InstruLogic
CONTROLS. AUTOMATION. INSTRUMENTATION.

Ask these 4 Questions before your next SCADA Project

In life, experience is a great teacher. Smart people learn from their own mistakes. Smarter people learn from the mistakes of others.

Most treatment operators will only see 2-3 major SCADA upgrades in a career. That is not much of an experience base. And to complicate your learning curve, the industry and SCADA technology are rapidly changing. What made sense 10 years ago may not apply today. And what seems to make sense today, may not 5 years from now. We see about 60 SCADA upgrades a year. We have seen what works and what doesn't. We know how to get the most "*bang for your buck*" at initial purchase and how to manage costs for the long haul. More importantly we are focused on emerging trends and their future impact. From over 30 years serving the measurement and control industry, we suggest the following questions to make your next SCADA project more cost-effective and less painful.

Open Systems or Proprietary?

This is a fundament decision. Open Systems have revolutionized the computing world, igniting innovation while driving down costs through increased competition.   Nevertheless proprietary vendors carve out a niche in many technical markets with those who can be satisfied with limited functionality and are unconcerned with the potential of future innovation. But there are risks associated with investing in proprietary or single-source systems. The most obvious problem is that the supplier you choose today will be your single-source for updates, support and future enhancements for a decade or even longer. If your single-source supplier has financial problems, the company changes ownership or goes out of business, service and support will be affected and possibly unavailable. Or if like Apple™, they change the way they do business or significantly increase prices you will be stuck without many options or leverage to negotiate. A worst case scenario would be system replacement in order to regain control over support costs.

On the other hand, Open Systems provide buyers with options. Should your initial supplier no longer provide the best service and support, you can easily find another. If a costly upgrade is needed, there will be options and leverage for competitive pricing.

Who will support it after installation?

Many times a focus on initial purchase price leads to longterm consequences. The old saying, *"you buy cheap, get cheap"* certainly applies to the Measurement & Control industry. Many low-bidders don't service what they sell. They *"get in"* with a low price. Then *"get out"* immediately after final acceptance and will *"get back to you"* only when there is a new project on the table.   Many suppliers focus only on the *"big prize"* and do not provide comprehensive post installation service and support.

This may be an acceptable scenario if you have a full-time in-house staff to support your systems. But if not, some investigation into the availability of post installation service is called for. Your vendor evaluation should include gathering metrics for the number of techs available for post installation service and response time guarantees.

Which HMI?

Another place that a singular focus on initial purchase price will have long-term consequences is the selection of the HMI or SCADA software. SCADA software is just one component of the overall system. But more than any other component of a Measurement & Controls projects will determine user satisfaction and drive long-term costs.

Some SCADA software vendors charge for every user seat, every tag and every screen. Others sell by the server. Some offer unlimited tags and an infinite number, user seats and connections. And while this distinction may not be visible in the original purchase price it can be costly in the future should you want to expand your system. If in the future you add remote monitoring, the wrong SCADA software selection will cost you. If you want to integrate with other IT systems, the wrong SCADA software selection will cost you. If you want to change or enhance your monitoring and control strategy, the wrong SCADA selection will cost you. If you purchase the right SCADA package these system enhancements won't result in increased licensing fees.

So it is worth investigating the licensing practices of the SCADA software being proposed to make sure your low initial price doesn't result in higher long term cost.

How do you want to pay for it?

The traditional way to obtain Measurement & Control Systems has been a large capital outlay with an expected 10-year life span of diminishing capability followed by another large capital outlay to replace aged and unsupportable systems.

An attractive alternative to purchasing your next SCADA system is obtaining SCADA functionality from a Managed Service Provider. Instead of a large up front capital expenditure, you pay for it out of operating funds. Instead of unpredictable support costs, you have a fixed recurring monthly subscription. System repair is included and component obsolescence is the service provider's responsibility. Best of all, system management services are covered by the monthly subscription.

For small to medium scale treatment operations, obtaining SCADA from a Managed Service Provider like InstruLogic's **Service SCADA** offers a more cost-effective and predictable alternative to traditional purchase options.

Request a quote for Service SCADA. www.instrulogic.com/service-scada-quote-form

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