Connext Transforms Production Efficiency and Control for Large Food Processing Company

RESULTS

- Greatly improved production control of 32 disparate machines connected to the MES
- Improved production efficiency due to elimination of manual processes
- Improved reporting capability due to data logging and historian functionality

APPLICATION
Machine data integration across a food and beverage production facility

CUSTOMER
Systems integrator TFA for a large food processing company

CHALLENGE
A large food processing company in Italy produces a wide range of preserved vegetables, both pickled and in oil in glass containers, but like many industrial manufacturers, the company has many "islands of automation" – isolated machines performing essential tasks but disconnected from any centralized management system. It had 32 machines depending on each other, but operating independently on a manually managed production line. The production manager received paper-based production orders and gave instructions to the machine operators from those orders. The system was personnel-intensive and fraught with potential for human error.

When the company installed a new MES (manufacturing execution system), it required software that could connect all of the disparate machines running on individual programmable logic controllers (PLCs) to the MES as quickly and efficiently as possible.

SOLUTION
To connect all of the disparate systems, the company worked with its systems integrator Technologies for Automation S.r.l.u. (TFA) and selected Connext™, an OPC UA server that supports a large number of industry protocols.

"We offered the customer Connext due to its scalability across protocols. This is a fundamental feature where connection with several PLCs was required."

Francesco Alberti
General Manager
Technologies for Automation S.r.l.u. (TFA)

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The openness of Connext made it possible to connect the MES system with the 32 machines of the production line in a simple and transparent way. To assure virtually continuous operation, Connext was used in a redundant configuration. The Connext platform is not just an OPC UA server, but it also offers a range of capabilities such as historian and data logger functionality. These provide local back-up of all the data that is exchanged between the MES system and the Connext solution. Thus, the company is able to manage the collection of data to be shared with the MES platform continuously and without interruptions. Due to the inherent functionality of Connext and the simplicity of the solution, the implementation was efficient with minimal downtime. The advanced integration capabilities of Connext and the simplicity of deployment and implementation were decisive factors in its selection for the project.

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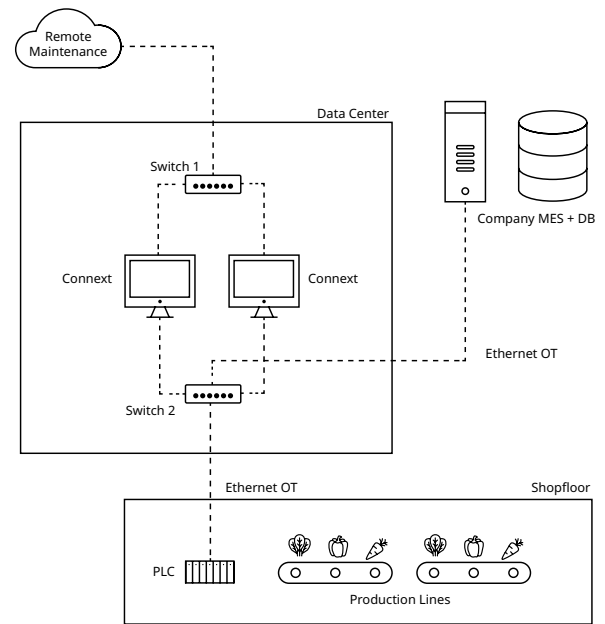
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