



Thanks!

- Thank you to our valued Clients for limiting out on birds with us at the Annual Pheasant Hunt in Kimball SD! If you are a client and want to go next year, send me a message!

Upcoming Events

- We will have a booth at the plant manager's meeting, IRF conference and the maintenance manager's meeting.
- Data Webinar hosted by Ethanol Producer Magazine in April!
- We will be at the NEC in New Orleans.

Brain Teaser

You may enter, but you may not come in, I have space, but no room, I have keys, but open no lock. What am I?

Submit answers to CarsonM@direct-automation.com. First one wins a prize! Kasey Richardson won last issue and won a rugged power bank. Use the same e-mail if you have a question you would like answered in the next issue.



It seems like every ethanol plant has a different approach to handling their IT. Their approaches really depend on what they value. Uptime, efficiency, ease of use, capital cost, data collection, data and control security, ease of use, longevity and variable costs are factors everyone considers. We want to help you meet your priorities.

NEW TEAM MEMBER!

Shelby Bierema joined Direct Automation this summer to assist you with becoming a Direct Automation client! She is very ambitious and brings new ideas to our team. We've been very impressed with how well she listens and then focuses on what is important to you.



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Building Trust.

Direct Automation prescribes that good service is achieved with accountability.

When you are a client of Direct Automation, you have access to our entire team. You can call the office, or call the employee who works with your company the best. We do not make you fill out forms or sign documents to approve service for each instance then arbitrarily sign someone up to your issue. We know that filling out forms and meeting new people won't help you reach your goal. When you call, we know you need something of importance and will help you to accomplish the issues.

Our clients win when we make clear distinctions between top and bottom performing employees. That is why you get their cell phone numbers. If they get more calls and great reviews, they get more respect at work and they get rewarded for it. We figure if they earned your trust, they earned the reward. To do that they have to earn your confidence in them by successfully taking on big responsibilities with your best interests in mind. If they do that, we know when you have a project or a situation you will call them first.

Avoiding the forms and signature process has been a great decision for Direct Automation. Some competitors think those forms and signatures avoid nonpayment issues. "The truth is," Paul Zweifel, owner of Direct Automation, states "it is very rare that someone does not pay a bill. And if they did not, getting one payment is the last thing I'm worried about. I'm worried about our reputation. I want to know what happened. The first question I ask is "Was our service below par?" If the answer is yes, we fix it to the best of our abilities."

By being accountable it is easier to track problems and engineer the service in order to avoid that same problem in the future. The biggest area for improvement, for any integrator, is communication. It is rare to find a great communicator that is a wizard with the automation system. But it can be trained.

Questions? Give me a call.
-Carson 1-605-464-1667



PALLETS OF APACS HARDWARE FOR SALE!

We love helping our clients. Currently, we are assisting them in the sale of their Legacy APACS hardware. We strongly prefer to sell in lots; we have 50 mgy and 100 mgy plants available. Systems were functional when they were removed.

We also have other legacy DCS parts as well. Just call. We can help.

If you are deciding to push that 2020 APACS deadline farther and farther away, we recommend you get your hands on this. When a part malfunctions, you do not want to be on eBay hunting a part down, you want that part in a box in your maintenance shop.



Choosing your Migration Partner

You are thinking about weighing your options on the big DCS Migration. Important concepts to consider:

If APACs, Foxboro, Yokagawa or ABB System Six are in your daily vocabulary, call us for a free evaluation and proposal for a DCS Migration. 605-428-4300

There are a few major considerations you must make as you decide on how to go forward with a DCS migration:

1. Do you want a Rip and Replace, by area, or a phased approach?
2. What DCS platform do you want to install?
3. Whom do you want to help you install and service your new DCS?

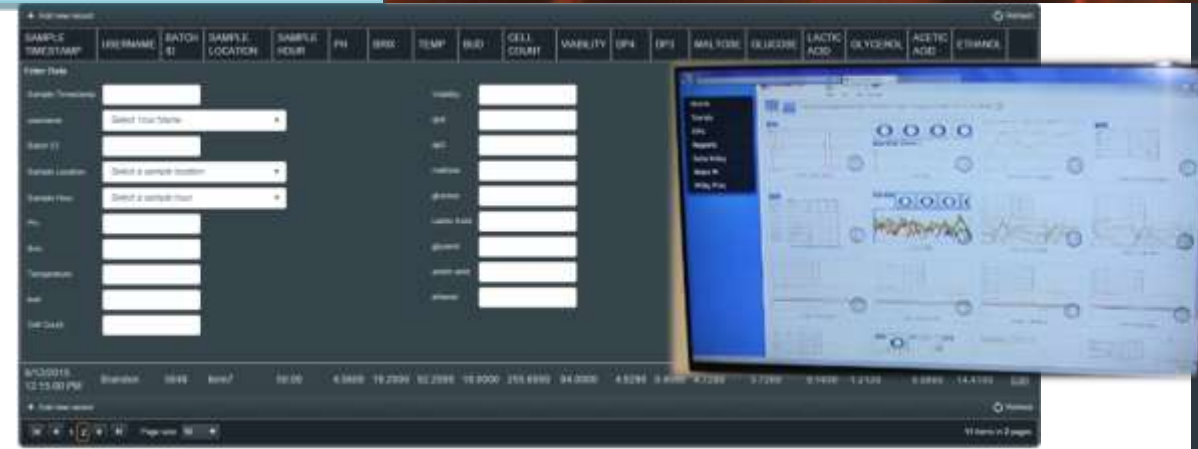
(1) I'm going to cut to the chase for the first one and tell you that you will be much happier with a Rip and Replace DCS migration of your whole plant. You could break it up by area, or do the HMI then hardware, but if you do, you will be using a bizarre compilation of hardware and integration to make it happen. How does a Rip and Replace benefit you? The product is better, and the **total** cost is almost always cheaper with this method. The only exceptions are if you have a cash flow issue or plan to piece meal it to compromise for a smaller automation team.

(2) For a platform, you need to come to terms with what is important for you and your company. If it is uptime, you want a platform that is redundant, non-server client based, can download during operation, and is rugged. If you like this above all else don't fall into the trap for features that reduce cut over time during the installation shutdown. It does not take longer than your normal fall or spring shutdown to cut over a system. Do not get hung up on those features. Specialized cards that are designed to fit in your old chassis might save a few hours for your integrator, but your startup will happen at the same time, because the integrator should not be the bottleneck. If you value alarm management, look for a platform that is ISA 18.2 compliant (and an integrator to match that). If process efficiencies are important to you, get a system that can inherently imbed those features right into your plant without getting bolt-ons. Bolt-ons mean more hidden capital and service expenses and more fingers in your plant's DCS.

(3) You will need pick someone to help you. Good service, and service that is relevant to the ethanol industry, will be important. Proper setup will save big money in the future, so try to get a feel for future cost commitments. If you want to flex every muscle of your DCS, pick a proactive plan that allows for the integrator to hone your system and prevent errors, rather than react to problems. Does the integrator have some perks, like some industry knowhow to provide some efficiencies or provide IT service too so you don't have to outsource that somewhere else?

We'd be happy to spend as much time with you as you would like to help you analyze if we would be a good fit for your project. We realize the proof is in seeing it and in the reviews of people that use it, so we will set up plant tours and encourage you to ask around about all of the choices on your decision making table.

-Carson Merkwon
MBA, PMP, ChE



"This is Getting Serious"

Your ethanol plant's DCS produces about 150 million data points a day!

Now, add Lab Data, PLCs, Operator Logs, Financial Data, Market Data, CMMS, and any other digital form to make interpreting a real headache.

Three years ago, Paul Zweifel decided to take the leap and developed the best solution for data management for ethanol companies. A year ago, it started out as a very convenient tool to ditch spreadsheets and view graphs. But now it is so much more.

This is getting serious. In a few months Pi in the Sky will likely be a replacement for almost all of your other data viewing tools. The market disruption will be significant.

You will no longer need a lab data software, a fermentation data management software, and by next fall you won't even need a benchmarking service. The crazy part is, it keeps on growing. In a year, you could be able to sell your inventory, trouble shoot problems with the industry, put out requests for proposals, and network.

The features are not going to stop anytime soon, we have customers who continuously request new ideas every day. And every day, our employees are finding ways to make it happen. What a blessing to have the match up of a great team and great clients to make this product shine.

-Carson 1.605.464.1667



EYE ON IT Current Industry Trends



Direct Automation did not initially get in this business thinking we would be migrating DCS systems that are not in the legacy status. It did not seem plausible that newer systems would be candidates for replacement. But we have found due to competitions unprofessional installations and lackluster support, some clients are asking for a change. If you have a new system and are curious if we can make it work better, or even start fresh and replace it, give us a call.

Support Ethanol Production

Message our page on Facebook or LinkedIn to help us connect with ways to promote ethanol at your plant. We can work together to get the word out on the positive effects of ethanol for our country.

If you have an event at your facility we'd love to support you.