

Fact Sheet



Open for Business

The term “OPEN” has many connotations to it. In the controls market there are those who have used this term to further their own proprietary technology, products, solutions, or systems. The facts around “open” can easily be misconstrued.

Open protocols, open systems, open bidding/procurement, open distribution...all have different meanings. Let's look at each carefully:

Open Protocols – Typically, this refers to a communication protocol that allows various manufacturers' products to actively and interoperably communicate information on a common bus or network. It defines the messaging methods, media types, and requirements for devices to “coexist” on the same wire without interfering. Often the use of the term “open protocol” is manipulated by the user to mean one of several things.

- My device can talk to their device and share information
- My device can talk to my other devices without interfering with 3rd party devices
- My device will talk to my front end on the same wire as other devices talking to the front ends
- My device will interoperate with my devices, other manufacturers devices, my front end, or any other front end on the same wire without requiring any custom engineering

It is this last definition that gets to the core of an open protocol, true interoperability at the device level. No games, no gimmicks, no half truths that can trap uneducated customers.

Open Systems – Refers to more than the protocol. It refers to all aspects of the system. A good control system typically specifies five key elements:

- Control Devices
- Graphical User Interfaces
- Network Infrastructure
- Enterprise Connectivity
- Management and Analysis Tools

A good open system will define the requirements for each of these aspects of the system. A good open system will enable multiple bidders and multiple products to fulfill the specification requirements for each of these elements of the system.

Open Bidding – Also referred to as “open procurement” refers to the contracting process of implementing a control solution. An open bid specification defines the functional requirements of each element of a system, not the features of the products. Contracting officers then put the specification out for bid. If the specification is developed with an open system definition, multiple bidders can bid on the project on a fair competitive basis. No one bidder has a better chance of winning based upon what the specification contains.

Unfortunately, the market has a long history of control specifications being “supplied” by control system vendors and, by their nature, include “features” not found in competitors systems – not that these features are required or even required, but they are used as a “leg up” or a method of excluding other vendors from bidding. Too often salesmen sell bells and whistles when the customer wants comfort and control.

An open specification leading to open bidding requires more upfront work by the system specifier. There needs to be more thought and design work done upfront to ensure the project

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scope, architecture, and functionality are completely defined. The extra work is significantly offset by the complete bid cost reduction in a true “apples to apples” bidding process.

Open Distribution – Refers to open availability of products and solutions in the open market. If a product is designed to meet an open protocol but is only available from a sole sourced supplier or only available under closed contract, the resulting system may be considered a closed system. If a product is not directly replaceable by another product from a competitive company, the system becomes locked-in to that sole sourced supplier.

Products are now more readily available from multiple sources in the market. One key differentiating point when evaluating a solution is where you can purchase spare parts and get service. If you have multiple options, you are more open. Sole sourced supply for replacement parts and service tends to lock up the system and yields a higher cost for the ongoing maintenance of a system.

Make Good Decisions – Evaluate all aspects of the open model. Open for business is not a concept by a market reality reflected in many other competitive markets. Competition drives innovation. Proprietary systems and solutions drive locked in business. The two tend to be exclusive of one another. Develop a good strategy towards selecting an open system.

LONMARK is Open For Business - The sign of a good strategy is a future-proof of system design. LONMARK has a proven track record. The foundation of the LONMARK Interoperability Guidelines is the requirement that devices from different vendors must work together. These devices are tested and certified that they will, in fact, interoperate. Additionally, LONMARK provides specification examples and design guidelines which layout the foundation for a complete open system including all elements mentioned above. LONMARK embraces the tenet of complete open, integrated solutions that provide energy efficiency through intelligent control.

LONMARK'S 600+ members provide a wide variety of control system hardware, software, and integration solutions for practically any application and can help with:

- Enterprise system integration
- Master System Integration expertise
- Master planning strategies
- Specification development

Fair competitive bidding support LONMARK is helping the green movement achieve the energy efficiency requirements of today. Looking for guidance in taking advantage of open, interoperable, integrated systems? We can help. LONMARK offers the following resources and services:

- Complete listing of certified interoperable products
- Training programs for organizations looking to implement a strong energy efficiency program through intelligent control
- Educational seminars for conferences, trade events, or corporate teams
- Sample specifications for open systems projects
- Guidance in developing a solid energy control master plan
- Support in securing multiple competitive bidders for your projects
- Technical support for LONMARK product certification
- LONMARK Certified Professional Credentialing program and directory
- References and Case Studies

As a non-profit trade association dedicated to helping organizations change the way they think about energy control, LONMARK is eager to help. Our worldwide team of affiliates and support staff are at your disposal.



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