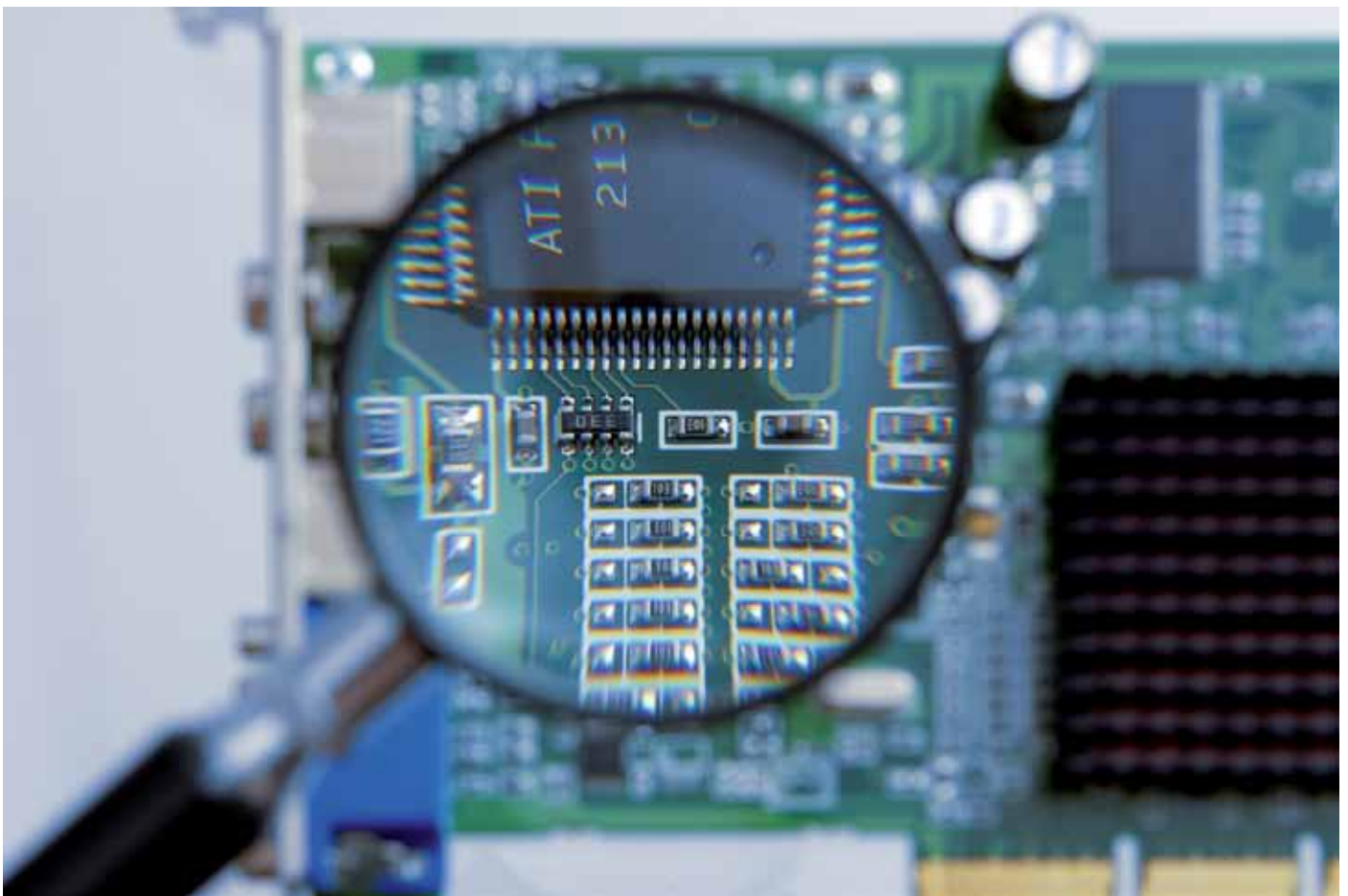


## Customised control



OEMs are constantly looking for ways to gain a competitive edge by delivering clear product differentiation.

This white paper looks at how the performance, energy-saving potential and ease-of-use of machinery can be enhanced by component customisation.

With end-users demanding ever-greater levels of efficiency and capability in machine systems, OEMs are looking for ways to gain a competitive edge by delivering clear product differentiation in a world of often homogenous technology. One way to achieve this is by component customisation.

The challenge is to identify which opportunities to customise a component will deliver true advantage and result in increased revenues and avoid those routes that eat into profits without adding value to the end product. For example, customising can deliver a competitive edge but many machine builders are naturally concerned that customising small numbers of components will not be cost effective. There is also the wider question of knowing precisely what to do; the company in question may not possess the right expertise to identify where component performance, reliability and functionality can be enhanced. Finally, there is the problem of carrying out the work, which may not only exceed capability but also budget.

Firstly, let's look at volume. Customisation often appears to be an attractive but prohibitively expensive option where small volumes are concerned. The common belief is that it has rarely been cost effective to customise small numbers of components and it is true that the management of the process can require skills that the OEM does not have and production time that it cannot afford.



Customised components require design, development, testing and production facilities operated by dedicated staff; these facilities may also have to be approved to industry standards, which in itself can involve considerable cost.

So how can OEMs attain customised components at a cost that is not prohibitive? The answer is to utilise a supplier with a depth of expertise in the component technology concerned, preferably one that not only supplies a broad range of standard products but also regularly works on bespoke offerings for individual customers. Such suppliers are often best placed to offer competitively priced options for customisation, often because they use a standard or previously customised product as the foundation for the new customised component. Also, a supplier specialising in

standard components will already have the facilities in place to ensure testing and compliance with industry standards.

We then come to the question of evaluating and identifying what kind of customisation to offer. An OEM's in-house team may not be able to identify the best opportunities for component customisation, while opportunities to maximise component performance, reliability and functionality are likely to be missed, simply through a lack of awareness of the latest advances or production techniques associated with the technology in question.

In contrast, the expertise and understanding offered by a specialist supplier will help the OEM to add value to its machines through customisation. This may be achieved through enhancing functionality

through changing menu options, or may be purely aesthetic, enhancing equipment through simple changes of colour and branding that aid the user in the given application and make that all-important differentiation with the competition. Crucially, this can be achieved without simultaneously increasing complexity for end users.

Finally, customising must be achieved efficiently to reap the maximum benefit for the OEM and the best way to ensure this is to source a specialised supplier with in-depth application knowledge and manufacturing experience. To make the most informed decisions on how to enhance and customise equipment, you need to choose a specialised partner/supplier that understands your sector and your application, and that can therefore provide full life cycle management.

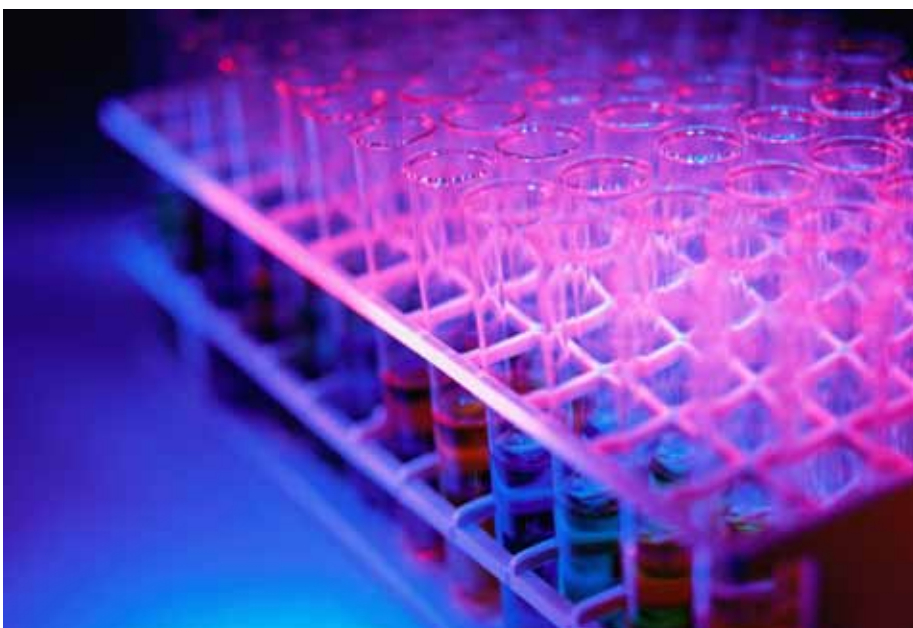
An expert partner will have an awareness of changing standards

relating to your application and will help you avoid, for example, component obsolescence and the cost incurred when replacement components are required. Most importantly of all, customisation will sell your products by offering clear and measurable benefits such as enhanced performance, increased energy efficiency and improved ease of use.

For example, West Control Solutions recently replaced a temperature control unit in a laboratory oven that was unreliable and which would have been expensive to replace. The consultation process revealed that not only was there a lack of reliability in the current unit but also considerable temperature fluctuations when the oven door was opened and closed. This resulted in an overshoot as the controller sought to bring the oven back up to operating temperature, which was wasting time and energy. Having



established the requirements of the oven, West Control customised a more cost-effective temperature control component with a controller built to fit exactly the existing oven(s), programmed to ensure that optimum temperature was restored as quickly as possible. The result of this customisation is that the performance of the oven has been maximised, energy has been saved and ease-of-use improved.



The customising of components is therefore not necessarily the expensive luxury it may appear to be. Furthermore, if customisation can bring about improvements in form, function and aesthetics, increased revenues will follow. A specialised team already equipped with the knowledge and awareness of the latest advances or production techniques associated with your technology will more than repay your investment by enhancing the performance, energy-saving potential and ease-of-use of machinery.

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Austria : +43 (0) 2236 691 121  
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France : +33 (1) 77 80 90 40  
Germany: +49 (0) 561 505 1307  
UK: +44 (0) 1273 606 271  
USA: +1 800 866 6659

Email: [enquiries@west-cs.com](mailto:enquiries@west-cs.com)  
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