

Not So Risky Business

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A problem has been identified that needs a solution. You have also been given an additional requirement from management that the process identified needs to increase output by 30 percent over the original system. You have already searched the websites of some industrial VFD vendors, but you are still not sure about all the technology, terminology, and performance claims stated. You want that extra assurance that you are making the right choice. So you pick up the phone and call the technical support group number listed on the website. If they ask you for a purchase order or put up any type of fee-based hurdle, immediately hang up the phone and call another vendor on your list. The vendor you call must be ready to review your application questions and offer straightforward suggestions when asked. You should be able to have your technology and terminology questions explained in clear and understandable language. This presale application/technical support phase should make you feel comfortable with the choice you are about to make.

Physical Installation

This phase is most critical concerning the channel you are planning to purchase through. You may have saved a few percent on the initial purchase price of the VFD but that thrill is quickly forgotten when you have a deadline to meet and you can't get started up quickly and correctly. This is what total cost of ownership is all about and where you really begin to have that positive ownership experience, or, conversely, you start to regret your selection. Many vendors ship what are now called "cheat sheets," or "quick start guides," along with a CD containing all manuals, a spare parts list, wiring diagrams, and a host of other assistance documentation, along with quick links to web pages providing technical assistance. Sometimes, though, this is still not enough. Your skilled and experienced local distributor or sales representative can be your best source of eliminating risk during this critical phase.

Start-Up And Operation

Start-up can be scheduled many weeks after the physical unit is installed and wired for operation. There are times when a qualified start-up technician will be needed to assist during this phase, again with the ultimate objective of reducing risk and enhancing your total experience of ownership. These services are sometimes fee-based but must provide value. The operation phase of ownership should last many years and provide consistent, trouble-free service.

Production And Maintenance

This phase arrives many years after the initial sale, but cannot be overlooked. It is in this phase that the assurance of a solid technical support resource backed by

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years of product knowledge and application expertise adds true value and reduces your risk of ownership. When the need to modify a production or process line arises, you need to have the assurance that you can pick up the phone or e-mail a well-staffed, highly-trained group of product and application experts to assist in getting your needs met quickly and efficiently.

A VFD that has given you decades of faithful service may need attention from time to time. Ultimately, this attention will include the replacement of the unit and the evaluation and analysis process will begin again. When this occurs, you need the assurance that a migration path to the next generation of improved technology is available from your vendor.

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