

Capital productivity



An improved overview of production, an increase in workplace efficiency and better ergonomics are principal features of ABB's complete workplace for control room operators, the System 800xA Extended Operator Workplace.

This workplace builds on ABB's unique System 800xA software and continuing technical progress. It was developed in conjunction with two Scandinavian companies, and is now being released onto the market. The first installations are completed and several customers within the process industry are awaiting their deliveries and installations. The expectation is that a more effective, safe and profitable production will ensue ■.

Operators can see the entire plant in an overall picture, as well as viewing several other selectable images at the same time. When a fault arises they can see it and respond more quickly.

One frequent comment from those customers that have seen and chosen the ABB System 800xA and the Extended Operator Workplace is that they would like the operators in the control room to have the best available production overview. "We want our operators to have a good overview of the production process and better possibilities to ensure we produce the highest level of quality for our very demanding customers. So we chose ABB's System 800xA Extended Operator Workplace for our control room".

An other comment is that the Extended Operator Workplace is effectively combining a large overview display with several regular monitors, all with full interaction.

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Projections of productivity

An operator's dream:
Ergonomics for the control room

Per Lundmark

It is a universal tenet that providing workers with the right tools augments their ability to produce efficiently. Progress in control room technology is a prime example of this. A good tool is defined not only by the scope of its functionality, but also by the ease with which it can be used. The operator needs rapid and intuitive access to relevant information at all times. A delay in obtaining information or a confusing format for its presentation increase the risk of misjudgment and lost production. ABB has taken on this challenge, taking control room ergonomics and interactivity to new heights, permitting operators to interact with all displays presented to them.

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can see it and respond more quickly. It is also easier to remedy. This enables us to minimize the number of halts in production”.

A number of different customers are awaiting delivery of this new presentation technology. Process industries, petrochemical industries and combined power and heating plants are amongst those who have seen the advantages of having an efficient workplace for their operators.

At the core of the workplace lies ABB's 800xA automation system with its special sub-function, Operations. The Operations package contains the operator interface and the software that can display information in different ways on screens of various types. It thus opens the possibility for overview pictures of a completely unique type.

More than 40 percent of all halts in production involve operator errors. In most cases, these can be traced to operators not being able to access vital information sufficiently quickly.

With Operations, the foundation was laid for the development of a completely new operator station. ABB inaugurated a working relationship with two Nordic companies, Creative Grafiska Möbler AB, a developer and producer of control room furniture, and 3D-Perception AS, a supplier of projectors for large-screen displays. After several years of development work, System 800xA Extended Operator Workplace is now ready for control rooms around the world.

The operator workplace incorporates an operator desk that is available in two sizes. The desk can be selected to contain one or two operator stations, each with up to four monitors, and one operator station controlling a large screen onto which two or three projectors mounted behind the desk beam information. The workstations can be configured as desired

through the unique software in the 800xA system that controls the display of images in an ergonomically correct manner and totally automatically. Among other things, this enables numerous combinations of image displays between the monitors and the large-screen.

ABB believes that ergonomics and overview are vitally important in enabling operators to be able to act quickly and avoid making mistakes. The goal is to minimize the number of unintentional production stops and to maintain a high, safe and consistent level of quality in production.

The development work followed a number of guidelines for a good control room workplace:

- It must provide a good overview of the process
- It must be fully interactive for quick action.
- It must be modern and attractive.
- It must have equipment that replaces existing, difficult to manage wall panels.
- It must be able to integrate video monitors, such as CCTV.
- It must be designed in such a way that visitors do not disturb operators.
- It must be ergonomically designed with good lighting and a low level of noise.

- It must permit consolidation and communication between different control rooms in the flow of production

The most important thing in a new control room workplace is the option of displaying an overview. It is common in many control rooms in most industries to have large screens that do not offer any means of interaction and often only display images of trends that are not of particularly great use. The operator in such a room struggles with perhaps only two monitors, incomplete information, and ineffectively placed video monitors for the important camera monitoring.

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The overview offered by System 800xA Extended Operator Workplace

- A more effective, safe and profitable production with System 800xA and the Extended Operator Workplace.



2 The Matrox remote graphics unit helps reduce heat and noise emissions in the control room by providing only the user interface to the operators. The computers are located in a separate room.



owes its advantage to the flexibly configurable display of information on different screens and projectors. Overview pictures can, for example, be displayed on the entire large-screen, while the monitors show details, diagrams or other information. Or conversely, a single image, a diagram for example, can be spread across three monitors as one total picture while the large-screen shows trends in smaller windows. All images are opened correctly and automatically by the software in 800xA Operations, in separate windows and in a clear and readable format.

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The large-screen can be used in different ways:

- As a single continuous image
- In order to display all images in the system as overlapping images
- In order to build up group pictures of multiple images
- For displays for visitors
- For "live video", instead of separate video monitors.

Another important purpose of the workplace is the improvement of the working environment for operators. ABB wishes to change the role of these operators so they can work more effectively and obtain greater satisfaction from the work they do.

The improvements to the working environment include the ability to raise and lower the curved working surface and the desk. Similarly, the large-screen can be raised and lowered, as well as slightly bent in order to present a clear image from where the operators are sitting. By mounting the large screen directly at the rear of the desk instead of on a wall, as is usually the case, the overview is not disturbed by passers-by. An additional improvement to the working environment is the option of moving the computers entirely outside of the control room to deal with the prevalent issues of heat, noise, space, and security.

An example of how this can be done leverages new technology developed by the electronics company, Matrox Graphics. Matrox introduces a transmitter card on the workstation or server which replaces the standard graphics card and can be fiber-optically cabled to a remote graphics unit on the operator side. The remote graphics unit contains all the necessary I/O including: four monitor ports, six USB ports for peripherals such as keyboard and mouse, and audio connections for speakers. Matrox remote graphics units 2 work with all installations of System 800xA.

Operators are offered optimal support by interactive display technology from ABB



Working environments are a concern of the international consulting company ARC Advisory Group, which was commissioned to compare different operator workstation technologies and make recommendations for future developments. As part of its task, it studied the System 800xA Extended Operator Workplace and praised it, describing it as "an ergonomically optimized workstation designed to enhance the operator's working environment and effectiveness with features that reduce fatigue and extend the operator's range of understanding."

ABB wishes to change the role of operators so they can work more effectively and obtain greater satisfaction from the work they do.

System 800xA Extended Operator Workplace has been shown at a number of trade fairs around the globe, where it has always met with a great deal of interest. Many visitors shared the assessment that "ABB's workplace is precisely what we want!"

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