

## We place our bets on open standards and modularity

Andreas Eglseer is head of Interroll's new Global Center of Excellence for Software and Electronics. We spoke with the Austrian engineer about the role of software and open standards in modern material-handling solutions.

Most people don't associate Interroll with software. Is that a false perception?

Yes, definitely. Without software, no conveyor line, sorter or stacker crane would operate in the distribution warehouses or production plants. And with the trend toward automation in recent years, software has gained even more importance in the material-handling sector. Many tasks can now only be performed automatically with intelligent software solutions and corresponding interfaces that are crucial to managing the global flow of goods fueled by the popularity of e-commerce and the seamless connection of conveyor and machine-processing systems.

Software is a very broad field. Where is Interroll positioned?

As a neutral provider of key technological products, we're not concerned with integrating material-handling computers, complex warehouse management systems or enterprise resource planning systems into an overall solution. That's the business of our system integrator customers. When it comes to software and electronics, we operate in the millisecond world of real-time data

processing – in other words, machine control and the provision of current operating data from conveyor and sorting systems.

So you have to ensure that these systems can be integrated into different IT environments, right?

Exactly. Ensuring an end-to-end flow of information is necessary to benefit from the advantages of ubiquitous networking as applied, for instance, in the Industry 4.0 environment. We provide system integrators with data from sensor-actuator networks or control systems via the necessary interfaces for higher-level processing systems, and we do so with the support of open IT standards. At the same time, we ensure that information on installed products or the current operating data of the plants can be recorded simply and conveniently, for example for solutions included in the Interroll Lifetime Service in which the measures for preventive maintenance can be planned as needed.

How about the protocols used for material-handling solutions? Are they also standardized, as they are in other industries?

No. Many users, manufacturers and countries are still doing their own thing. This situation hinders market opportunities and creates a real need for software adaptation. It would certainly be useful to have an open industry standard, like the one in digital mobile communications, that ensures the easy interoperability and scalability of the solutions. These are tasks our entire industry must undertake in the near future.

As a Global Center of Excellence what is the focus of your software offering?

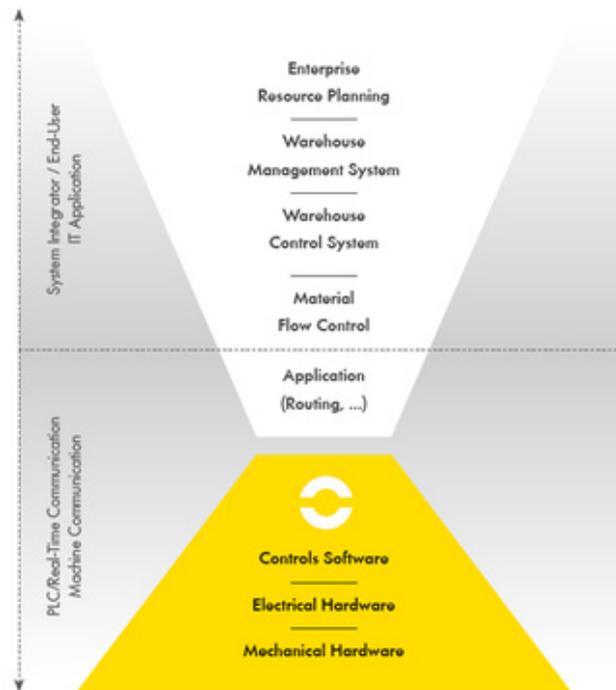
It's all about delivering customer benefits, in line with our guiding principles of quality, speed, and experienced simplicity. A good example is our recently introduced Split Tray Sorter. Here, we have halved the usual project timeline between purchasing and commissioning in one go. To achieve this goal, we have developed a modular control solution that puts these sorting systems into operation quickly and easily. Thanks to the system's modularity, the end points or infeed conveyors are integrated step by step through a configuration on the machine panel instead of in the operator's programming environment. At the same time, the standardized control ensures an easy utilization of system's entire performance potential. The plug-and-play approach clearly reduces the complexity for customers. As a result, it opens up completely new business opportunities not only for larger system integrators, but especially for many smaller ones.

Are you pursuing any particular course with your range of control systems and electronics?

As a Center of Excellence for Software and Electronics with a startup background, we don't take a special approach compared to the other product areas. But we do follow the successful path of the modular platform strategy that Interroll has pursued for years. This modular strategy has the advantage not only that we can significantly reduce the complexity of programming, but also that we can successively step up our product development and expansion in the software sector. One example is the MultiControl system for our proven zero-pressure accumulation container conveying technology, with which we are now also unifying the DriveControl for zero pressure accumulation pallet conveying – regardless of whether it is a matter of seamless integration of 400 V or 24/48 V drives.



## AUTOMATING THE MATERIAL FLOW



Get in contact



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