GLOBAL INDUSTRY FOCUS

ISSUE 001

FOR EVERYTHING ELECTRONICS & OFF-BOARD

In This Issue:

Industry Leaders

Adapting to change and embracing diversification - how our industry showcased innovation and proved its resiliency in navigating the Covid-19 crisis

The BUSINESSES and the PEOPLE behind the PRODUCTS and SERVICES

September/October 2021

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GLOBAL INDUSTRY FOCUS

Welcome everyone to the inaugural edition of Global Industry Focus!

After a unprecedented 18 months for not just the electronics industry but the entire globe, we are excited to be able to bring you a publication that delivers a real focus on individual companies and their staff, those people that have weathered the storm and successfully navigated a path through the most challenging of times.

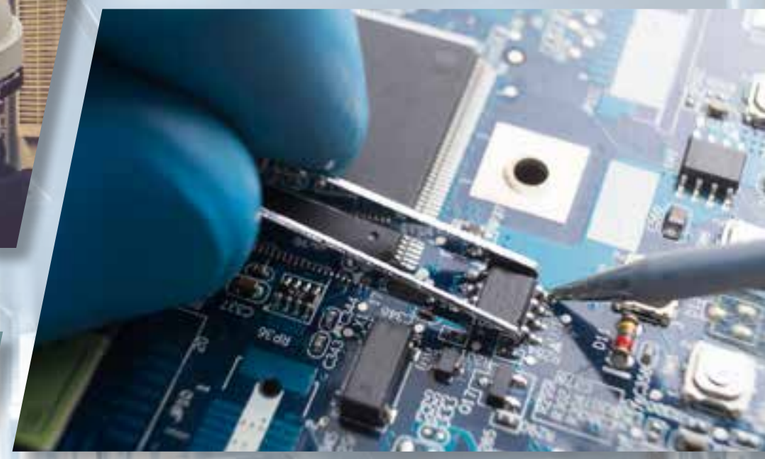
Over the last months, we have spoken to many companies about the hurdles they have overcome and continue to face, and we feel privileged to bring you their stories in this first issue of Global Industry Focus. Even before the current crisis, changing technologies and new ways of working were disrupting jobs and the skills employees need to do them; the coronavirus pandemic made this question even more urgent.

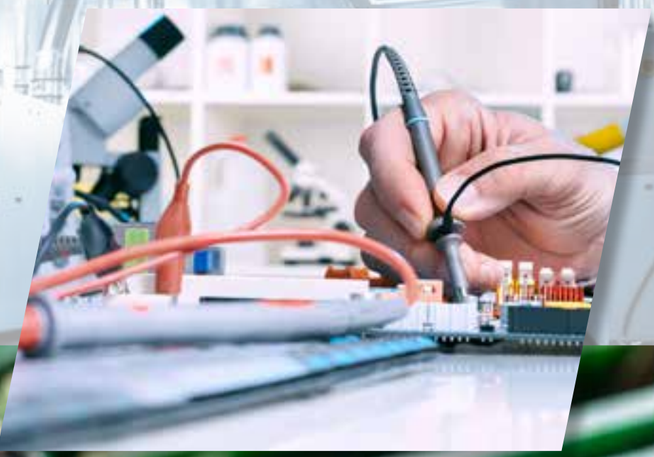
Companies have had to figure out how to adapt to rapidly changing conditions, and in some cases diversify and attempt to future proof their businesses going forward. This dynamic is about more than remote working—or the role of automation and AI. It's about how industry can reskill and upskill the workforce to deliver new business models going forward. What we find on the other side of this pandemic may not look like the normal of recent years, and companies will require real resiliency and innovative thinking to move ahead successfully.

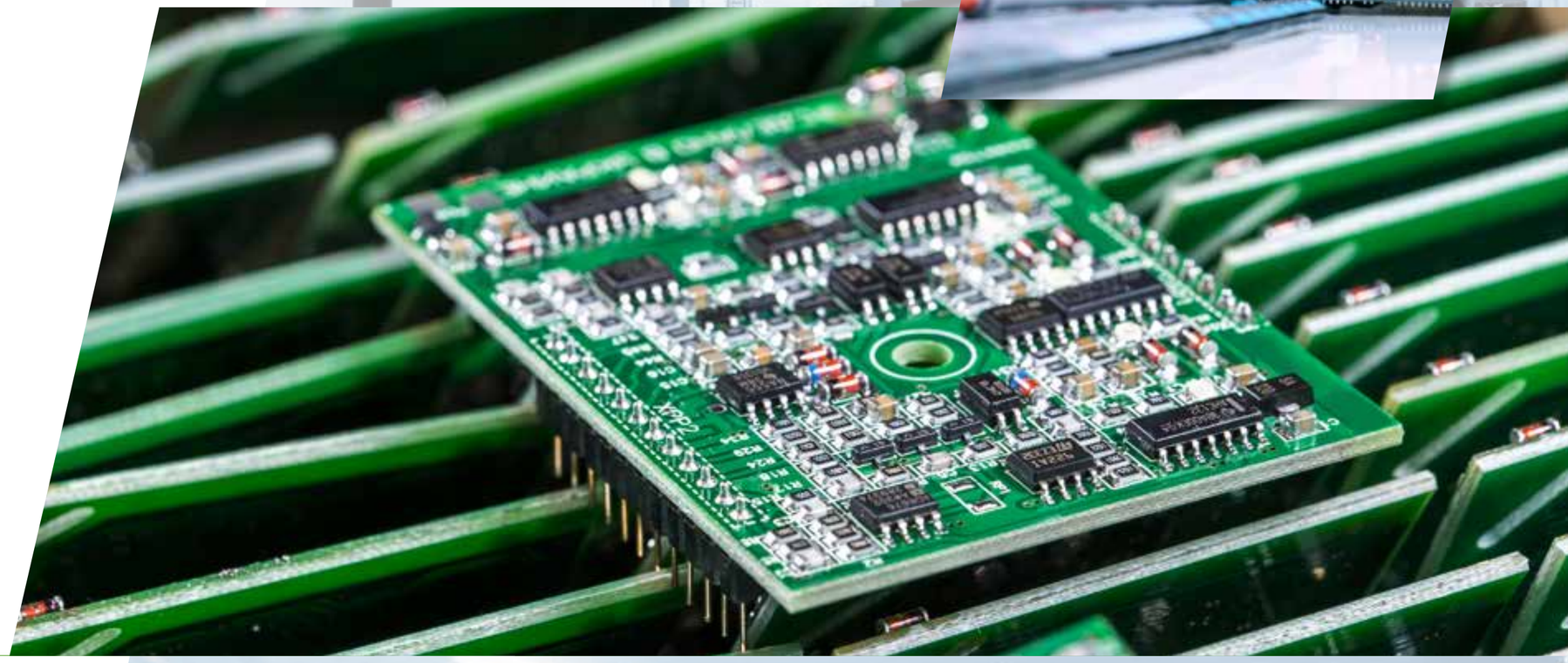
As a publication, we are aiming to bring you exclusive content from across the electronics and off-board spectrum, and we would love to hear your own experiences and news so that we can deliver a rounded and full picture of our industry to our readers.

We hope you enjoy Global Industry Focus!

Kirsty Hazlewood
Editor







Interview with Juergen Ries, Chief Executive Officer, ASYS GmbH

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

We diversified our business already before the Corona situation. Our company has always stood on three stable pillars: we grew up in the electronics sector, but have also built up a convincing portfolio in the solar sector and are growing steadily in the life science sector. In the meantime, we have expanded the solar sector, so that we now speak here of the Energy business field. In addition to metallization lines for PV production, we are a strong partner in fuel cell production and are also expanding our competencies to the battery sector. This broad market positioning has helped our company to achieve stability during the crisis. Our business in life science was striving during this time, as well the energy sector was strong, since especially car industry shifts in new engine technologies.

Furthermore, we can draw on a broad product portfolio: With over 12 product groups, we can offer comprehensive solutions - everything from a single source is our motto. Our claim is to provide customers with comprehensive support and to back them up. Especially during the crisis, we were able to offer our customers security and reliability.

Overall we could use the time well to finish our structural adjustments and set the path on growth with our Automate, Digitalize & Connect Mission in all our three business areas – electronics, energy and life science.

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities regarding business which were not necessarily apparent before?

We have seen these opportunities before already and as mentioned this helped us to strive in other business areas such as life science. We were ready to ship for instance final assembly solutions for covid 19 test kits when the crisis started, so for ASYS this situation just accelerated our business strategy. Our permanent striving for automation in production also benefited us during the crisis. Our customers often had to cope with staff shortages. Many of them therefore increasingly looked for solutions that allow operator-independent processes. This is where we come in with our comprehensive material logistics solutions and the PULSE PRO software suite, which acts as a higher-level control tool in manufacturing. In the meantime, we can build a fully autonomous line for our customers, which we will show at Productronica this year.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

Thanks to our diverse portfolio and customer mix we were in the fortunate position that we didn't feel much affect. Other than other companies we had full order books and all our manufacturing was working full time to keep up with customer demand. Internally, we digitalized our processes and flexibly adapted to the given regulations depending on the situation - whether multi-shift operation in production or mobile workstations in administration. We were able to switch very quickly and thus always keep operations flowing.

How has your company achieved a more diversified business model and how important is this to mitigating disruption?

This was always the strategy of our two founders, Mr. Kreibl and Mr. Mang. Over the course of the last 29 years the company always grew into new technologies and business areas. With 20 daughter companies, diversification in technology and business is somehow in our DNA. Next year, we would like to celebrate this with our customers and partners at our 30th anniversary.

How have you diversified your products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

We just kept path on our strategy. For sure more digital services have been added, but our general product strategy is centred around our mission Automate, Digitalize & Connect and it has proven to be just the right strategy to weather such kind of crisis. What do we mean by that? Automation is our core, it's what started it all. We offer our customers innovations that make a difference and we are agile, flexible and solution-oriented in our services. Digitalization is the inspiration behind our innovations. We accompany our customers step by step in their change process and are a reliable partner on the way to the smart factory. For us, connect means creating something new through connections. We connect machines with machines, machines with people and people with people. We share knowledge in order to offer our customers the greatest possible benefit from our solutions.

SUSTAINABILITY

As Covid has proved, the costs of a global crisis vastly exceed those of its prevention, do you therefore believe that corporate sustainability is key in order to build the costs of environmental resiliency in a post pandemic world?

Definitely. It is part of good corporate behaviour and ASYS Group was always committed to drive as well such topics. Our strategy is to apply our technology and mechanical engineering expertise across all sectors. In addition to providing a high degree of flexibility, this know-how transfer also provides a basic safeguard for the company and forms a future-proof platform.

In the Energy segment, we bundle the business areas of solar, fuel cells and battery technology, which make a significant contribution to securing a sustainable future.

What sustainability measures have you employed and what impact have these had so far?

We joined the CDP imitative and currently work out our execution strategy for carbon neutrality. CDP rating offers us a transparent and globally accepted rating standard which we are happy to join.

Throughout the entire manufacturing process, at all locations, we ensure responsible use of the resources employed through effective resource management. Here, we are striving to switch to a climate-neutral production chain. At the Dornstadt site, for example, we have been generating electricity from solar energy for over 10 years and offer charging facilities for electric cars.

We see effective resource management as our social obligation to current and future generations.

WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION

How have you implemented workplace transformation since the crisis began and will you continue with any procedures?

Well I guess like most other companies we had more work force in home office, pushed our digitalization agenda, got used to work in virtual teams and as well our customer interactions moved into digital space. Lot of these things we will keep post covid as well since it reduces travel efforts, helps on efficiencies and somehow anyway became part of our daily business life.

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

For sure it is always great to meet customers face to face especially if we can show new developments live on our machine. However, we adopted as best as we could to deliver our customer all latest news of ASYS in an interactive digital way.

Listen to the GIF ASYS Interview with Juergen Ries

ASYS GROUP

Transforming Ideas
Automate, Digitalize & Connect

We installed a permanent video studio and I can say our marketing and product management team became digital natives in that regard. We have great experience with it, even when the live shows come back for sure we will keep our digital channel open in the future as well. Especially with our "ASYS Inside" webinars, in which we report monthly on exciting manufacturing solutions, we have meanwhile made a name for ourselves in the industry. In a humorous and relaxed way, we address exactly the topics that concern our customers. Thanks to digital implementation, we reach our audience worldwide.

What effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training and productivity?

From my feeling the people adopted very fast to it. We found a healthy routine on working in office and from home. Similar to digital marketing – it is here to stay. For sure not in every kind of job it is a possibility, but it will be a healthy mix of hybrid work in the future.

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"Even after many of the restrictions were lifted, we have continued to promote our online training classes"

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

Due to the inability to openly travel, IPC allowed for delivery of remote (online) training and remote proctoring of exams for theory-based classes. Even after many of the restrictions were lifted, we have continued to promote our online training classes as they have been highly successful with positive feedback.

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities regarding business which were not necessarily apparent before?

We have always been set up for online training with the advanced equipment we have here at ART Ltd. This has added us in being the leading IPC Approved Training Partner that we have always been well known for.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

ART Ltd have the benefit of having multiple Master IPC Trainers who could step in if another of our trainers has the need to self-isolate. Our online performance and communication with our customers and students have already been tried and tested and not subject to issues that others may have found.

How has your company achieved a more diversified business model and how important is this to mitigating disruption?

I personally do not feel we needed to diversify, as we have always been flexible in the courses and services we offer, regardless of presentation here at our fully equipped training centre in Essex or at our customers facility.

WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION

How have you implemented workplace transformation since the crisis began and will you continue with any procedures?

Strengthening our online course delivery platform operation, including formal remote proctoring of the course exams to mitigate restrictions on face to face training. This had the added benefit for customers in remote locations worldwide, regardless of pandemic restrictions being lifted.

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

Contact with prospective new customers has proven to be difficult. Zoom and Teams has been a useful tool but obtaining new contacts that are not already known to us has been greatly impeded.
A lack of face-to-face trade shows proved a challenge as navigating online events can be difficult unless the virtual attendee already was aware of our company and the training and services we offer.

What effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training and productivity?

Due to the nature of our business, many of our trainers travel and conduct courses solo so being home based had limited impact.

GLOBAL MATERIAL SHORTAGE

What issues have you experienced regarding material shortages affecting the supply chain and how have these been dealt with?

Lead times on components and equipment has increased. As we also provide our customers with practical kits to be used during their internal training, we have always ensured our stock levels are maintained and not drop below a set level. Staff here at ART Ltd ensure we keep in contact with our approved suppliers regarding material shortages and gain their assistance with alternative parts as and when necessary.

In your opinion, will we see increased counterfeit components now entering the supply chain due to supply issues, and if so, what safeguarding measures will be installed against this possibility?

Yes. Our training of procedures to follow will become more relevant as this issue increases. The use of IPC process controls and process methods needs to be established across the entire supply chain following Requirements Flow down. This provides confidence that procedures, protocols and documentation to prevent counterfeiting and its knock-on effects have been observed as much as possible.

Interview with **Debbie Wade**

Managing Director
Advanced Rework Technology

ADAPTING TO CHANGE / DIVERSIFICATION

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

For us the negative impacts have been raw material supply and shipping issues.Thankfully we are dual sourced on all products so have been able to survive this situation but have had a few close calls ! Regarding shipping this remains a global issue for everyone which we think will only worsen as we approach year end.

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities regarding business which were not necessarily apparent before?

We have seen increases in automotive and white goods related sales but few new opportunities related to the Pandemic. Many new qualifications have been delayed as engineers work from home.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

Yes, agility in sourcing raw materials, moving manufacture between sites where raw material may be in stock or to reduce logistic times.

How has your company achieved a more diversified business model and how important is this to mitigating disruption?

I think the major change to the business model has been zero travel and a large increase in video conferences. I think this is here to stay for quite a while.

How have you diversified your products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

We have not found it necessary to diversify.

SUSTAINABILITY

As Covid has proved, the costs of a global crisis vastly exceed those of its prevention, do you therefore believe that corporate sustainability is key in order to build the costs of environmental resiliency in a post pandemic world?

I believe that the lesson we should learn here is localise manufacture for a more sustainable future.

What sustainability measures have you employed and what impact have these had so far?

Localising supply with multiple vendors giving long contracts.

WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION

How have you Implemented workplace transformation since the crisis began and will you continue with any procedures?

More staff are able to work from home and the office space is shielded with Perspex etc. We will continue to follow these initiatives for the forseeable future. Sales staff are utilising video conferencing but we are now returning to travel where possible..

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

We have invested more in online and magazine advertising and participated in various virtual exhibitions and events.

What effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training and productivity?

The HumiSeal team has coped exceptionally well and productivity has not been affected.

GLOBAL MATERIAL SHORTAGE

What issues have you experienced regarding material shortages affecting the supply chain and how have these been dealt with?

The same issues as everyone, Increased shipping costs with reduced capacity, increased raw material pricing coupled with a large increase in sales. Our growth is limited by raw material supply and shipping capability.

In your opinion, will we see increased counterfeit components now entering the supply chain due to supply issues, and if so, what safe guarding measures will be installed against this possibility?

This is not a new thing for us and we have various countermeasures already in place to validate our materials against any counterfeits.

CHRIS PALIN
EMEIA Manager

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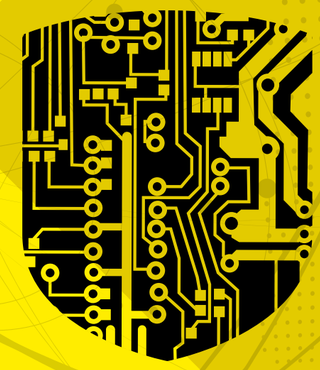


HumiSeal®

Eliminating the Risk of Counterfeit Electronics with Secure Manufacturing

By Michael Tidwell, VP Marketing and Business Development

Counterfeit or fraudulent electronics is an enormous problem for OEMs and device manufacturers, particularly those that rely on a global supply chain and programming and assembly at remote, third-party contract manufacturers (CMs). That's because the electronic device supply chain is not fundamentally secure and can be hijacked by bad actors who clone products, over-produce devices, steal intellectual property (IP) during the manufacturing process, or substitute inferior or counterfeit integrated circuits (ICs) for those originally specified by the OEM.

This unsecured supply chain has obvious financial impacts for OEMs: reports estimate that consumer and industrial businesses lose $250 billion annually due to counterfeit electronic components.

Equally concerning is the impact on safety and functionality that these counterfeit devices present. In 2016, researchers at the Georgia cybersecurity firm BorderHawk discovered security flaws in a common networking device called a remote power manager (RPM) that had been purchased from a Chinese manufacturer. According to the Christian Science Monitor, BorderHawk researchers were working on a different project at a large energy firm when they noticed unusual network traffic on their client's network. Their investigation revealed that the RPM device contained links to a known, malicious domain located in China. The device firmware also contained hidden commands that could be used to obtain lists of user accounts and passwords to access the device and give malicious hackers direct access into data centers and business applications.

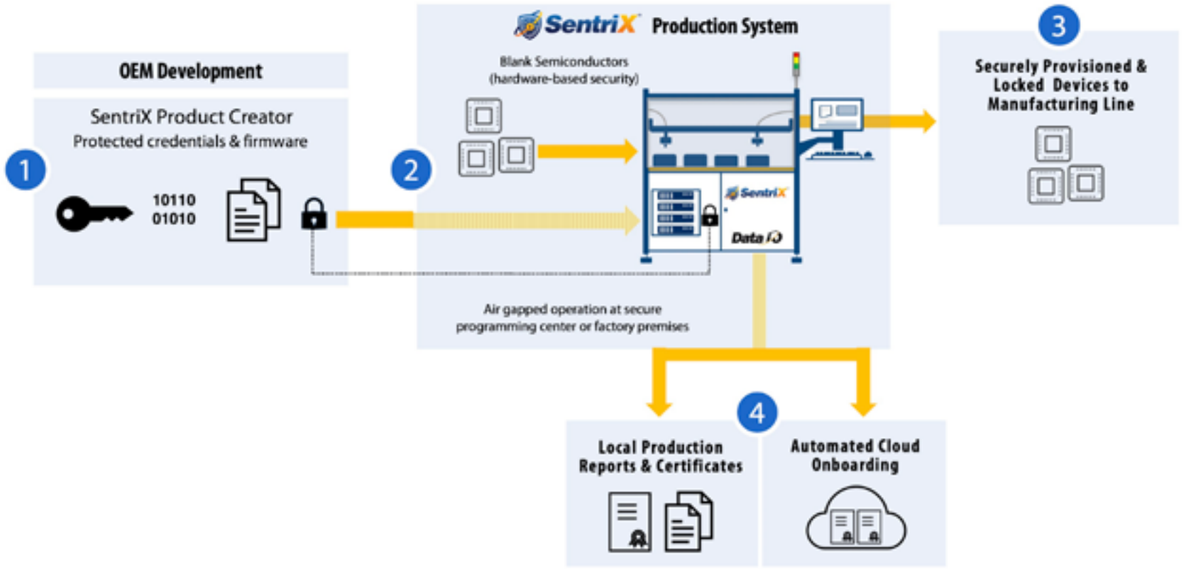
"Unfortunately, security researchers say these types of vulnerabilities are not uncommon and often are difficult to detect," wrote the Christian Science Monitor. "The problem is a byproduct of changes in the way that technology firms source and build their products, often relying on far-flung networks of manufacturers and suppliers who operate with little oversight or quality control."

According to the publication Military Embedded Systems, even the United States Department of Defense (DoD) supply chain is vulnerable to the risk of counterfeit parts. The DoD estimates that as much as 15% of all spare and replacement parts for military electronics turn out to be counterfeit.

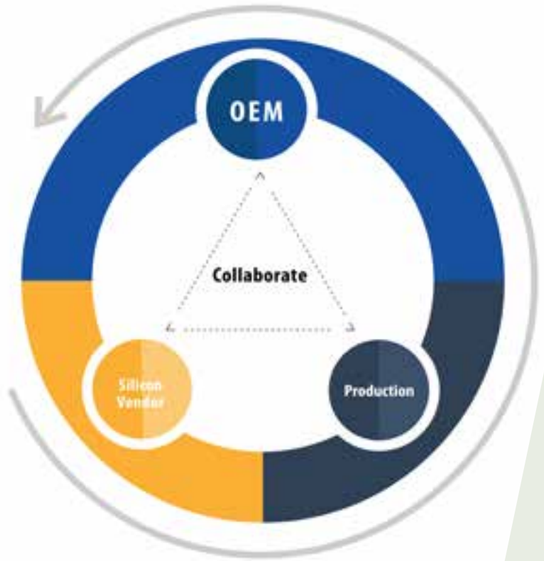
What's needed is a more trustworthy electronics supply chain, based on secure manufacturing processes and tools that better control and manage manufacturing practices at third-party owned factories. The objective of secure manufacturing is to ensure that OEM devices are manufactured per OEM specification of hardware, firmware and data, and without loss of any OEM IP. Secure manufacturing processes also are designed to authenticate ICs for silicon-vendor proof of origin prior to provisioning to prevent the production of counterfeit or fraudulent devices.

Building Security and Trust into Devices

To implement supply chain integrity and secure manufacturing requires building security and trust into devices with hardware-based security. To achieve this, a number of key building blocks must be put in place. First, OEMs must use securable IC elements or microcontroller units (MCUs) with storage protected by a hardware-based root of trust and a trusted execution environment. These elements or MCUs also must provide an immutable boot path and true random number generation mechanism to enable generation and usage of a unique device identity.



While use of secure elements or units is necessary to secure the end device, additional operations must be performed to further build on and enhance the security that is provided by the hardware-based roots of trust. This is accomplished in manufacturing through the process of secure provisioning that configures the hardware roots of trust on a device and, hence, creates the device identity and device-specific security credentials, binding these security elements to the IC responsible for securing the device.



Security credentials like keys, certificates, chain of trust, firmware and data that are provisioned into a device IC are very important secrets for an OEM. Should a bad actor gain access to these security credentials during the manufacturing process, the security deployed into devices can be compromised. Thus, in order to protect the security credentials that need to be provisioned into devices during manufacturing, it is fundamental that the deployment process itself be secure.

Authentication of ICs before provisioning

Data I/O has developed the SentriX® security deployment-as-a-Service platform to deliver on the promise of secure manufacturing. Using SentriX, OEMs now have the ability to secure their supply chain and manufacture secure devices at scale – without risk of counterfeit production – using a trusted security deployment service.

To prevent production of counterfeit or inferior devices, SentriX programming processes are designed to authenticate ICs for silicon-vendor proof of origin prior to provisioning additional security credentials into the device. Secure element ICs and MCUs provide a secure cryptography-based authentication process that is based on a silicon-vendor IC identity certificate that is pre-provisioned into the IC during the manufacturing process. During the SentriX authentication process for individual ICs, a silicon vendor ID, a product ID and a serial number are read from the IC and compared against a list of such data provided by the silicon vendor. If the data read from the IC is not found in the list provided by the silicon vendor, the device is marked as counterfeit and eliminated from the manufacturing process.

SentriX is designed with the paramount goal of securing and simplifying the IC provisioning process and helping eliminate the risk of counterfeit devices entering the market. The SentriX security deployment platform helps OEMs overcome key challenges of device security definition, secure manufacturing and the secure provisioning of trust into devices during manufacturing for improved security, lower cost, faster time to market and greater supply chain integrity.

www.dataio.com

Interview with Andy Bonner, Managing Director, Cupio Ltd

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

In a way we started our Covid planning early in 2019 by planning for Brexit. Part of that strategy was to open our failure analysis and inspection lab. With perfect timing we had everything ready for the end of 2019 early 2020 when the pandemic started. People couldn't visit us to use the systems anymore and, with fewer people working there was less being sent in for inspection.

At the same time travelling to companies for maintenance became a lot more difficult and absolutely no one wanted to see a salesperson. We spent a couple of weeks at home wondering what to do but the pressure to carry out the required regular maintenance, particularly on X-Ray, mounted so we put in covid cleaning precautions in the office and lab and found ways of getting back to visiting customers. The nature of capital equipment purchases meant that ongoing requirements didn't go away, but they were delayed.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

To a large extent we tried to carry on as near to normal as we could. There is plenty of room in our facility to keep sensible distancing and with only one person using a system at a time we didn't have any difficulties with that. Travelling to see customers was a little more varied and we had to be declared as necessary workers in order to travel and stay in hotels. Hotel stays aren't the best when you are confined to the room. Driving during the pandemic was a positive pleasure with so little traffic on the roads.

How has your company achieved a more diversified business model and how important is this to mitigating disruption?

As I mentioned before, our business model was changed pre pandemic to cope with the Brexit changes so we had already stopped most of our work on the European mainland which meant that we had no pressure for overseas travel during the pandemic. As a business we have moved most of our operation online so that all customer information, accounts, ISO record etc now use cloud storage. This means that we can now work for almost anywhere when not needed for a physical application. I think that hybrid working will remail the norm now and spending some of the week working from home is here to stay.

How have you diversified your products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

The Pandemic hasn't really changed what we offer as a business. We are looking at what new equipment we need in the lab as we enter the late stages of the pandemic as we are getting more requests for component inspection to check for counterfeits.

Sustainability

As Covid has proved, the costs of a global crisis vastly exceed those of its prevention, do you therefore believe that corporate sustainability is key in order to build the costs of environmental resiliency in a post pandemic world?

I don't think we are ever in a post pandemic world, we're just pre the next one. Covid has been small beer in comparison to the issues that face us, or our children, with climate change. Everyone and every company has a responsibility to move towards using fewer resources, creating less waste, and generating fewer greenhouse gasses.

Measures taken for the pandemic such as home working mean fewer journeys, less office heating and cooling and maybe better use of the built environment. It isn't possible for everyone or in all circumstances but with enough people doing it it is movement in the right direction. As a business we have to work profitably but that doesn't mean that we can't ensure that we reuse, repair and recycle more.

What sustainability measures have you employed and what impact have these had so far?

We don't own our building so we can't take any measures to improve insulation or other things that we would like to do, but we have changed all of the lighting to LED which has greatly reduced our power usage. We probably drive too many miles in diesel and petrol vehicles. The distances are quite large so electric powered vehicles aren't quite there yet but when they are we will change. We are looking at the use of trains for longer journeys rather that flying and that is becoming much more practical for some service visits.

We are also doing much more on line, rather than visiting, and do a lot of system diagnostic work over the internet where, previously, we would have visited. A large proportion of our business is selling inspection system for X-Ray, acoustic and optical inspections. Companies are going to continue to need these for their manufacturing processes. They consume materials in manufacture and energy in their delivery. It is a difficult area to reduce the environmental impact.

I think key to reducing the environmental impact is to make these systems last longer, reducing their lifetime costs, reducing the amount going to recycling and lessening the number of system movements. We are looking into better preventative maintenance and monitoring and working with our suppliers to manufacture with easily changeable parts where possible and to ensure longer availability of spares. I expect that our measure have a trivial impact on the global climate crisis but I hope that a lot of trivials can add up to something worthwhile.

Workplace transformation

How have you implemented workplace transformation since the crisis began and will you continue with any procedures?

No one wanted to catch covid so we implemented spacing and sanitiser measures as I mentioned before. Those are things which will largely go, along with the lateral flow tests. What will stay is the option for hybrid working and more online meetings and demonstrations.

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

The lack of face to face meetings and shows has been a big change. To compensate we have ramped up our page and online advertising and that has been giving good results. Whilst we really want to get back to shows we may do them in a slightly reduced way and maintain some of the other routes to market.

What effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training and productivity?

We had one employee who worked solely from home during the pandemic but has now started to come back into the office as it seems easier to discuss things in person rather than over the phone or internet. That doesn't have to be all of the time though and working from home can relieve stresses with child care or other domestic responsibilities. It doesn't matter to me, when someone is working at home, if it is early mornings or evenings or during the "working" day. Removing unnecessary commuting or time pressure can certainly improve productivity and give a better work / life balance as well as being good for the environment.

Global Material Shortage

What issues have you experienced regarding material shortages affecting the supply chain and how have these been dealt with?

This has only really just started to affect us with our suppliers lead times going out. It is difficult for us to do much to mitigate the impact on system deliveries so for the time being it is something that we just have to live with.

In your opinion, will we see increased counterfeit components now entering the supply chain due to supply issues, and if so, what safe guarding measures will be installed against this possibility?

Part of what we offer, and plan to expand on, is anti-counterfeiting inspection. We have had this capability in the lab since we set up but have had more requests for this type of inspection recently. It is almost inevitable that, in a time of shortages and increasing material prices, that the counterfeiters will step up their activities.

www.cupio.co.uk

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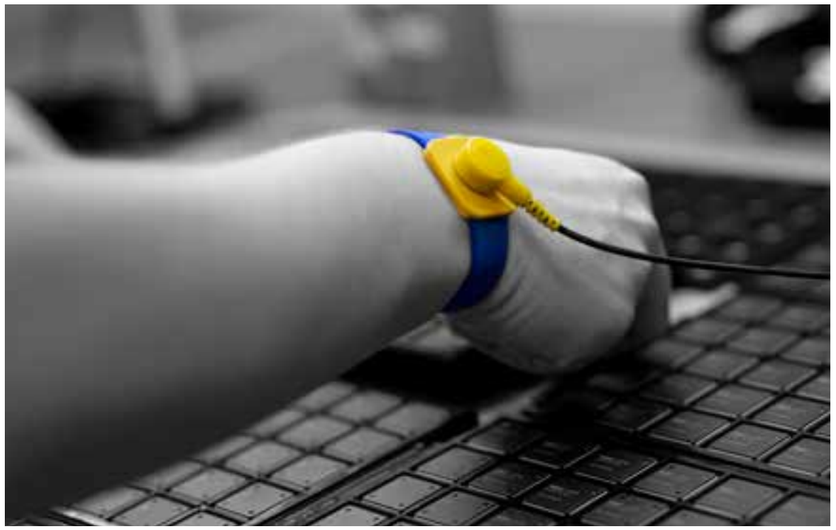
Interview with Skye Balaam, Marketing Team Leader, Astute



How has your company navigated the negative impact of the crisis?

By staying ahead of the curve and being proactive in our decisions – Astute has mitigated the negative impacts of covid on the business by protecting the health and wellbeing of our employees and safeguarding the interests of our customers and partners alike.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

Astute has used its' agility and resilience for over 30 years to withstand various challenges. The very foundations of Astute are built strong enough to endure rapidly changing macro-environmental factors whilst remaining adaptable to flex with our customers' requirements. We will continuously invest in our people – who are instrumental in maintaining our core values.

What sustainability measures have you employed and what impact have these had so far?

Astute are engaging with several manufacturers to source sustainable power solutions for our customers and for our own facilities. We believe that these relationships will be invaluable and advantageous for all – ensuring our collective focus is on utilising alternative energy solutions – taking steps to protect the planet together.

Our participation with SPWG (Sustainable Procurement Working Group) (ADS) allows us to work with industry, on sustainable procurement issues collaboratively, further strengthening our commitment to sustainability and encouraging initiatives that we can deploy internally.

In addition to these measures, we are reducing our carbon footprint by reducing travel: we now have additional people and resources in Europe and the ROTW who can assist our valued customers and partners in these locations.

Astute and its people are committed to a more sustainable future and will continue to seek and explore innovative solutions to reduce, renew and recycle and reuse.

How has company marketing been affected by the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

The requirement for digital communications and resources grew drastically, within weeks of the pandemic's onset. Our audience's needs changed, and we adapted. We found opportunities to help our customers understand the current market and our solutions via webinars, newsletters, and social media.

Marketing & communications are vital in maintaining visibility, trust, and confidence in our brand – especially in times of uncertainty. Since tackling the challenges of the pandemic, we have more tools in our armoury now, to reach our audiences through a variety of mediums.

Marketing at Astute will evolve to be a multi-way conversation, between ourselves, our customers, and suppliers – as an around-the-clock resource hub. Not to replace physical and social interaction but to further compliment it!

What effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training, and productivity?

Our people have demonstrated unwavering resilience throughout the pandemic. We have a passionate, team-orientated company culture – borne of people that support each other and did so valiantly when the situation seemed irresolute. There was a collective understanding that we would pull together to diversify, adapt and eventually, come out of the other side stronger than before!

Everyone that could work from home – did; and therefore, all training and functions that those individuals would usually conduct in the office – were now carried out in the safety of their own homes.

The transition was made seamless by the dedication of all our people – who have learned more about their own capabilities because of enduring such uncertainty and isolation, together.

In your opinion, will we see increased counterfeit components now entering the supply chain due to supply issues, and if so, what safe-guarding measures will be installed against this possibility?

When demand surpasses supply, companies may choose an unknown or untrusted route to obtain stock, and this is when counterfeit material can enter the supply-chain. The acceleration of demand for electronic devices along with global material shortages provides the perfect conditions for opportunistic attacks like these.

Our operations are run in accordance with quality processes including AS6081 that mitigates the risks of purchasing and supplying fraudulent/counterfeit electronic parts. We have in-house test facilities at our HQ in Stevenage UK and our US Facility in Austin, Texas.

Please speak to an expert at Astute today, for advice on how to avoid supply-chain disruption caused by material shortages.

Adapting to Change and Diversification

Interview with Stephen Morris, General Manager, EMEA, Rochester Electronics

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

Enabling us to protect the welfare of our staff was of paramount importance to Rochester and our flexibility of the business and our staff enabled us to switch to working from home seamlessly. Our customers would have noticed no change and were able to continue to do business with us as usual. Our Global Team is dedicated to supporting their customer base and maintaining a high level of service.

This meant that Rochester has been fully operational throughout the pandemic, and we continue to support the critical needs of the Medical, Defence, Automotive and Industrial customers with our stock inventory, product manufacturing, and service solutions. Our Teams have worked hard to negate supply chain disruptions to our customers by providing a continuous source of supply.

As always, we are here to support our customers by phone, email and video conferencing platforms.

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities regarding business which were not necessarily apparent before?

Though the Global pandemic was by far one of the biggest challenges that many businesses had to tackle, we did see a positive impact on our business. One of the major positives was with our ecommerce business where we saw a huge surge in online sales. This is no real surprise given the business dynamic changes due to COVID, but with this we also saw an increase in our productivity levels and online visibility as our offices became virtual and more streamlined.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

During the initial adjustments resulting from the impact of the pandemic, our team was quick to adapt to remote working. We were prepared with the necessary infrastructure to enable our team to establish home offices within 24 hours. Numerous new processes and procedures had to be quickly implemented not only to manage our sales staff but also to ensure that our warehouse facilities could keep functioning safely under the guidelines from local government. This resulted in our customers seeing a business as usual from Rochester even though we were navigating the complexities of COVID and running a business at the same time.

Looking after our people is of paramount importance to Rochester and the flexibility and support that Rochester Staff showed during the difficult times helped keep the business moving.

How has your company achieved a more diversified business model and how important is this to mitigating disruption?

Rochester was a pretty diverse business to start with. A strong belief in its people and culture resulted in success when major changes had to be implemented quickly. Key objective for us was to keep our business moving to support our customers in need and to do that we needed our own people to trust our direction and drive our business safely. If it wasn't the fact that we had a good solid base to work with, I think we may have struggled more.

How have you diversified your products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

Keeping up with the expansion plans over the last few years, in addition to expanding and reshuffling our team, Rochester Electronics has recently collaborated with STMicroelectronics. This development has allowed Rochester Electronics to extend the supply of a broad range of Discrete, Analog and Mixed Signal devices to customers worldwide.

Earlier in the year, Ampleon transferred its 1st generation GaN Discrete Wideband Amplifiers to Rochester Electronics. This includes GaN inventory and Die, and the authorisation to distribute and the license to manufacture.

The new partnerships will offer customers peace of mind that the products they are investing in are certified, guaranteed and authorised by the original manufacturer, providing an excellent addition to Rochester Electronics' existing portfolio of semiconductor lifecycle solutions.

Sustainability

Just-in-time supply chains have proven to be very vulnerable during the COVID crisis. 100% supply guarantees no longer exist as: raw materials, and production and shipping capacities are all more tenuous. Rochester's stock of 12 Billion Authorised finished IC's provides industry with an essential risk-free buffer. Automotive, Industrial, Energy, and Aerospace customers have all utilised our services to keep production lines running.

In the future, Rochester will continue to be an essential supplier to all these industries to hedge against uncertainty. Customer's need to plan for uncertainty.

What sustainability measures have you employed and what impact have these had so far?

We ARE the sustainability partners for businesses in the Automotive, Industrial, Transportation, Military, Medical, Energy, and Aerospace sectors. This is our core business model that enables OEM businesses to continue to manufacturer their products when semiconductors are hard to get or have even been made obsolete.

Workplace transformation

How have you implemented workplace transformation since the crisis began and will you continue with any procedures?

The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has completely shifted the way we live and work. We had to quickly adopt new initiatives and technologies to ensure employee safety whilst maintaining productivity. Working from home had become the normality for most of our employees and now with life slowly returning to normal we have introduced a hybrid model where our staff split their time between the physical workplace and home. We have taken all necessary steps to ensure the safety of our workforce, from office cleanliness to updated processes to handle different situations that could be caused by COVID-19 related incidents.

We have updated our travel and meeting policies where we actively monitor and adhere to the latest travel guidance from the local government to ensure the safety of employees and customers.

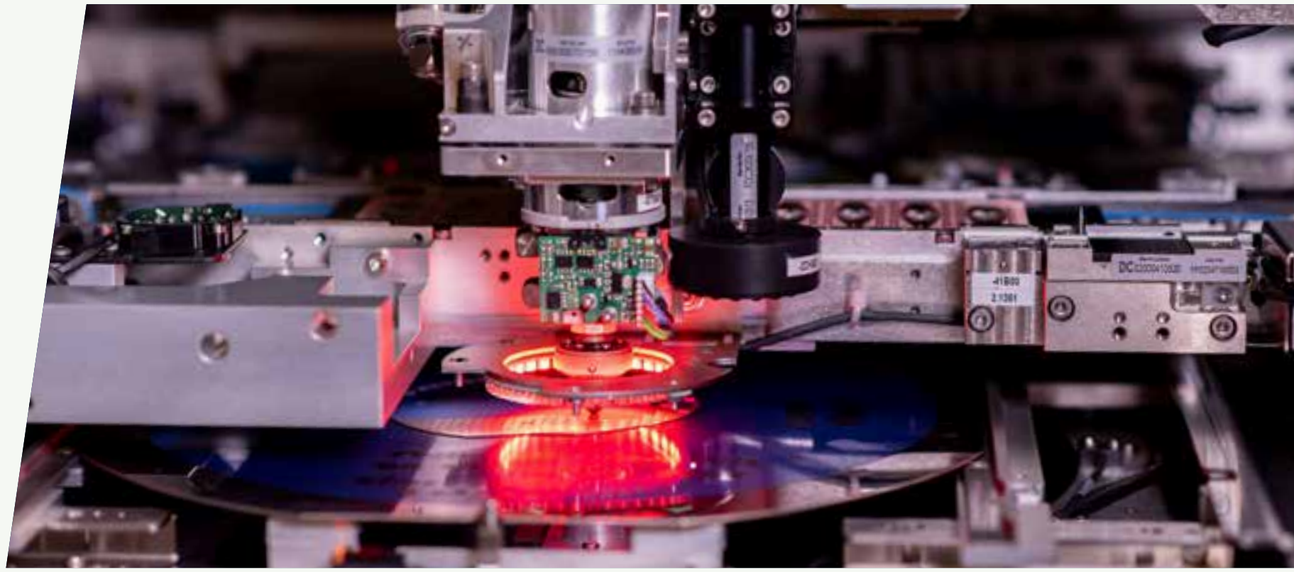
How can leaders balance employee needs and aspirations around how they want to work in the future with broader business objectives?

A happy workforce is a productive workforce and Rochester has always endeavoured to make the workplace a great place to be. We have migrated from the traditional 9 to 5 office based culture to one that, we feel, gets the best from its people. Many of our customers are also now working this way and I believe that this will continue as we move forward where people see the online and physical meeting mix as something of a norm. Our key goal here is to be as affective as possible by enabling our people to do their jobs to the best of their ability, comfortably and safely in an environment they enjoy. This in turn will reflect in how we deal and manage our customers giving them the flexibility to do business with us in a way that reflects their own business culture and environment. To date this has worked very well, but we will continue to monitor and change as the market does.

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

For Rochester Electronics, the inability to meet customers face to face has been a further challenge that the company has had to overcome.

We're a people's business. People buy from people, so the inability to physically



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go and meet our customers has been a real hindrance. We've had to adapt how we communicate with them – before, we would have gone and seen them on a regular basis, spending time supporting them and building our business relationship one on one. Trying to maintain and build the same kinds of relationships over the phone or over the internet can be more of a challenge.

To counter this, there is a conscious drive from the team to reach out to our customers on a much more regular basis. This helps to ensure that our customers know we are here to support them and help guide them through these times of difficult market variances.

Technology has also been hugely beneficial for us from a digital marketing perspective. This is something that Rochester Electronics EMEA has been driving much more strongly this year, and it's amazing to see the difference this has made. We are compensating for not being able to physically meet people by strengthening our digital media, sharing success stories and business updates, and the response from the market has been fantastic.

Our Marketing team is great at understanding our customers' needs in different countries, and it's made a huge difference to the business. We continue to grow our digital platform and increase our visibility in a digital way and show customers that we are still here and working hard to support them.

What effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training and productivity?

Working from home and communicating digitally have produced better productivity results than anyone could have expected.

Working remotely has been a positive experience, socialising virtually with colleagues has become more accessible to our team members who might have commitments outside of work, or live in a remote area. Many employees feel their work-life balance is healthier and their general well-being has noticeably improved.

The business has made a conscious effort to drive communication between team members and drive healthy competition across regions not only in business but also in getting people away from their screens out into the fresh air.

Global material shortage

What issues have you experienced regarding material shortages affecting the supply chain and how have these been dealt with?

SUPPLY issues over the last 12 months have undermined the normal delivery certainties. COVID related manufacturing, shipping disruptions and even unexpected natural disasters have led to supply chain uncertainty and lengthening lead-times.

Component Discontinuation notices have risen by 15% over the same period, as 3rd party fab priorities have changed, and the industry refocuses its fab investments to address a lower powered battery dominated landscape. The current Semiconductor market shortages are widespread. Very few manufacturers and product families have been spared the extended lead-times and even allocation. However, companies can adopt alternative sourcing methods for continued semiconductor availability like partnering with an authorised supplier like Rochester Electronics who manage and maintain consistent longevity of supply.

Rochester Electronics' focus on providing a continuous source of semiconductors aligns strongly with the long lifecycle requirements of equipment manufacturers. Rochester provides 100% authorised stock of active and end-of-life (EOL) devices from over 70 leading semiconductor manufacturers. As a licensed semiconductor manufacturer, Rochester has manufactured over 20,000 device types and with over 12 billion die in stock, Rochester has the capability to manufacture over 70,000 device types. Fundamentally in times of shortage and increased obsolescence, Rochester is well positioned to support customers in these times of need and that is exactly what we have been doing by shipping more than 1bn products in the last year.

In your opinion, will we see increased counterfeit components now entering the supply chain due to supply issues, and if so, what safe guarding measures will be installed against this possibility?

Lean supply chains have met a demand upswing and supply constraints, all market sectors are affected.

The customer is under a huge amount of pressure to guarantee supply, and typically grey market or unauthorised sources are seen as the only solution. The counterfeit business is huge and sell through these grey market channels to infiltrate into the end customers. When times are tight, and products are not available then the risk of an end customer becoming a victim of counterfeit product increases significantly.

Yes, there are testing and checks that can be done to ensure the products are genuine, but these take time and are costly to perform and, in some cases, still not fully guaranteed.

The only way to ensure genuine products is to buy from an authorised source where you are absolutely guaranteed the pedigree of the devices.

Authorised suppliers like Rochester Electronics offer risk-free sourcing, and the only real safe option to keeping customer's production lines operational during shortages, allocation, and obsolescence.

To find out more about Rochester Electronics, visit: www.rocelec.com

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“Interpower has been integrating vertically for twenty years and this has really paid off”

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

One of the main impacts of the pandemic has been the constriction of freight movement, especially from the Far East to the U.S. We are taking full advantage of this developing situation by making as many of our products as possible in our factories in the U.S. and then making sure our customers and prospective customers know that.

Our competition is composed almost entirely of importers and distributors of product made in China and we are taking full advantage of that.

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities regarding business which were not necessarily apparent before?

Interpower has been integrating vertically for twenty years and this has really paid off because our competition largely imports products from China. We have continued developing products we make in the U.S. that replace products that we previously imported from Europe. We've never imported much of our products from the Far East.

How have you diversified your products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

We are continuing to vertically integrate by making products that we formerly purchasing from foreign sources. Our suppliers were, for the most part in Europe, but we are replacing them, too, with product that we are making in the U.S.

Workplace transformation

How have you Implemented workplace transformation since the crisis began and will you continue with any procedures?

Our ability to make products is entirely dependent on keeping our manufacturing and warehouse staff safe and healthy so early on, we asked all employees in customer service, supply chain management, and IT who could work at home to do so. They are, with few exceptions, still doing so thanks to an effective IT effort to help everyone connect. We have no immediate schedule for bringing people back to the office from home.

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

In some respects, live events and live networking were already a thing of the past at the outbreak of the pandemic but COVID really brought virtual meetings and networking to the forefront. We have already identified some foreign exhibitions that we will not participate in going forward at all. Most important, we are experimenting with many alternatives to in-person events.

Global material shortage

What issues have you experienced regarding material shortages affecting the supply chain and how have these been dealt with?

We have experienced material shortages in just three types of components so far and only one item was something we could try to source by reaching out to distributors we don't normally deal with. We were successful in finding a distributor with this item in stock. The other two components were brass extrusions from which we have electrical contacts stamped and a specific type of plastic insulation material which does not have alternate suppliers we can easily change to. We have not had much success yet in finding adequate supplies of either brass extrusions or the plastic insulation material. Our only solution involves lots of phone calls.

Bob Wersen is President and Founder of Interpower Corporation headquartered in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Interpower Corporation manufactures and markets primary power components used by producers of electrical and electronic equipment that will be exported. Products include international power cords and cord sets, power entry modules, RFI power line filters, circuit protection devices, and equipment used to test products destined for sale in export markets.

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Phil Kinner, Global Business and Technical Director of Electrolube's Coatings Division

Phil discusses the impact of 2020, the innovation of new materials, issues of growing importance to the electronics industry and how the future is looking right now.

How has your company navigated the negative impacts of the crisis?

2020 was certainly an interesting year; one that most of us will choose to forget. Plant shutdowns, project cancellations, component shortages, furlough, working from home, Microsoft teams, Brexit, the list of challenges seemingly endless. Fortunately, life continued largely unchanged for those of us in the R&D team at Electrolube and we were able to complete many of our longer-term projects without the usual day to day interruptions; after all, a win is a win!

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities regarding business which were not necessarily apparent before?

Several trends have really stood out for us, as the first half of 2021 ended. Firstly, 150°C appears to have become the new 'normal' for the maximum required operating temperature of conformal coatings for automotive use. This is an increase from 85°C or 120°C on the last generation of products. This new high is really pushing the limits of availability from traditional coating chemistries, but happily for us, this is not a surprise. Here at Electrolube, we have been preparing for this very moment over the last few years; applying ourselves to the generation of solutions and products that support the new requirements.

How has your company used agility and resilience to tackle the effects of the pandemic?

Electrolube has been established for 80 years and during this time, the company has weathered every storm. We are a highly resilient and agile firm with a loyal and dedicated workforce. When faced with adversity, we innovate and produce solutions, effectively transforming a negative into a positive. Life has not been easy for anyone during this pandemic, but we have pooled our R&D resources to collaborate on some exciting new products, which are currently in testing, so we can't say too much about them right now, except watch this space!

How have you diversified your products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

We have been exchanging ideas across our three R&D teams in China, India, and the UK, and will announce new products that are currently under development early next year. Interestingly, condensation resistance continues to grow in importance, increasing in prominence within many new customer specifications. Thankfully, we have developed materials and processes that can maintain operation and prevent corrosion and failure events under condensing conditions.

As Covid has proved, the costs of a global crisis vastly exceed those of its prevention, do you therefore believe that corporate sustainability is key to build the costs of environmental resiliency in a post pandemic world?

Environmental issues have really been in the spotlight over the past twelve months. Responsibility is starting to become more apparent at the material specification level too. For the first time throughout my 22 years in the conformal coating industry, I have seen several specifications that specifically preclude the use of solvent-containing or solvent-emitting conformal coating materials. This is not only a great step forward for the environment, but a great step forward for the material users as well. Solvent-free alternative materials are generally higher performing in condensing environments and can have the ability to meet the requirements of the increased maximum thermal operating temperatures.

Also, the IPC-CC-830 conformal coating standard committee is looking to introduce several new classes of coating materials. This reflects the newer types of products, introduced to help meet some of these new industry requirements. However, since the pass/fail criteria remains the same for materials from different classes, users will still be required to ensure that the materials are fit for purpose and meet their requirements. The novel, high-performance, solvent-free 2K range of conformal coatings, initially introduced some 5 years ago, is finding commercial success in many applications. Improved environmental credentials, because of the solvent-free nature and lack of by-products from curing, sit happily alongside improved condensation resistance and are the hallmarks of the 2K range.

How has company marketing been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

It has been very desolate not to connect with people in person. Electrolube is a highly people-focused and approachable company, so it has been challenging not to attend live exhibitions and discuss requirements with visitors. We genuinely thrive on challenges, priding ourselves on resolving issues, so this has been cumbersome. However, we have a strong reputation for innovation, reliability and improving performance of customer devices, so we have been fortunate to have a reputation that has brought like-minded customers to us during the pandemic. We have also seen a surge in interest from the EV industry and are actively providing solutions for all manner of battery, sensor, and engine applications, as well as attracting customers within IoT. With the extensive portfolio of materials that we have, we have maintained our position and have found new ways to communicate with the industry, through social media, our online knowledge base and blog, through online meetings and with excellent support from the industry's media.

It would be neglectful of me to mention at this juncture, our recent acquisition by MacDermid Alpha Electronics Solutions and the exciting prospects that this represents for the future. The opportunities presented by the acquisition of such a diverse organisation leads to some incredibly powerful cross-collaboration ultimately resulting in improved solutions for our customers.

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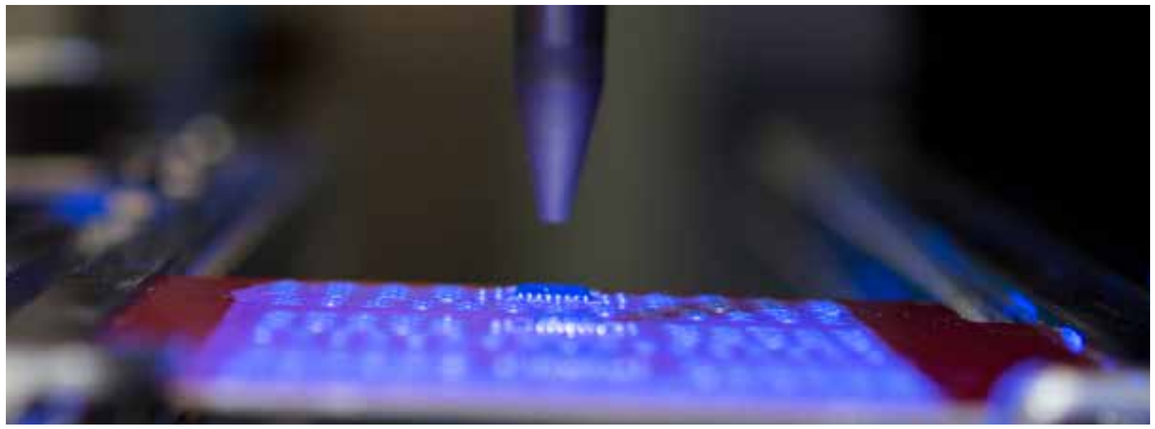

Weller Tool's Gerald Gardener

Helps the Workplace Breathe Easier with Best-in-Class Air Filtration Solutions

Extraction systems from Weller Tools provide a systematic solution to any application. Weller Tools' goal is to help customers breathe easier by providing clean air for the workplace. Its technology eliminates dangerous fumes and particles, leaving clean air behind. Weller filtration systems have a "three stage" filter system for removing small particles, fumes and gases, designed specifically for continuous use in industrial work environments.

Bigger particles get caught in a pre-filter and smaller particles get caught in the high-quality HEPA H13 filters. The wide band gas filter then removes gases, fumes and adhesives. Therefore, recirculating clean air back into the workplace ensures a safe, healthy work environment. Weller Tools provides filtration products for the following applications: soldering fumes, laser fumes, gluing fumes and for the cosmetics industry. We recently spoke with Gerald Gardener, Global Product Manager, to find out more about Weller Tool's important filtration technology.

Gerald, we understand you've been on the Weller Tools team for over four years now, and you've recently changed roles within the company. Can you please provide our readers with a brief background of your time at Weller, including a description of your new role? What are your main responsibilities?

I have been in the electronics soldering industry for many years. I am a Mechanical Engineer by qualification and always have had an interest in technology and the latest in product development. I joined Weller's Automated Soldering division on the technical applications side just as our Automated Soldering prototype was nearing completion, so it was exciting times. With that side of the business now established and gathering momentum on its own, it was the perfect time to take on more duties in the Product Management department. Filtration (fume extraction) is a vital product category for Weller and we are looking to focus heavily on ensuring a clean and healthy work environment for Weller users. I have been charged with taking Weller Filtration to the next level.

Why are filtration products important to the health and safety of employees?

While no one likes smoke and flux fumes in their face, it's the invisible-to-the-eye particles and gas that cause even more damage and embed even deeper into the lungs. The Internet abounds with the dangers of inhaled gases and chemicals. The more you read, the scarier it gets. People assume lead-free solder is the answer to our health concerns, but that's just resulted in even more aggressive fluxes and fumes all burning off at higher temperatures, creating even more residues. Air in the breathing zone from lead-free hand soldering can contain more than 20 million particles from the range of 0.3-1 micron. Particles that small are extremely hazardous to inhale. And it is the combination of particles and gases that is the most dangerous. Gases stick to the particle, ending up in the alveoli deep in the lungs and causing inflammation and lung damage. This is exactly what soldering smoke is. That's why a good filter system needs to be able to filtrate both particles and gases and why the filter must be replaced in a timely manner.

What benefits do Weller's filtration products provide that make them unique in the market?

Weller started fume extraction in the 1990s. It later acquired Filtronic, a reputable filtration brand and market leader in Europe at that time. We had an abundance of skill, knowledge and expertise, and a focal point was the filter element itself. Our units tend to have large gas filters that ensure enough dwell time for the physical and chemical interactions to take place between media and contaminant. The other plus side of the filters being large is that they require less frequent filter changes. We have a broad range of filtration units and filter types to cover many varied application requirements. We even have experts that can advise on the correct filter media for a customer's bespoke chemicals. Our products are packed with other features like connectivity with our soldering stations and other devices. Low noise levels are another great feature of our products.

What markets most benefit from filtration products?

All markets where gases, fumes, smoke or small particles are airborne in the workplace would not only benefit but would need fume extraction under legislation pertaining to that country. The damage caused by repeated inhalation of foreign substances is severe and often permanent.

Is your range of filtration products available globally? Are there any regions that purchase them more heavily than others? If so, why do you believe that is?

Most of our products are available globally. We sell more in Europe than other regions. I would say this is because of a combination of the following:

- Previously stricter workplace health and safety requirements
- Our penetration within the markets we serve
- European sales teams' subject matter knowledge

Furthermore, since we had a head start in Europe over other regions and our filtration units last so long, we still sell many replacement filters even for extremely old models.

Can you explain the "Easy Click System"? Is that unique to Weller Tools?

The Easy Click System is a unique system to Weller. It's a simple, quick and toolless exercise to connect extraction hoses between nozzles, arms, fitting and valves. In this day and age where production cells are chopped and changed depending on the contract being produced, having a convenient system that can be moved and adjusted easily provides a significant benefit.

We understand that the Constant Flow Control system is a popular choice for use in numerous industries. Can you explain how the system works?

Yes, it's a great system that offers many advantages if multiple operators are connected to the same filtration unit. For example, if one operator closes the suction arm at one workstation when the soldering iron is not in use, the system automatically adjusts the airflow so that the pre-set airflow is maintained to all other operators. It readjusts the airflow when the soldering technician lifts the soldering iron again. This system also automatically adjusts the fan speed as the filter becomes more clogged by particles over its lifetime, until the filter is completely consumed. This ensures that the pre-set airflow at the operator always is the same.

What other important filtration system products does Weller Tools provide?

Tip extraction often is overlooked. This is where the extraction takes place via a thin tube directly at the end of the soldering iron. This generally finds more service in training centers or in labs and are often a quieter solution. Since the filters are smaller than volume extraction systems, the demands in a training room are less than production facilities and filter change intervals are acceptable. Another interesting product is the CBC fume cabinet. This has a unique and effective air curtain that ensures the smoke stays inside the cabinet even though the whole front of the cabinet is open.

What would you most like the industry to know about Weller Tools' filtration products?

Weller is synonymous with soldering. However, we are just as competent when it comes to filtration. The only difference is that we started with filtration about 40 years after we started soldering. I would like customers to consider Weller first when considering fume extraction. We can solve your filtration challenges while exceeding your expectations.

SMTAI Conference and Expo

Speakers Announced for SMTA International Conference and Exposition

The SMTA announced the list of accepted speakers for the SMTA International Conference and Exposition, which will be held November 1-4, 2021 at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minneapolis, MN, USA. The event is co-located with Medical Design & Manufacturing (MD&M) Minneapolis bringing together one of the largest audiences of engineering and manufacturing professionals in the Midwest.

Published research is presented by speakers from major manufacturing companies including:
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Collins Aerospace
Ericsson AB
Flex
Honeywell FM&T
IBM Corporation
Intel Corporation
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Sandia National Laboratories
Texas Instruments

Plus several universities, and many more. Conference technical tracks include Advanced Packaging Technology, Flux, Solder, Adhesives, Harsh Environment Applications, Inspection / Counterfeit Electronics, Lead-Free / Low Temperature Soldering Technology, Manufacturing Excellence, Substrates/PCB Technology, and Technical Innovations.

The Women's Leadership Program is planned for Tuesday, November 2. The program features career development presentations and speed mentoring sessions. This fun program will close with a wine and ice cream reception.

Students and Young Professionals are invited to a program on November 3 and 4 featuring presentations on electronics assembly fundamentals as well as discussion sessions related to personal and professional development.

On November 3-4 more than 600 exhibiting companies and over 6000 attendees are anticipated across the five co-located design and manufacturing shows.

Registration
Registration is now open and available online.

visit https://www.smta.org/smtai/

High-Reliability Cleaning and Conformal Coating Conference Comes to Dallas

The SMTA is pleased to announce the finalized technical program for the High-Reliability Cleaning and Conformal Coating Conference. The in-person event takes place October 5-7, 2021 at the DoubleTree by Hilton - Dallas Market Center in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Two Professional Development Courses kick off the event on Tuesday, October 5. Mike Konrad, Aqueous Technologies, instructs the morning course titled, "Cleaning and Cleanliness Quantification Bootcamp." The afternoon course, "J-STD-001 Section 8 Objective Data – Where Do I Start?", is co-instructed by Doug Pauls, Collins Aerospace; Mike Bixenman and Mark McMeen, Magnalytix.

The technical program addresses Cleaning Processes, Conformal Coating, Materials Characterization, Surface Reliability, Safety, Field Reliability, and Recovery. Speakers from Collins Aerospace, Continental, Honeywell FM&T, Rockwell Automation, Sandia National Labs and more will present research results and best practices.

Rajan Ambat, Ph.D., University of Denmark, will keynote the Wednesday program, presenting "PCBA Cleanliness in Relation to Humidity Effects on Electronics and Conformal Coating Performance."

Andrew Kostic, Ph.D., Tin Whiskers Group, will provide his keynote presentation, "Lead-Free Tin - A Cure Worse than the Disease", on the final day of the conference.

For full details visit: https://smta.org/cleaning/

SMTA
Surface Mount Technology Association

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Surface Mount Technology Association

SMTA "Members of Distinction" Awards Announced

The SMTA is proud to honor the 2021 "Members of Distinction" award recipients who have shown exceptional dedication to the association and the electronics manufacturing industry.

The association's highest honor, the Founder's Award, recognizes members who have made exceptional contributions to the industry, as well as support and service to the SMTA. This year, the organization selected David Raby, STI Electronics, Inc., to receive this prestigious award. A member since 1985, he has provided skilled leadership as a past President and Board member, an officer in the Huntsville Chapter, and an ambassador. SMTA and the electronics industry have benefited immensely from David Raby's contributions over the years.

The Member of Technical Distinction Award recognizes individuals who have made significant and continuing technical contributions to the association. This year the Awards Committee selected Ronald Lasky, Ph.D., P.E., Indium Corporation, as the recipient of this award. Dr. Lasky has presented numerous technical papers at SMTA conferences, is a co-founder of the SMTA Certification Program, and is a member of the Pan Pacific Microelectronics Symposium Technical Committee.

The Excellence in Leadership Award honors strong leaders who continue to support and elevate the association. The 2021 recipient of this award is Debbie Carboni, KYZEN Corporation. Debbie has been dedicated to the success of the SMTA for over 20 years. She has demonstrated her leadership as VP Expos on the Board of Directors for six years, as a prolific speaker for many years, and as an active member of the Expo and Women's Leadership committees. Most recently she has been instrumental in reviving the Philadelphia Chapter and mentoring the officer team. The SMTA thanks Debbie for her many valuable years of service.

SMTA
A Global Association
Working at a Local Level

The Excellence in International Leadership Award recognizes members who have provided outstanding support and leadership to the SMTA's international members, chapters, or educational programs. The recipient selected for this award is Mei Ming Khaw, Keysight Technologies. Mei Ming has been a prominent leader in the SMTA Penang Chapter for many years as well as working with headquarters to bring their programs to a global audience. She formerly chaired the technical committee of the South East Asia Technical Conference on Electronics Assembly and also helped organize the annual expo in Penang for many years.

KEYSIGHT TECHNOLOGIES

Keysight Technologies received the **SMTA+ Corporate Partnership Award** this year. As a global member, Keysight Technologies has shown support at every level of the association from supporting chapter and board leadership positions to technical contributions for conferences, committees, and most importantly their willingness to share technical knowledge with others in the industry. They embody the SMTA mission by encouraging employees to become members, attend meetings and share their knowledge. Keysight Technologies is most deserving of this honor.

SMTA has recognized exceptional individual and corporate members for their immeasurable contributions to the association since 1994.

Full details at: https://smta.org/page/current-recipients

ADVANTECH

Enabling an Intelligent Planet

The Future of Embedded IoT and Edge Computing:

Making AIoT Real with Flexible, Open, Plug and Play Edge Platforms

Figure 1. WISE-DeviceON applications simplify connected-device management challenges.

System integrators need edge computing platforms that are flexible, open, off-the-shelf, and plug-and-play to unleash the full potential of the Artificial Intelligence of Things (AIoT)

Big Data is the new oil for industry, and the parallels between the two commodities are striking. Unleashing the latent value within data is impacting every aspect of life and work, and it is changing the way infrastructures are managed. It makes new activities possible, and it transforms the way businesses operate, conceive, and deliver new products and services.

The way data is handled – from its extraction, refinement, transportation, and the processes applied to derive value-added products – critically affects its value. Even now, the data revolution is only just beginning. The possibilities are potentially endless, and many have not yet become apparent. Computing underpins and defines each stage in the data lifecycle, and the ability to move the data to the right processing platform easily, efficiently and quickly is essential.

The Emerging AIoT

The IoT provides the fundamental infrastructure that connects them all together. To deliver the needed flexibility, adaptability, security, robustness and reliability, IoT brings together a multitude of technologies including established Internet technologies as well as emerging technologies such as AI, 5G, and also Wi-Fi 6, which is engineered for much greater efficiency and scalability than preceding generations.

The entire solution, from sensors and aggregators to the central cloud, must be conceived as a whole to ensure optimal performance and efficiency. What happens at the edge is increasingly pivotal to the outcome.

Low latency and real-time response are critical to specific scenarios, such as industrial IoT (IIoT) implementations. Moreover, it is important to ensure that network bandwidth and compute resources, as well as energy, are utilised efficiently. Both of these reasons are driving the move towards more processing of raw data locally, near to the source, enabling time-critical responses to be communicated back quickly and forwarding only essential data to the central cloud. Gartner has predicted that 75% of data will be processed at the edge by 2025.

Infusing AI into edge and embedded computing creates the AIoT, or Artificial Intelligence of Things, where AI adds value to IoT through machine-learning capabilities while IoT adds value to AI through connectivity, signalling and data exchange. A complete AIoT solution brings together many elements and demands a wide range of competencies. With so many facets to the value chain, system integration can appear complicated, time consuming, expensive, and potentially uneconomical.

To make AIoT real and deliverable, effectively leveraging edge and embedded technologies in an effective blend, system integrators need software and hardware building blocks that are conceived for AIoT applications. To minimise development risks and time to completion, these building blocks should also be off-the-shelf; they should leverage open standards while offering plug-and-play convenience and simplicity.

Choices for Edge Computing

Advantech is addressing this demand by creating plug-and-play computing platforms and software frameworks that simplify and streamline deployment of new AIoT applications in edge and embedded scenarios. These include software platforms such as Edge AI Suite and WISE-DeviceON (figure 1).

Edge AI Suite includes the Intel® OpenVINO toolkit™ and provides features that ease deep learning inference on edge devices, such as a model optimiser, inference engine, pre-trained models such as rapid object detection and human pose estimation, and a deployment wizard for launching AI models. It is also ready for third-party SDKs such as vehicle classification and license-plate recognition. In addition, support for the open-source, vendor-neutral EdgeX Foundry provides a software framework for interoperability between applications and devices such as sensors, which helps users establish easy plug-and-play connections.

WISE-DeviceON provides real-time device and data management capabilities and enables instant intelligent edge onboarding, data acquisition, and status visualisation. There is also a set of WISE-DeviceOn industrial apps targeted for specific domain requirements, such as DeviceOn.DM for operating and managing industrial IoT devices. DeviceOn DM's easy-to-use interface helps monitor device health, real-time actions to power on/off, troubleshoot problems, and send software and firmware updates over-the-air (OTA) on-site and remotely. There is also DeviceOn.CommBridge, which provides data acquisition, protocol conversion, rule engine, and easy-to-integrate APIs to quickly respond to the requirement of edge intelligence industry and help customers achieve digital transformation and upgrade in IoT era.

Other DeviceON apps include DeviceOn/iEdge for data and edge management, DeviceOn/Kiosk+ for remote kiosk management, DeviceOn/ePaper, DeviceOn/Display, and DeviceOn/SQ Manager for the remote control and management of related peripheral modules. These functions help customers manage connected IoT devices while building edge-to-cloud applications.

Edge+ enhanced edge computing platforms incorporate processing, wireless connectivity, and cloud integration capabilities, and leverage domain-focused software including DeviceOn apps and others. The ARK-3532 edge computer is optimised for machine- and factory-automation applications and comes IoT-management ready with industry-standard communication interfaces, built-in security features, and WISE-DeviceOn pre-loaded. The ARK-3531 is featured for remote kiosk applications with a powerful compute engine and DeviceOn/Kiosk+ software.

On the other hand, the EIS-S230 Edge Cloud Solution provides a scalable on-premises platform that features built-in Kubernetes and on-demand microservices. There are also Edge+ digital signage solutions such as the DS-085 quad 4K-signage player, designed for energy efficiency and slim outline to meet the needs of the application environment.

There are various Edge AI systems, such as the AIR-101 optimised for visual AI with two Intel® Movidius™ VPUs and software including Edge AI Suite. For real-time AI inference and high-performance computing in industrial applications, the AIR-300 Edge AI system can be specified with up to a Core i7 CPU and provides a PCIex16 slot for a high-performance graphics card. There is also a large storage capacity to hold massive numbers of images, as well as sufficient bandwidth to handle data transmission.

Such a system is used in applications like industrial visual inspection, where traditional machine vision with rule-based algorithms often struggles to detect all types of defects. In addition, traditional systems cannot be easily updated to recognise new defects.

Edge Intelligence in Action

Leveraging AI and deep learning technology in the AIR-300, system integrators working on an inspection solution for a ceramics company were able to overcome these familiar limitations and perform visual defect inspection in real-time. Sending captured images to the edge AI system for real-time inferencing enabled defective products to be quickly identified. The system can also be used as a local training server when the defect inspection system needs to be updated to inspect new products. AI-based defect inspection can be changed simply by preparing training datasets of the new defect types. Hence updating the defect inspection system no longer requires the assistance of costly professional engineers.

Edge AI technology allow a variety of applications to be run on edge computers, which significantly reduces total cost while also sharpening system response times by capturing videos and enabling responses close to the event source

At the height of the pandemic, Advantech helped a Taiwanese system integrator create a thermal-imaging solution leveraging the AIR edge AI system with Advantech VEGA-300 series AI-acceleration modules. By working with co-creation partners to create a broad selection of edge computing solutions, and with system integrators to help bring the right combinations together, Advantech is enabling the next generation of AIoT solutions to come forward.

Conclusion

To meet performance and efficiency demands, intelligence in the IoT is moving out from central cloud services and increasingly into edge computing platforms handling real-time decision making and data filtering tasks. AI has a leading role in this emerging intelligent edge, and system integrators need help to deliver powerful, flexible solutions without needing deep expertise in neural networks or data science. Plug-and-play hardware and software building blocks that are also open and flexible are helping to build the new AIoT.

advantech.com

"Sustainability in the supply chain is fundamental"

TechWorks interview with Alan Banks CEO

How have your members navigated the negative impacts of the Covid-19 crisis?

TechWorks members come from across a wide spectrum from the Deep Tech Industry and include Automotive OEM's, Tier1 Supplier and Suppliers throughout the supply chain, Design and Manufacturers of Semiconductors, Service providers, Academic institutions and many more across the entire Deep tech industry. Each has had to cope with different aspects of the impact of Covid-19 on their business, either by adapting to working from home practices where this is possible to ensuring that the working environments are safe for people to attend in person. This has had a fundamental impact on the way some business' now operate and many of these practices will now be adopted on an ongoing bases. E.g. Less travel to meetings, more online meetings and significant collaboration across the sector to understand best practices.

On a positive note, has the pandemic highlighted opportunities for your members which were not necessarily apparent before?

Definitely, in the early stages of the Pandemic we saw many of our members stepping up to the Governments ventilator challenge and we saw Automotive , Technology and Medical companies working together collaboratively to design, develop, test and manufacture ventilators. We also saw some companies switching their Injection Moulding operations away from design car components to produce PPE for medical staff. We have also seen a rise in 'touchless technologies' as more people are aware of the spread of disease through touching physical surfaces

Have you noticed that your members have diversified their products or services since the beginning of the pandemic?

Yes, there is more application of technology in the medical sector and disease detection and prevention sector as well as development of 'touchless technologies', we are also seeing more collaboration across different sectors e.g. Automotive, Sub Sea, Logistics, Medical etc.

Sustainability

As Covid has proved, the costs of a global crisis vastly exceed those of its prevention, does your organisation therefore believe that corporate sustainability is key in order to build the costs of environmental resiliency in a post pandemic world?

Yes absolutely, sustainability is become part of the key design characteristics of many of our members technology solutions. Sustainability in the supply chain is also a fundamental to ensure ongoing sustainability of the industry as the current global shortage of semiconductors in the Automotive sector has highlighted.

Workplace transformation

How have your members implemented transformations in their workplaces since the crisis began and do you believe they will continue with any procedures?

The biggest changes have been around implementing social distancing and hygiene practices, also the implementation of working from home and hybrid working patterns are likely to stay. Some (including TechWorks) have moved to new premises as a result of the Pandemic to allow for greater Social Distancing and operation of hybrid working patterns.

How has industry been affected with the lack of live events and networking opportunities?

This has impacted TechWorks quite hard, as approximately 1/3rd of our revenue come from live events through ticket sales and sponsorship, we have been able to provide some events for our members but the sponsorship income and ticket sales are significantly down. We held our first 'live' event for 2 years in September 2021 and received a fantastic response in terms of attendance and positive feedback for the networking opportunities it provides. Our members get tremendous benefit and value from attending our 'live' events which we don't get 'online' as conversations have to be much more structured online.

From what you've seen, what effect has hybrid or home working had on employee well-being, ongoing training and productivity?

In the early stages it took a while for our employees to adjust and some were reluctant to appear on camera initially, this has now subsided and the team works really well remotely, however, there is a certain amount of 'video fatigue' creeping in and the team also does not benefit from the team work, corridor, coffee machine conversations and the ability to bounce ideas off each other in an ad hoc way. This is why we have now returned to the office in a safe operation and are utilising a hybrid working model. General feedback from the team is that they are so please to be back in the office to be able to work with their colleagues and have face to face meetings again. This is a positive for everyone's mental well-being.

Supply Chain Issues

What issues have your members experienced regarding material shortages affecting the supply chain and how have these been dealt with?

The Automotive Industry has been particularly affected by the semiconductor shortage, with many shutting down production or significantly altering build schedules. We are helping by looking at our members Bill of Materials and where possible trying to connect them to alternative suppliers in the supply chain. We are also working with the UK Government to make them aware of the capability we have in the UK and to ensure that we use UK supply-chains to support the industry as much as possible. We are also seeing some impact of the container shortage and impact of energy prices and logistics challenges all affecting some of our members ability to produce their products.

In your opinion, will we see increased counterfeit components now entering the supply chain due to supply issues, and if so, what safe guarding measures will be installed against this possibility?

This is always a risk and more prevalent during times of shortages, we have seen some counterfeit products entering the supply chain and in some cases this are identified at the point of final product testing and occasionally when a product fails in the market. To ensure this is minimised, companies must pay attention to the complete supply chain of the elements that are used in their production and work with respected partners and test before the parts go into products.

Understanding the reasons for the electronics components shortage and surviving it

Diego Giordani, Consorzio Tecno/Assodel
(Association Electronics Clusters – Italy)

Since the end of 2017, companies that manage electronic components have been facing difficult times with various waves of component shortages, price increases and lengthening of delivery times to contend with.

A sharp increase in demand on the one hand and a shortage of materials and components on the other, have weakened the ability to meet demand, especially for more standard passive components, such as multilayer ceramic capacitors (MLCCs), resistors, transistors, diodes and memories .

Despite this, until the end of 2019, market dynamics have constantly improved as the investment plans made by suppliers have increased their capacity and related production. There were no major shortage problems in 2019 and, by mid-year, the passive components market was relatively balanced with prospects for improvement for 2020.

However, this was before the pandemic began. The impact of Covid-19 stifled manufacturing and shifted the operational focus of suppliers as well as significantly impacting and reducing market capacity.

Many electronic and mechanical suppliers were based in the epicenter of the pandemic, Wuhan, China. When the area was shut down and factories were unable to produce at full capacity or even at all, there was not enough supply to meet the demand.

As Covid-19 spread around the world, a shortage of components was increasingly experienced. Factories in Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia could not manufacture and then deliver enough components. As a result, even global OEMs could not manufacture their own products.

Wherever the supplier is or where the final product is produced; entire supply chains have been clogged by the pandemic and all inventories have been sucked in and out of the market.

The lead time for high-end semiconductors, which had already increased, has more than doubled. In spite of everything, there has been no negative financial impact on companies; in fact, when component suppliers were able to produce, they shifted their operations to prioritise components for the healthcare sector. In fact, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a worldwide shortage of ventilators and a growing need for X-ray machines, diagnostic tools and other medical devices that use electronic components.

However, once this first phase of the emergency ended, the component manufacturers returned to pre-COVID-19 activities including making investments to support cutting-edge technologies that mainly support the automotive, smartphone and the 5G / Internet of Things market (IoT).

The automotive industry is experiencing a rapid transformation, with products using automotive electronic components increasing at an unprecedented rate. Cars are evolving and becoming more sophisticated with built-in software, sensors, artificial intelligence, connectivity and electrification. Think for example of today's standard combustion engine car that uses between 2,000 and 3,000 capacitors; as the electric vehicle gains market share, the amount needed exponentially increases to as many as 22,000 MLCCs required in a single car.

This number will continue to grow as more features are electrified.

The smartphone industry is constantly evolving and the miniaturisation of smartphones is leading to a shortage of components similar to what we are seeing in the automotive industry.

For passive components and memory products, smartphones represent a significant part of the overall consumption. It's a matter of pure mathematics: there are about 1.5 billion smartphones produced per year and each flagship model contains about 1,000 capacitors. This means that smartphone makers use about half of the roughly 3 trillion MLCCs produced globally each year. This makes the smartphone market the main driver of consumption and technology.

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This digital industry publication will offer a global perspective for the whole of the electronics and off board sectors. Complimenting our existing industry hub and weekly WNIE (What's New in Electronics) platforms, we are confident that in this ever changing world these titles will offer companies a complete marketing solution.

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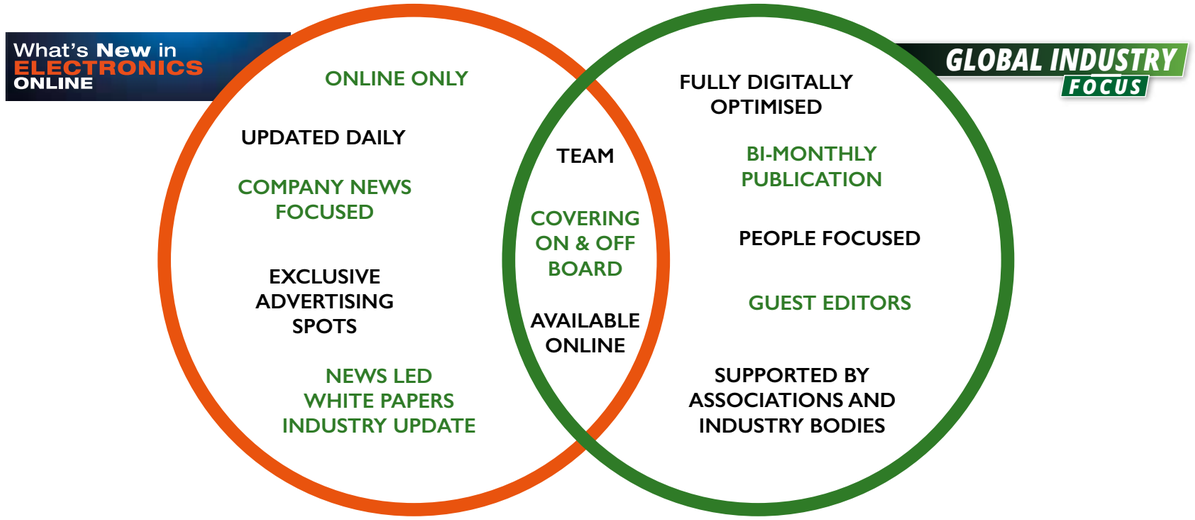

Why another industry magazine?

Offering a magazine that's targeted at the entire industry will add huge benefits for advertisers too. To maximise budgets, companies need to appeal to both designers and purchasers, without the additional cost of having to advertise across multiple publications. The pandemic has forced companies to drastically reduce their marketing spend, thus reducing their reach, but featuring in Global Industry Focus means there is no need to compromise, inclusion in Global Industry Focus allows enhanced visibility and access to the whole electronics industry, including multiple sectors and multiple job functions, all in one magazine at one cost.

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