

Finding the Right Control System Integrator for Your Plant Automation Project

Norman O'Leary, Executive Director, Control System Integrators Association

Where can you find a competent control system integrator? That's a question we're frequently asked by manufacturers.

The fact is, nearly everyone has a perception of control system integrators (CSI) and how they can add tangible value, and minimize risk, with their participation in a project.

But calling one's company a CSI is just a start. It is quite another matter to have in place the organization, capabilities and relevant experience that raise the bar to a level that enables a control system integrator to consistently and competently provide the necessary professional services manufacturers expect in automation projects.

We're talking about services such as vision and planning consulting, functional requirement specs preparation, solutions development, project management,

installation and start-up, and training and ongoing support. Equally important, the control system integrator should have specific industry plant floor control and information experience. This should include applications covering a broad range of automation projects.

Look at the depth and synergy of the CSI's personnel. One lone expert in your industry or application just won't cut it. Staffing should include qualified and ample backup for all technology specialists to ensure efficient and effective completion of multiple and parallel projects.

And the question most often overlooked: Would the potential CSI choice score equally well as a good business practitioner?

Separating control system integration "performers" from "pretenders" is what the Control System Integrators Association (CSIA) is all about. We assist our CSI members by helping them develop effective business skills, providing standards for sound business practices and demonstrating how to incorporate insightful metrics to ensure implementation of best practices that provide a healthy, low-risk channel for the application of technology.

Additional help is available in the CSIA two-volume set of guidebooks, *Selecting and Working with a CSI*, available at http://www.controls.org/find/howto_guides.htm.

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