



Global networking specialist HMS acknowledges the importance of CC-Link

In a recent report released by the Swedish networking specialist and CLPA partner HMS Industrial Networks, CC-Link ranks as the fourth most important fieldbus technology worldwide. Further, despite the established trend towards Ethernet based networks, HMS estimates fieldbuses to still account for two thirds of the industrial network market.

According to HMS' analysis, industrial Ethernet installations are growing at 17% per annum now, accounting for 34% of the industrial network market. In contrast, fieldbus networks represent 66% of the market and are growing at 7%. This information is calculated from analysing global figures for the number of new installed nodes in factory automation networks.

The analysis shows that while both fieldbus and industrial Ethernet networks are growing, Ethernet is growing faster. This bears out the trend for the market shifting towards industrial Ethernet, with the growth of Ethernet based technologies significantly greater than fieldbus.

Another significant finding is that different networks are strong in particular regions. As expected, HMS is seeing strong demand for CC-Link in Asia, with Japan being a key market. "With more than 25 years of experience in industrial communication, we have a very good insight into the industrial network market," says Anders Hansson, Marketing Director at HMS Industrial Networks.

"We see a shift towards industrial Ethernet but the migration to industrial Ethernet is taking longer than first expected. We get a lot of requests for connectivity to both fieldbus and industrial Ethernet."

Hansson continues: "What is completely evident, however, is that the network market remains fragmented and that industrial devices are getting more and more connected. This is accentuated by trends such as the Industrial Internet of Things and Industry 4.0."

One organisation that supports both fieldbus and industrial Ethernet is the CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA), whose European General Manager, John Browett, says the figures support his organisation's view that the future of industrial networking depends on Ethernet.

Having understood that the transition to industrial Ethernet would be a long-term proposition, the CLPA decided to make sure its CC-Link IE (industrial Ethernet) technology would offer significant technical advances, and hence a compelling reason to upgrade. The chief benefit CC-Link IE offers is that it is the only open industrial Ethernet technology that provides gigabit speeds and hence the highest levels of productivity.



Commensurate with increasing plant-wide connectivity, CC-Link IE is able to handle large amounts of data. For example, today's automotive production lines build different models with multiple variations in options, trim levels, etc., simultaneously. The real-time data requirement is intense, but can easily be met with CC-Link IE's gigabit capabilities. Further, the current industry paradigm shift that has been named "Industry 4.0" in Europe is dependent on bandwidth in order to deliver its claimed benefits. CC-Link IE is uniquely positioned to deliver the necessary bandwidth with its gigabit performance.

However, the CLPA is also sensitive to the significant investment companies have already made in manufacturing systems that use fieldbuses. While CC-Link IE is undoubtedly the leading technology for the future, the CLPA has been careful to make sure that connectivity with existing CC-Link fieldbus networks is also possible. Hence the upgrade path for companies planning new systems is straightforward. In fact, many of the skills and knowledge involved with designing, building and maintaining CC-Link systems are directly transferable to CC-Link IE systems.

Meanwhile, HMS, supplier of products for industrial communication and an active member of the CLPA, is actively supporting companies looking to embed CC-Link IE technology in their own products. Their "Anybus" line-up offers CLPA certified devices that provide an industry standard way to embed this market leading technology.

Browett concludes, "Device makers worldwide are dependent on third party companies like HMS to implement CC-Link IE solutions. However, a variety of suppliers is also important. This is why the CLPA is also partnering with industry leading companies such as Renesas and Mitsubishi Electric to offer a range of CC-Link IE connectivity solutions to meet different design goals and ensure the broadest coverage of application requirements."

Image caption: Recent analysis released by the Swedish networking specialist and CLPA partner, HMS Industrial Networks, shows that while both fieldbus and industrial Ethernet networks are growing, Ethernet is growing faster.

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About the CLPA

The CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA) is an international organisation with over 2,300 member companies worldwide. The partners' common objective is promotion and technical development of the family of CC-Link open automation network technologies. Over 1,400 certified products are now available from more than 290 manufacturers. CC-Link is the leading open industrial automation network technology in Asia and is becoming increasingly popular in Europe and the Americas. The European headquarters is in Germany, with offices throughout the continent. The CLPA's main initiative for Europe is the Gateway to Asia (G2A) programme, which helps European businesses develop their Asian business further. More details are at www.cc-link-g2a.com.



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