly realized that CC-Link was one of the core networks to offer connectivity solutions for. Since then, HMS's Anybus-solutions have successfully helped many industrial automation companies establish in Asia. By network-enabling devices for CC-Link, HMS's customers have gained access to Asian industrial automation markets such as tire, FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) and bearing manufacturing where CC-Link is especially strong.

Today, HMS offers several network-enabling solutions for CC-Link. These solutions include both embedded interfaces to be integrated into drives, robots, weighscales etc., but also stand-alone gateways which offer quick and easy connection to CC-Link for any industrial device. "The fastest and easiest way to get CC-Link connectivity is undoubtedly to use an external gateway giving you instant access to CC-Link without any changes to your device," Mr. Palmhager explains. "But with an embedded solution, you get CC-Link connectivity inside your product, which can be a great advantage if you want to offer your products to a plant with a CC-Link network."

Savings possible

Using a ready-made Anybus module is generally 70% cheaper than developing a connectivity solution

in-house, and when installed, it is possible to simply switch the module to gain access to 20 other industrial networks. This modularity also enables users to become future-proof and compatible with upcoming networks. The protocol conversion is quick and does not slow down the communication between the devices and the network.

Simplicity and stability

"We work with all the major networks on the market and see many benefits of CC-link from a network perspective, especially when it comes to simplicity and stability," Jörgen Palmhager continues. "CC-Link is a straight-forward protocol to work with. As an engineer, it is easy to set up the first communication and understand where to access data. It is also a robust network which requires few upgrades."

Comprehensive conformance testing

As a network connectivity company, HMS sees the differences between networks when it comes to both technology and support from the different user organizations. "When it comes to conformance testing, CC-link definitely has one of the most rigorous tests on the market today," says Jörgen Palmhager. "You feel that your products are scrutinized and thoroughly tested to handle market demands. Many of our customers appreciate this, and also the fact that we do a lot of work for them when it comes to pre-conformance testing."

Important for the future

"CC-Link has been an important network for us," concludes Jörgen Palmhager. "It is the dominant network in Japan and gaining market shares in expanding markets such as China and Korea. The newer Ethernet versions, such as CC-Link IE Field is a good platform to develop the protocol for future needs with profiles for drives, energy savings etc. Consequently, we will continue to offer CC-Link compatibility for customers wanting to expand into Asia, both for the fieldbus versions of CC-Link and for the newer Ethernet versions. CC-link connectivity will be an important aspect for any industrial automation company wanting to tap into the expanding Asian market. "