reduce, **resize, *revitalize***

In today's hectic, on-the-go society, nothing tops corporate priority lists like efficiency. Upper management cuts steps, reduces equipment and trims personnel in order to complete the same job for less capital. Although this optimization process will likely continue for as long as businesses exist, one manufacturing company is working to make it just a little easier for water and wastewater professionals to move closer to that goal.

By Heather McCoy

Water professionals save time and money with new DataStick technology

The recently introduced DataStick from AquaSensors is a compact product that removes many of the extra steps typically needed to analyze water. As stated by Tim Schilz, director of sales and marketing for AquaSensors, "Our biggest claim to fame as a young company is that our measuring systems can be interfaced directly to a PLC (programmable logic conroller) or SCADA or DCS system without the need for an analyzer or transmitter, which most companies still require."

A Company is Reborn

AquaSensors was founded in 2002 on the heels of the former Milwaukee-based Great Lakes Intl. (GLI). GLI also served the water and wastewater industry but disappeared in 2002 when it was swallowed up by a larger company. Today, AquaSensors is made up of much of GLI's former engineering group.

"[We're focusing on] a little different twist in the market" Schilz said, "but with the same type of robust designs and products that will have long-term use in municipal or industrial applications."

AquaSensors' main focus is to design and manufacture analytical measurement systems for process control applications. The company prides itself on a product design that reduces equipment and installation costs while improving reliability in a wide variety of applications.

The company is located in Menomonee Falls, Wis., with representatives and distributors located worldwide.

Small Stick, Big Time Saver

For the first time, many analyzation processes are more efficient thanks to AquaSensor's DataStick technology. The DataStick offers companies the opportunity to conduct the same tests and monitoring processes that they always have but with fewer steps.

Schilz described the system as "a patented technology that speaks the language of a lot of PLCs, whether it's DeviceNet, an Allen-Bradley PLC; Modbus; or PROFIBUS."

The value of the stick is that it requires a user only to plug it in and use it. The product comes precalibrated, so a PLC will immediately recognize the parameter being measured and input that directly into the control scheme. Schilz also points out that the product enables users to link the DataStick to a USB port and turn a Notebook PC or PDA into a measuring device with the DataStick on the front end. Each DataStick system runs on 24 volts DC and is UL-approved for hazardous locations.

Users also have the option of inserting an AV38 display interface between the DataStick and their control scheme for more conventional testing configurations. The AV38 supports up to 200 DataSticks and provides two current outputs for traditional data reporting.

All-in-One Testing

The DataStick offers all of a user's testing needs in one compact package. It shrinks the system's footprint and maintenance costs by removing the additional components—including panel space and interface boxes—traditionally required in a testing system.

In order to change testing parameters, users need only to switch out the stick's head (each sensor provides 24-bit data) with the new parameter, and they are ready to conduct a new test without having to purchase additional DataSticks. Current measurement heads include pH, ORP, two electrode conductivity, toroidal conductivity, dissolved oxygen, dissolved ozone, resistivity, drinking water turbidity and suspended solids.

Additionally, replacing broken parts in the system is just as easy. If a sensor goes bad or needs to be reconditioned, a tester needs only to replace the small sensor that plugs into the DataStick to get it back up and running.

Practical Application

One industrial account with process water applications has found that the DataStick has made processing more affordable by cutting out extra equipment costs. The Valley Queen Cheese Factory, Inc. in Milbank, S.D., uses the DataStick in the wastewater portion of its factory. The DataStick helps the company ensure that its water meets state requirements; specifically, the tool is used to test the pH and conductivity of the water.

Kevin Dornbusch, control supervisor for the plant, finds the product's ability to directly communicate with a system a big help with plant applications. He said this feature has allowed him to eliminate five transmitters from the process.

Dornbusch also praised AquaSensors for its impressive customer service. He said that although he technically works with a local distributor, he called the main office for help with a tricky pH system installation and was impressed with how helpful the staff was.

"I'm big on customer service," Dornbusch said. "If a company doesn't have good customer service, I won't use the product. But AquaSensors has been really good to work with. We've had a lot of success with them." *wqp*

About the Author
Heather McCoy is assistant editor for *Water Quality Products*. She can be reached at 847.954.7958, or by e-mail at hmccoy@sgcmail.com.

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