

Keeping track of it all



By Bob Stasonis

Have you looked at the back section of our magazine over the last year? There are usually about 2 – 3 pages of new products! Lots of new “stuff” in PXI! You’ll see new instrumentation, switching systems, development tools, and a host of ancillary products. Estimates are that there will be up to 1,500 hardware and software products based on or supporting PXI by the end of 2005. It appears that the members of the PXI Systems Alliance are still finding new ways to make PXI more capable and easier to use for a broadening range of applications. You can easily visualize a growing catalog of PXI products for a growing market.

But this plethora of options causes a dilemma for many of our readers. As they design new test and automation systems, how do they choose the right module, chassis, software, or any other PXI product? There’s just so much stuff! How can they know what’s going on in the market? Fortunately, there are independent resources. First of all, keeping back copies of this magazine is a great resource. Our annual buyer’s guide is something you must keep on your bookshelf.

Of course, the Internet is where the most up to date information can be found. This magazine’s website (www.pxionline.com) has a searchable database of PXI products. You can search by company, global categories, and exact instrument type. There is a synopsis of the product, a form to ask for more information, and links to the online datasheet or company’s website.

In addition, the PXI Systems Alliance (www.pxisa.org) website has a product guide, sorted by category, with links to the respective member websites. There are also application notes and recordings of web seminars where you can learn how other companies have implemented PXI.

I have also found several commercial companies with Internet search engines focused on instrument databases. Globalspec (www.globalspec.com) has a very extensive database of instruments and related products for test and automation. It also includes many other categories besides PXI, so you can search out things like hoses and sheet metal

as well, if you have the mind. You can download an *Engineering Toolbar* that helps you more easily search their databases and access application notes from many suppliers. ETesters (www.etesters.com) is the newest database I have found, and unlike Globalspec, is only focused on test equipment. There is also a database of standards organizations and systems integrators. I should remind you that both of these sites are vendor paid search engines, so the first company’s products you may see probably paid for that spot. So scroll down and see what other choices there are so you get a clear picture of what is available.

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At the end of the day, it’s really down to you and the amount of work you are willing and able to put into the effort. Web and hard copy research is first. But equally important is the relationship you have with your vendors. Hopefully, you have enough contacts with direct sales and distributors that you’ll have a good picture of that portion of the PXI market you need to work with. So grill your vendors...make them provide you with good information on the market as well as their products. You’ll build a better system and will be better prepared for the next project.

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