

Open Systems Forum

The BCIA is seeking to redress the balance in the open systems debate. To date, discussions have focussed on the technical aspects of interoperability, with the commercial opportunities coming a poor second.

What, if any, are the commercial benefits of open systems and if we can identify them, how can they be exploited? These are the questions to be discussed at the Open Systems Forum scheduled in February.

There is a vast array of control systems installed in UK building stock and a growing need for their interoperability. To date, the solution for achieving interoperability has been provided by the systems installer with little consensus within the industry. Some manufacturers have concentrated on promoting the benefits of their own proprietary systems, declaring that the available 'open'

systems are just as restrictive.

The challenge:

With our diverse interests it may not be possible on a technical level to agree the best route to interoperability. But on a commercial level we may find that we have more in common. We need to seek out the open system opportunities and agree how they can be exploited in our favour.

Terry Casey of Tridium has agreed to chair the Open Systems Forum. To give the day structure, there will be two sessions—see panel below.

The forum will commence at 10:30 a.m. (coffee available from 10:00 a.m.). If you or a colleague wish to attend then advise Ann Hull by no later than Friday, 27 January: email bcia@feta.co.uk or telephone 01249 720303.

Open Systems Forum
Thursday, 2 February 2006—FETA, Hare Hatch, Reading
Session 1: The challenges associated with promoting open systems.
Session 2: How these challenges can be met.

New Look for Members' Meetings

This year will see a dramatic change to the format of the quarterly Members' Meetings. The first is scheduled for Thursday, 9 February and will be held at the Village Inn Hotel in Coventry. There will be a series of presentations:

- Peter Warburton, chairman of the CIBSE IT & Controls Group, will consider the implications of Part L on building controls.
- The Construction Skills Certificate Scheme has been approached to provide an independent view on the JIB Grade Card and the HVAC

SKILLcard. We are waiting to hear from them.

- Members from the Marketing Working Group will present the results of their market survey, highlighting current and future influences that could affect the controls market during the next five years.

Even though the meeting is being held in a first-class hotel, there will be no cost to members. We only ask that if a Member company sends two delegates, then the second delegate meets the cost of his/her refreshments for the day.

Dates for the Diary

January:

- 5—Management Committee at FETA, Hare Hatch
- 11—Contracts Group at FETA, Hare Hatch
- 19—Skills Development Group at TAC Satchwell, Warrington

February:

- 2—Open Systems Forum at FETA, Hare Hatch
- 9—Members Meeting at the Village Inn, Coventry
- 15—Technical Group at FETA, Hare Hatch.

March:

- 9—Marketing Group at FETA, Hare Hatch
- 15—Skills Development Group at FETA, Hare Hatch

Grade Cards or SKILLcards?

Three years ago the Association agreed a building controls engineer definition with the JIB, via the ECS, enabling engineers and other employees to apply for a Grade Card to access construction sites.

Some members preferred to apply to the HVCA for an exemption letter which, from 1 January 2006 has been discontinued.

We are currently speaking with the HVCA with a view to agreeing a build-

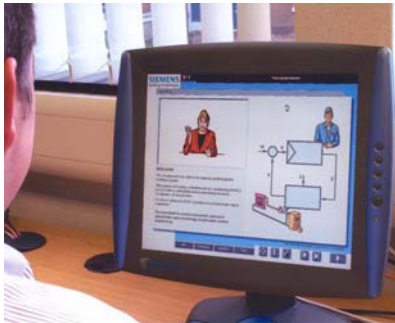


ing controls engineer definition which, providing all other requirements are met as determined by the HVCA, should enable employees to apply for a SKILLcard.

We'll keep you posted.

Technical Training Programme 2006

This year's programme of training modules, up to and including June, has been published on the Electrical Contractors Association's web site. Dates with places still available for the six modules are:



- ⇒ Fundamentals of HVCA & Building Technology—28 March 2006
- ⇒ Measuring and Control Technology—16 May 2006
- ⇒ Hydraulics in Building Services—14 March & 27 June 2006
- ⇒ Control Function in Heating Plants—21 February 2006
- ⇒ Control of Ventilation & Air Conditioning—25 April 2006
- ⇒ Refrigeration Technology—24 January & 13 June 2006

For more details including how to book go the ECA web site (www.eca.co.uk).

Key Performance Indicators—the results.....

The results are in. All Members will have received a copy of the BSRIA PowerPoint presentation, which was distributed with the Members Meeting minutes of 15 September 2005. But in case you haven't had the time to study them in detail, here is a quick overview of the results.

The overall satisfaction score (out of 10) was 7.7 for the manufacturers and 7.7 for the installers. This equals a similar KPI exercise undertaken for M&E contractors.

Key lessons to be learnt:

1. With the plethora of communications devices available today, customers believe that they should be able to contact people direct at all times.

Quote: *"I can't stress the importance of this enough, there needs to be direct contact...I don't like going through the main switchboard and leaving messages."* and *"Their standards are slipping...their telephone system is very unfriendly."*

Recommended Solution: Customers request direct contact, consider key account process.

2. Resources and training came under scrutiny with customers' perceptions being that many firms seem overstretched and that new sales people are not being well trained.

Recommended Solution: Assess your resources—do you need more sales people on the road and/or increased training?

3. The KPI results showed an overriding perception that firms are not interested in resolving defects for problem solving.

Quote: *"They are technically good...but very arrogant"* and *"Prefer to work with systems integrators – big companies are very methodical in preparation but not so good on site...keen to sell, not deliver."*

Recommended Solution: Show a more customer focussed approach...some form of after-sales/installation feedback would demonstrate that you care about their business.

To finish on a positive note:

The manufacturers' best score was in providing appropriate guarantees and warranties: 8.5 out of 10. The installers' best score was 8.2 for providing installations that are reliable. And both groups' worst score was a still commendable 7.2; for manufacturers this was in providing products that are easy to use and for installers providing innovative solutions.

Throughout the survey the BCIA out-performed a similar exercise undertaken for M&E contractors, but that doesn't mean that we can sit on our laurels.

And finally....

Welcome to our most recent member: Don Controls Limited—our primary contact is Gary Bartlett.

Don Controls is a manufacturing and electrical engineering company based in Horsforth, Leeds. The company has been designing, manufacturing, in-

stalling, and commissioning electrical and control systems for over 55 years.

For more information visit their web site (www.don.co.uk).

