ABB:n Veli-Matti Reinikkala:
Kumppanuus
asiakkaiden
kanssa tiivistyy s. 16

Koulutus tarvitsee
mullistavia ideoita s. 35

Tavoitteena
NOLLA
tapaturmaa s. 26
Veli-Matti Reinikkala of ABB

Closer partnership with clients

"The Asian market is the biggest source of growth for the forest industry with several large pulp, paper and cardboard machine projects underway", says Veli-Matti Reinikkala, Head of Process Automation division at ABB. He says clients are now on the lookout for partners that provide services enhancing the energy efficiency and usability of production plant operations.

TEXT BY Olli Manninen ■ PHOTOS ABB

In Veli-Matti Reinikkala's view, partnership represents a positive challenge from ABB's perspective. "We must be able to manage all of the customer's processes. Offering qualified electricians is not enough. They need to understand issues such as how to make the machine produce more paper per hour", explains Reinikkala.

Process automation is one of ABB's five core divisions, accounting for some 20 per cent of ABB's net sales. "I estimate that its share will grow over the next few years. Although basic automation solutions no longer look set to change greatly, there is plenty of development potential in software platforms that can be constructed on top of basic automation."

These include the CPM applications devised by ABB, facilitating the control of factory operations via a single system. This makes production processes more transparent and enables real-time communication between various production functions.

Companies specialising in information management, such as IBM and SAP, are aiming at the same market. However, in Reinikkala's view, ABB's more diverse know-how and understanding of production plant processes serves as a competitive asset in this respect.

"When you understand the operational principles of, say, a paper machine, it is easier to begin developing the machine's energy efficiency, usability or safety."

Interesting comparative data

Process automation simplifies the operations of factories, with sensors installed in thousands of locations in different parts of the plant collecting information, for instance on temperatures, pressure or electric currents. Information is saved on a computer and analysed. The entire plant, and each item of equipment in it, can be monitored on the large screen in the control room.
Product development not to be compromised

- On a global scale, the ABB group invested €1.3 billion on product development last year. Even during the recession, the company did not cut down on product development investment. Veli-Matti Reinikkala, Head of Process Automation division at ABB, says that the company has taken the decision in principle not to compromise product development, even in hard times.

- "If you start doing that, the impacts of savings begin to show in just a few years. Competitors will outrun you in technology development. We are either the market leader, or among the three biggest players, in almost all product areas of technology that we represent, and aim to retain this position," says Reinikkala.

- In October, ABB opened a new frequency converter laboratory in its Helsinki plant. This is one of the company's largest single investments in product development infrastructure. However, most product development investment is targeted at projects of various kinds. Globally, the company's product development employs 7,000 people, 1,000 of whom work in Finland.

ABB in brief

- ABB is a global leader in power and automation technologies. ABB's products, systems and services enhance the competitiveness of industrial and power company clients in a pro-environmental way.

- The company employs more than 145,000 people in approximately 100 countries. In 2011, the Group's net sales came to €39.6 million. Last year, ABB's net sales totalled €23 billion in Finland.

ABB's core business areas are:
- Discrete automation and motion
- Low voltage products
- Process automation
- Power systems
- Power products

"Analysis of the data provides a detailed assessment of how efficiently the equipment is used. Servicing and maintenance of equipment is becoming more comprehensive. When you have plenty of information available, you are better equipped to find the best way of running the plant or knowing when to replace equipment."

According to Reinikkala, the traditional approach, of operating the machine at full speed until it breaks down, only persists in Asia. "They have not yet fully embraced the maintenance approach."

Thanks to a large number of international customer relationships, ABB has assembled plenty of information on processes related to the equipment used in various sectors of industry. ABB has compiled this information into service solutions that attract customers.

"When a customer gains access to one of these solutions, it gains data on the operating information of a few thousand plants. This enables you to compare issues such as how to operate your paper machine, and to analyse whether you are using it as efficiently as others in the industry, on average. If your adjustments are amiss, the utilisation rate or efficiency of the same machine can differ drastically."

The pull of Asia

Reinikkala comments that the paper industry is at something of a standstill in Finland right now, with the main operational focus being on savings and actual innovations being on the back burner.

"The paper industry remains a core business for us in Europe and North America, where the paper machine base provides a large number of service and maintenance customers."

However, the Asian market is the forest industry's major source of growth. "Several large pulp, paper and board machine projects are underway in Asia. Although China is driving this, everyone seems to be watching for when India will begin investing", states Reinikkala.

ABB has invested heavily in the Chinese and Asian markets. In China alone, ABB has 40 joint ventures that employ 18,000 Chinese.