

OTM's Joint Industry Project success brings welcome standardisation for oil industry subsea systems

'Really good news for the subsea industry,' says' BP's Lindsey-Curran

A joint industry project (JIP) set up by technology consultants, OTM, has yielded an early result, thanks to co-operation and discussion between members of the oil and gas subsea industry worldwide. SIIS (Subsea Instrumentation Interface Standardisation) was set up only two years ago with the aim of standardising on the interfaces deployed in the subsea industry.

OTM's Annie Hairsine is the network manager, providing project management to the SIIS joint industry project. She is delighted that agreement on the protocol has been reached so soon.

'SIIS focused on the interface between subsea sensors and the subsea control module,' she says. 'The group considered the interfaces required by all types of sensors in the subsea environment, and we consulted with the sensor vendors. We also prepared cost comparisons and looked at the level of industry support for each of the three shortlisted options. We were scrupulously fair about the selection process, and eventually we reached agreement on a single standard.'

The Canbus CANOPEN interface type has been selected as the standard for the SIIS protocol, and this is seen as very good news for the oil industry worldwide.

Chris Lindsey-Curran, senior subsea engineer at BP, said, 'The upstream sector once again finds itself in a period of high demand, with the service sector and the operators all struggling for resources, both human and physical.'

'The oil industry is also striving to improve the performance of subsea systems through improvements in reliability. Historically, the service and operator companies have been free to choose interfaces as there were no standards for subsea. This led to a plethora of communication protocols being adopted across the industry when interfacing to third party, external sensors.'

Service companies and sensor suppliers will now not have to focus time on designing new interfaces but instead can focus their energy on improving the key elements of their products to provide better service.

'In SIIS meetings we have heard repeatedly with respect to protocols that no-one cares what the standard is, but please pick one,' says Lindsey-Curran. 'And now we have – it's really good news for the subsea industry.'

The oil and gas operators will be able to save time in not having to select a protocol, but being able to quote SIIS as the standard. Sensor companies will no longer have to develop, qualify and test different interfaces to their sensors; this will save on engineering, manufacturing and inventory. Standardisation is also good news for the sensor suppliers, because they are free to focus on sensor development and not have to consider a myriad of interfaces to work with.

Annie Hairsine says, 'SIIS has only been in existence for just over 2 years and has made its first major decision. This now opens the way to bringing more standardisation and work fronts to be addressed. I personally think this is an incredible achievement in a relatively short time when you consider the number of parties involved. But this is just one small step on a long journey.'

OTM, with offices in Aberdeen, Guildford and Houston, has worked with BP and Shell since the initial concept (which spun out of IWIS www.iwis-jip.com – another of OTM's JIPs) to develop and nurture the concept. Through independent management SIIS has developed as an initiative representing the leaders in the subsea industry.

'This is just another example of pan-industry cooperation that represents OTM's unique position amongst the industry's leading decision makers,' says Annie Hairsine. 'To see such widespread agreement in such a short time is testament to the Steering Committee's drive and motivation.'

Ends

24 March 2006

For further information please contact

Annie Hairsine, Associate Director, OTM Consulting
Shirley Muir, Odyssey Communications

01483 598000
01224 325495

Diagram caption:

Oil and gas industry subsea production system installation with umbilical terminations in the foreground, Christmas trees and distribution system in the background. Oil industry JIP SIIS has agreed on the standardisation of the instrumentation interfaces used on the Christmas trees and distribution units.

