GE Energy Connections

GE Control Upgrade Reduces Cost and Downtime for World's Largest Car Wash Company

IMO Car Wash Ltd. is the world's largest car wash company. Every year IMO washes more than 30 million cars at its 836 state-of-the-art car wash facilities located in 13 countries in Europe and Asia. Each site can wash four cars at a time, making vehicles shine like new in less than two minutes.

Challenge

IMO has relied on GE's Series 90*-30 controllers and DataPanel HMIs to control its installations for more than a decade. They run all aspects of each facility, including brushes, pumps, car movement, and more. But across IMO's entire operation, the setup of each individual car wash is constantly changing depending on local market preferences, weather, and competition, making a powerful and flexible control system a must.

So when it came time to upgrade their control systems because certain modules were no longer available, IMO once again chose GE controls to run their car wash empire.

QuickPanel+

PACSystems RX3i

Solution

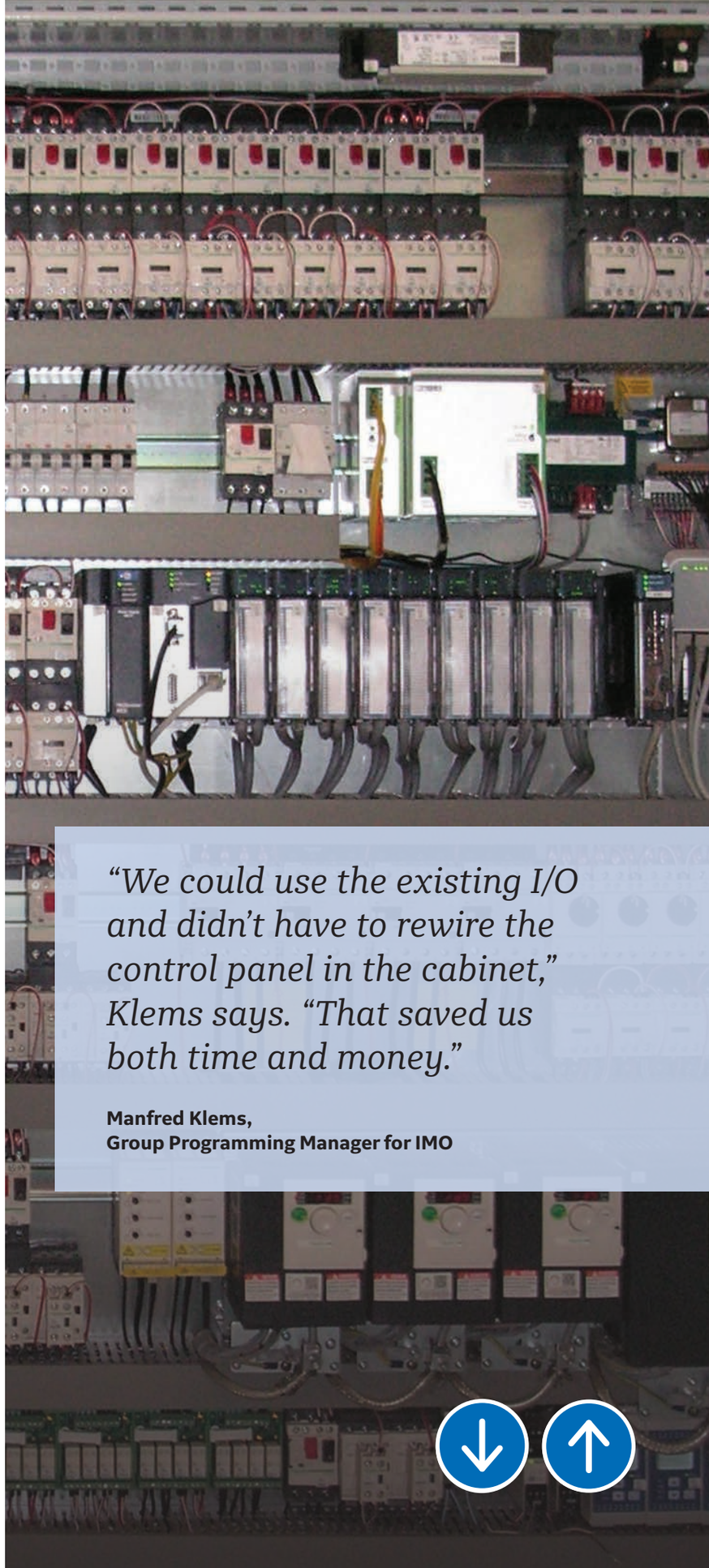
In evaluating its next generation control system, IMO sought a solution that would be simple to migrate, easy to program, meet its future needs, and leverage the benefits of the Industrial Internet.

IMO selected the PACSystems* RX3i controller to run their car wash equipment and the QuickPanel+* operator interface to manually operate each site when necessary. Manfred Klems, Group Programming Manager for IMO, managed the control system upgrade. Klems says one reason IMO chose GE was the ease of migration. A&H Vertrieb, a German distributor, supplied the new control system.

"We could use the existing I/O and didn't have to rewire the control panel in the cabinet," Klems says. "That saved us both time and money." Klems adds that once the new PACSystems RX3i controllers were installed, it was fast and easy to convert the control programs onto the new platform. Klems says upgrade of the hardware from Series 90-30 to PACSystems RX3i and software conversion took only a few hours thanks to the remote access capabilities of the PACSystems RX3i.

As much as soap, water, and brushes, IMO relies on data to keep its business going. A vast amount of information is gathered on each location's operation. With the high-performance PACSystems RX3i controller, IMO can now capture and transmit operational data to headquarters, where it can then be analyzed to optimize operations, troubleshoot and repair faults, and assist with financial analysis.

During the controls upgrade, IMO also replaced its old DataPanel operator interfaces with new 7" QuickPanel+ models. In addition, they now stock 6" QuickPanel+ for fast and easy replacement of old DataPanels when needed. The new QuickPanel+ allows each machine at each location to be operated manually, during maintenance via the OI touch screen.



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Manfred Klems,
Group Programming Manager for IMO

Result

IMO found their control system upgrade to be fast and easy. “Replacing the backplane with one that is the same size simplified replacement,” Klems says, while re-use of modules reduced cost and wiring effort. “And the software migration was almost automatic,” Klems adds.

IMO is enjoying many operational benefits as a result of the control system upgrade. “The PACSystems RX3i makes it easy to send data to our UK headquarters,” Klems says. The new system runs what Klems calls “a very complex reporting system” that sends fault data as well as information on incidents that occur—time and date stamp, weather at the site, and the position of the car. This data can be critical in understanding and addressing unforeseen events.

Klems also notes how the new PACSystems RX3i system allows for remote access and programming, which can occur frequently. “Changes to a site can be put into operation by someone without programming skills,” he says. The PACSystems RX3i Ethernet connectivity provides a fast, secure connection. This saves the time and cost of sending an engineer to sites, which also increases uptime.

And with the new QuickPanel+ operator interfaces, employees who may speak different languages can control the system at each site with easy-to-understand diagrams, making it simple for operators to manually run the car wash as needed.

With a newly upgraded control system from GE, IMO has reduced costs, increased uptime, and provided operational insights for its fleet of car wash facilities. Now, no matter what the weather, the market, or the competition does, IMO can quickly adapt to keep its facilities running at peak efficiency and profitability.

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Manfred Klems,
Group Programming Manager for IMO

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