

Connect with Confidence

By Lilly Chapa

Connected devices on the factory floor are nothing new, but today's connected operations are far more advanced than those of 20 years ago—and require the components to match. Historically, the data shared between industrial devices and systems was local and contained within the four walls of the factory, but today's connectivity goes beyond data and encompasses broader networking.

This concept, driven by the ubiquity of the internet and smart devices, is known as the Industrial Internet of Things or the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and is increasingly being implemented by industrial operations worldwide for applications ranging from automotive to building automation to critical utilities.

Adopting the technology, connectivity, and strategy required to harness the power of internet-connected operations—automation, predictive maintenance, data analysis, and more—can be daunting.

Working with an established distributor that offers products designed for optimizing IIoT capabilities, along with the experience to recommend the best solutions for any need, can help organizations make the transition to efficient and effective connectivity with confidence.

Phoenix Contact, a global market leader and innovator in the electrical engineering and automation sectors, offers a holistic approach to enhancing power, networking, and control capabilities. With a growing range of forward-thinking products for the harsh industrial environment, the 97-year-old German company is known for being the premier supplier of industrial electrical and electronic technology products that power, connect and automate systems and equipment.

Phoenix has headquarters in North America with local inventory, giving it the advantage of shorter lead times and ample available inventory, and their distributor salesforce and local sales engineers work hand-in-hand to ensure they are recommending the right solution for every customer.

With a mission to create innovative and inspiring solutions, Phoenix works hard to build trust and confidence between its large and knowledgeable sales force and customers. Phoenix's new Connect with Confidence program does just that—it positions Phoenix as one supplier of all the quality products needed to address multiple areas of functional design.

Now and Then

Connect with Confidence brings together and improves upon Phoenix's previous campaigns, which focused on particular markets and applications, as well as "The Triangle" of data, signal, and power.

Connect with Confidence combines and simplifies those approaches while moving beyond a product-oriented focus to one that identifies interconnect areas of functional design (AFDs). Phoenix representatives will consult with customers to better understand their needs and identify AFD solutions—not just products—that meet customers' project goals and corporate objectives.

“This is not a new paradigm, it's more of an evolution of connectivity,” explains Steve Barber, Phoenix's Director of Product Marketing for Device Connectors. “We're looking at things differently. Motors and drives, for example, are no longer simple devices that need power alone. They're also networked into the automation infrastructure of factories and buildings, where there are many signal and sensor I/O points, so rather than just power requirements, motors have control and networking requirements as well. Our new hybrid connectors are plugged into what used to be power and serve more than one function.”

Building A Deeper Relationship

Connect with Confidence is a tool to help guide and set the framework to build that deeper understanding of a customer's need. After decades of promoting its proud heritage as a German-based manufacturing company of high-quality products as well as its integrated and self-reliant manufacturing, Phoenix knew that a shift was needed.

By viewing products as elements of a higher system, Phoenix's sales representatives can focus instead on customer, project, and AFD insights to provide a sensible solution. The three AFDs at the forefront of the Connect with Confidence approach include power, control, and networking.

“Our sales people are sales engineers—there's a large focus on engineering, and we have a very technical relationship with the customer,” Barber says. “We interface with their design and engineering teams, and through that relationship, the sales engineer can have those technical discussions with customers to ensure them that we're on the leading edge. It enables that continued consultative engagement to get them to the final truest value of what they need.”

Phoenix plans to continue changing the connectivity conversation among the industry and with their customers, and Barber says the goal is to bring power, network, and control capabilities to the forefront of that discussion.

“Traditionally, when engineers were designing electronic devices, the discussion on connectivity was much further down the road after other components were decided upon,” Barber notes. “There are things that need to be considered much sooner in the design as opposed to after the fact, such as the implementation of hybrid connectors, and we hope to facilitate that discussion.”