Industrial Communication

Strong Partners for Secure Networks

Bilfinger GreyLogix Becomes Industrial Strength Networks Partner

With the new module "Industrial Strength Networks", Siemens is expanding its Solution Partner Program in view of the increasing demands placed on industrial communication. The module involves comprehensive training and support services for the Solution Partner and close collaboration during the development and optimization of products and solutions.

Whether in the food and beverage industry, in the treatment of water and wastewater, or anywhere in the energy sector – the protection of valuable information and the operational reliability of the usually widely distributed plants make demands on the communication security, which soon will actually be required by law for operators of critical infrastructures in Germany and other countries. This is even more true when considering that the communication in this area is frequently carried out via the Internet, local WLAN solutions, or Bluetooth, i.e., channels that require additional safeguarding for industrial use. That's why Siemens, over the past years, has optimized its range of secure network components from the SCALANCE system family, and also expanded it towards withstanding harsh environmental conditions through the acquisition of the Canadian vendor RUGGEDCOM.

To optimally support plant outfitters, operators, and service personnel during the commissioning and maintenance of these tailor-made communication infrastructures, Siemens is now expanding its Solution Partner Program accordingly: with the module "Industrial Strength Networks". Solution Partners in this program module are network specialists from various fields, such as production, process instrumentation, electric power, and transportation. Focal points of the module include initial Partner trainings, the training of multipliers, as well as the continuous collaboration on the user and application levels. "The goal is a win-win cooperation: we support our Partners with technical expertise during the implementation of secure, industrial solutions, and in turn receive qualified feedback and valuable suggestions from real life," remarks Jens Dolenek from Siemens in Nuremberg.

Strong Global Demand

The first Solution Partner successfully completing the module "Industrial Strength Networks" has been the GreyLogix GmbH, which is part of Bilfinger SE. For Gerd Witzel, managing director of the Bilfinger GreyLogix group, the decision for a close partnership with Siemens is the logical consequence of the increasing global demand for network security: "Most customers are extremely receptive when it comes to the subject of IT security." In this context, network security covers far more than just safeguarding against external attacks. Gerd Witzel: "By hardening the communication infrastructures, we can also protect our customers from internal attacks, for example, threats arising from tapping into WLAN access points and physical switches, or from USB sticks. How do we do this? Simply said: By only permitting what is authorized. And in doing so, the close cooperation with Siemens is a major advantage for us. It should be noted that IT security has already become a critical element of automation technology."

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The certificate of qualification to be the world's first "Industrial Strength Networks" partner was presented during the IFAT 2014 in Munich. From left to right: Jens Dolenek (Siemens AG), Maik Bösch (Bilfinger GreyLogix GmbH), and Wolfgang Lienke (Siemens AG).

Efficient Practical Training

In the course of the initial "Industrial Strength Networks" training held beginning of March 2014 for one week, the sales- and technically-oriented personnel of Bilfinger Grey-Logix was familiarized with the applications of the Industrial Communication portfolio from Siemens – concentrating on the product groups SCALANCE X, S, W, and M, as well as passive network components. Important aspects covered were the redundancy mechanisms and the virtualization in the network (VLAN) including the peculiarities of wireless LANs. Other essential subjects in this context were industrial security, network management, and SINEMA Server. According to Gerd Witzel, the emphasis was put on the practical use: "The hands-on portion was very high from the very beginning, and the trainers were absolute specialists for the respective components – in addition, thanks to the practical work with actual components, many requests from real projects could already be solved during the training."

Conclusion

Following the successful launch of the module, Siemens is offering the "Industrial Strength Networks" program to its existing Solution Partners as well as new collaboration partners, who are not yet associated with Siemens through the Solution Partner Program. Addressed are all specialized solution providers, who want their customers to have maximum operational reliability and communication security when it comes to complex, industrial communication networks.

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