

OKUMA: AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



CASE STUDY 

AT A GLANCE

Okuma America builds in BigFix as a security pillar of its THINC PC platform-based automated machine tools and Partners in THINC multivendor standards effort.



www.okuma.com/home.html

KEY CHALLENGES

- Build security and configuration management into a proposed industry standard for controlling and managing PC hardware-based automated machine tools
- Overall objective to promote a standard for an end-to-end raw-materials-to-finished-goods process flow, with links to ERP and logistics systems

IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

- BigFix implemented as OEM component in “System Protect” security suite for Okuma THINC machine tool automation platform
- Technologies integrated in THINC System Protect include BigFix (asset management, remote data collection, software distribution/installation); Symantec Livestate (backup and recovery); Trend Micro (antivirus, anti-spyware, anti-malware); and WebEx (remote diagnostics)

RESULTS

- THINC partners program has attracted 21 companies, representing the world’s leading industrial automation companies
- BigFix highlighted as key element in Okuma THINC System Protect Suite

“Wintel” PC hardware and software are not just for white-collar information processing any more. PC technology has evolved to become an attractive choice for integration into industrial automation systems that formerly relied on proprietary embedded systems technologies. In the industrial sector, PC-based technologies offer advantages in the areas of cost, processing power, upgradeability and their sheer ubiquity. With regard to these last two advantages, upgradeability is important in a field where computing technology has a product life cycle of 18 months, while the machine tool that hosts it may have a useful lifespan of 20, 30 or even 40 years. The ubiquity of PC technologies has also created a vast pool of programmers, system architects and other specialists with deep knowledge of how to do things with PCs.

Adopting PC technologies for industrial applications also has its challenges, however. Industrial PC-based systems pose many of the same security and management challenges that affect mainstream PC-based systems. In particular, a PC-based industrial asset can suffer from the same kinds malware, outages, worms, viruses, intrusions and other hazards that have long been a thorn in the side of enterprise IT infrastructures.

PC-Based Industrial Automation Leader

Okuma America has emerged as a leader in PC platform-based machine tools for a number of reasons. Not only was it an early adopter of PC technologies for integration into machine tools, it took care to work out all of details of how to optimally design, implement and service its THINC line of PC technology-based industrial automation products. This is important in building acceptance for PC-based industrial automation technologies, as users are primarily interested in what the tool can do and not the intricacies of managing as a computer. Bryan Newman, Director of Information Systems at Okuma comments: “Our customers are into

manufacturing, not computers. They don't want to worry about security, configuration management, maintenance or all of the challenges with a PC-based device."

BigFix has been installed on every Okuma THINC machine tool since 2005. "Long term service and support rides along with almost every device we sell. BigFix gives us outstanding abilities to see what's going on inside a THINC product installed in the field, service the software running on it, or fix problems. BigFix helps us deliver superior service at lower cost, which is always a good thing," says Newman.

Protect suite integrates BigFix (asset management, remote data collection, software distribution/installation); Symantec Livestate (backup and recovery) Trend Micro (antivirus, anti-spyware, anti-malware); and WebEx (remote diagnostics).

BigFix's inclusion in the THINC System Protect suite results from the openness, flexibility and power of the BigFix architecture. "BigFix definitely plays well with others and adds considerable value to the System Protect suite. It's really one of the strong points of the THINC architecture;" comments Newman.



"BigFix helps us deliver superior service at lower cost, which is always a good thing."

Bryan Newman,
Director of Information Systems, Okuma USA

Emerging Industry Standard

Okuma is currently taking the THINC concept to a new level, by promoting it as an industry standard for integrating multivendor factory floor automation solutions. "Our vision is for an end-to-end production environment operated through the THINC technology platform. The customer can centrally design, program and control a factory through the THINC platform where raw materials come in and finished products go out. We also can integrate THINC-based production processes into an organization's overall ERP and logistics systems."

Okuma is reaching out to other industrial automation companies through its "Partners in THINC" program. Partners in THINC includes technical standards setting, information exchange, and co-marketing activities. The current roster of Partners in THINC participating companies is a literal A-to-Z of 17 industrial equipment makers, from ABB to Zeiss. To support the program, Okuma has converted a 57,000 square foot industrial building in Charlotte, North Carolina into a showplace for THINC partners that includes demo area, conference rooms, offices, manufacturing floor, and a vendor theater.

As Okuma uplevels the THINC concept into a multivendor standard set, BigFix remains an important ingredient. The THINC System Protect software suite provides security, diagnostics, backup and recovery services for THINC standard end products. The System

SUMMING UP

Okuma publicly launched the Partners in THINC program with an open house event at the Partners In THINC facility in Charlotte in May, 2007. Okuma and the other Partners in THINC look forward to selling, installing and supporting THINC-standard systems worldwide. As this occurs, BigFix will go places it never has before. While BigFix has achieved wide acceptance in large enterprise environments, many organizations may get their first introduction to BigFix on factory floors through the Okuma THINC initiative, rather than office buildings as usually is the case.



BigFix: Breakthrough Technology, Revolutionary Economics

BigFix, Inc. offers the IT industry's only intelligent enforcement engine that enables real-time visibility and control of globally distributed desktop, mobile and server computer infrastructures. Built on a revolutionary technology platform, BigFix continually assesses and manages the health and security of enterprise computing devices at the velocity of change.

Without requiring massive investment in dedicated management resources, BigFix automates enterprise-scale malware defense, asset management, software inventory and distribution, vulnerability assessment, policy enforcement, power conservation, and patch management, without compromising network performance, end-user productivity, or security.

BigFix delivers outstanding return-on-investment through slashing IT infrastructure costs of ownership and management complexity while enabling IT organizations to elevate security configuration management from chronic pain point to positive business value resource.