

Boost for the digital service offering

Remote support for system operators

During the coronavirus crisis, many companies are facing the challenge of maintaining their systems and running them at full capacity with reduced workforces or shift operations. Added to that are numerous system components that have to be commissioned, as well as service, maintenance and calibration activities. With many of these work processes, service employees from Endress+Hauser typically provide on-site support. During the coronavirus crisis, and to ensure that the workforce is protected, in-person appointments are possible only in exceptional circumstances. In order to continue to support customers under these difficult conditions, Endress+Hauser is offering a package of digital services tailored specifically to this situation.

Author: Florian Kraftschik, MarCom Manager Media Relations, Endress+Hauser

External know-how: critical factor for system operators

Since early 2020, people across the globe have been experiencing how the coronavirus is turning the world on its head. Today there is little similarity to the things that were taken for granted just a few months ago. This crisis is impacting the entire world, and with it every industry in Germany, with negative consequences for production and employment.

In places where production continues, it's being hampered by various restrictions. Social distancing rules must be observed, in-person appointments and meetings must be canceled and even collaboration with external partners has to be suspended to some extent. For many companies that normally rely on the support of external experts for various work processes, the latter issue is particularly problematic. Especially critical is that if scheduled maintenance activities cannot be carried out with sufficient quality, outages and system downtime can result; if calibration activities have to be canceled, product quality could be at risk. In this situation, many companies have likely become aware of just how valuable external know-how is for their business processes.

Digitalization of the service offering – long in the making

Fortunately, Endress+Hauser is prepared for the fact that conventional service approaches are suddenly vanishing and that service employees can no longer drive to the customer. The company has long been working on many aspects of a comprehensive digital agenda by focusing on digital solutions for a wide range of applications. Digital shopping options have been in place for quite some time to give the purchasing process a more efficient structure. And today solutions already exist that are designed to bring the installed base of complete systems into the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT).

Endress+Hauser is furthermore developing apps to support the remote commissioning, maintenance, repair, and installation and removal of instruments. After all, it's long been clear that even without crises and urgent needs, conventional services will be changed by digitalization and digital alternatives will find their way into the service offering because they bring customers genuine benefits.

Visual Support – remote support for service calls

The service offering has also been supplemented with an app that makes it possible to transmit images in addition to phone calls and emails. The Visual Support software from SightCall was specially designed for support and service activities and allows Endress+Hauser service personnel to support customers and their systems through a cyber presence. Endress+Hauser is making the application available through technical support to system operators at no charge during the acute phase of the coronavirus crisis in order to support them. Endress+Hauser is also using this software solution as a basis to offer system operators instrument commissioning where on-site support is not possible. The user benefits from fast and efficient trouble resolution and commissioning without requiring employees to have physical contact with Endress+Hauser service engineers.

Smart Start-Up as a service package for commissioning

Endress+Hauser and some of its customers gained initial hands-on experience with the Visual Support app even prior to the coronavirus. The Smart Start-Up service package for commissioning Endress+Hauser instruments contains features such as app-supported remote commissioning. Customers welcome the fact that Endress+Hauser is using new and innovative technologies in technical support, and they have demonstrated a willingness to utilize the new apps and service offerings. Given that many companies are relying on agility, creativity and new ideas to deal with the challenges of the crisis, acceptance of the Visual Support app is on the rise. With this in mind, in the future Visual Support will be made available for service calls that are required on short notice.

Tobias Maier, Head of Technical Support Services at Endress+Hauser, says: “The visual connection allows us to acquire a good overview of the situation and better utilize our expert resources as a result.” He likes to use the app to quickly help his own customers.

The crisis as a digitalization accelerator

Even prior to the coronavirus crisis, Endress+Hauser's customers and partners had access to a wide range of digital tools and services, as well as the endress.com platform. This included Applicator for configuring products, Device Viewer for locating and downloading instrument documentation, the Operations app, which provides information regarding measurement instruments, and the SmartBlue app, which helps during instrument commissioning via Bluetooth connectivity, to name just a few of the digital helpers. Some of these apps are already integrated into conventional service procedures. One advantage of quickly implementing and bundling the digital service offering at the beginning of the coronavirus crisis was that work was already in progress on diverse apps and solutions, which meant that they merely had to be finalized before becoming part of the offering.

Summary: Service benefits from digital alternatives

Even during the coronavirus crisis, one of Endress+Hauser's stated goals is to be a strong partner for the process control industry. To ensure that system operators can access the Endress+Hauser know-how, expertise and support under these strict safety measures, the digital technical support and commissioning services were bundled into a special website. In addition, numerous apps and digital tools support customers with their work processes. The Endress+Hauser service employees also benefit from the opportunity to provide virtual support and expert know-how to customers. This gives users a sense of security and illustrates how the service offering can benefit from digital technologies and how they can reasonably supplement on-site service calls.



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