After battling traffic for a couple of hours to his customer site in Mississauga, Canada, André Charlebois is glad to step out of his vehicle and stretch his legs.

Once he reaches his customer’s storage tanks, he starts troubleshooting the issues with the level transmitter. As he works, a thought begins forming in his mind: **What if I could access the company’s instrumentation from my office? Or even from home?**

**Going the distance**

In the oil and gas services industry, this customer’s operations involve taking waste from industrial factories and neutralizing it through a variety of methods. Their sites each have between ten and 30 storage vessels for process chemicals as well as finished products waiting for sale.

The company doesn’t have any instrumentation or electrical personnel on staff, so if they have any little issues with their instrumentation, they have to call someone in.

As regional sales manager for Measuremax Canada, André, along with his service team, makes many trips to customer sites to install, commission, troubleshoot and maintain instrumentation.

With the size of his territory combined with the rising price of gasoline, the cost of these visits continues to increase.
In this particular case, the problem of visiting the customer was compounded by the fact that government regulations required that the company have each and every instrument checked by a qualified service technologist once a year.

**Making connections (remotely)**

André knew there must be a better solution. As a Siemens representative, he naturally came to Siemens for the answer.

At the same time, engineers at Siemens Milltronics in Peterborough, Canada, had been experimenting with field connect technology based on a gateway made by a German company called ifak systems. Engineers quickly realized this was an ideal solution for André’s application.

This module, once connected to a process instrument such as a radar transmitter, a wireless or cell modem, and a power supply, would give users the ability to connect to the instrument from anywhere.

Along with his system integration colleagues from Measuremax, André met with James Powell, Business Developer for PI Communications at Siemens.

James showed how easily the ifak module connects to Siemens instruments and the remote monitoring possibilities this system provides its users. These features worked because of Siemens’ long-standing commitment to open standards.

Once André proposed this solution to his customer and received approval, it took just a day to install and commission the entire system.

“We had to use our in-house system integrator and panel shop to pull it all together,” explains André. “But with the applications guides and assistance from Siemens, it was easy.”

**Troubleshooting today**

Now if the waste recycling company has an issue with an instrument, André simply connects through his laptop and can view the device and often diagnose the problem without even visiting the site.

When the problem is a bit more complicated, the remote system gives him the information he needs to prepare for when he does visit the site.

In addition, on one vessel he needed advice from Siemens Factory Support Group (FSG). FSG was able to remotely log into the site and look at the echo profile and advise him on the application difficulties.

What has industry gained from the remote monitoring solution?

1. **Lower cost of ownership**: Reducing the number of site visits by Measuremax immediately saves travel money and time. Also, when a site visit is required, the additional information gained through the remote connection gives the service person a better understanding of the problem before he visits. This means that he or she is more prepared to troubleshoot the instrument issues, again saving time and money.

2. **Improved service**: Whenever you call for service, you have to wait. Having a remote login means that you will not have to wait as long, and sometimes you can even
get immediate service. With this solution, an instrumentation expert is only a click away.

3. No-worry instrument management: By employing Measuremax to look after the instrumentation, the customer does not have to worry about the instrument. With the remote login, the customer reduces the number of visits and thus the number of contractors on site.

4. Increased safety through reduced site visits: When technicians don’t need to visit a site, especially one in a hazardous environment, and can instead connect in remotely, this immediately reduces the chance of workplace accidents and safety concerns.

For commissioning and maintenance of a customer’s level instrument, such as the SITRANS LR250 radar transmitter, this remote monitoring system saves time and money.