



Schneider Electric's Product Specialist for Motor Controllers Tom Fowler: On Regional and Global Reach

CANENA held its 2009 Annual Meeting in

Orlando Florida. The theme was "Putting Harmonized Standards to Work." It was an invitation to marketing and business strategists to come together with the technical experts and explore how harmonized standards can be more successfully employed as catalysts for developing markets and realization of the benefits from trade agreements between the nations in the Americas. Mr. Tom Fowler, Schneider Electric's Staff Product Specialist for Motor Controllers, provided a key addresses at the 2009 Annual Meeting on the usefulness of a multi-nationally harmonized standard in accomplishing his companies marketing objectives. I talked with Fowler for this story.

JOEL SOLIS

Tom, what is your responsibility at Schneider Electric-North America?

TOM FOWLER

As my title suggests, my focus in on our OEM Motor Controllers product line. The majority of my time is spent working directly with customers, understanding their applications, and launching and applying new products.

Do your customers have a global reach?

Yes, many do but even those that don't are affected by global competition just the same as we are as component manufacturers.

How do standards affect the markets for your products?

Historically, separate standards have established lines of demarcation between geographic markets. I think it would be fair to say from what we know today, that the

existence of separate and often very different standards has limited the regional and global reach of both component and equipment manufacturers.

“With harmonized standards, I’ve estimated we saved 30% in both cost and time to market...”

Can you explain what limitations you’re talking about?

Well, I would say that different standards can often create limitations due to restrictions on technologies and reduced competitiveness caused by costs associated with additional testing, time to market and other factors.

Since the harmonized standard for motor controllers was first published, can you summarize what the impact has been?

Well, since the standards were first harmonized, I can say with confidence that the number of different product variations we’ve needed to serve the geographic markets in North America have been reduced. I also know that both the cost and time of qualification, that is testing and certifications, have been significantly reduced, as most often only one test program is needed. Faster to market and lower cost equates with enhanced market competitiveness.

Is there a specific example you can share with us that quantifies in some way, the value you’ve realized?

Yes. We recently launched a new line of contactors. In the past, separate qualification testing would have been required for UL and

CSA standards and for the IEC standard. With harmonized standards, I’ve estimated we saved 30% in both cost and time to market for this particular launch. Depending on the product, I think it would be fair to expect anywhere between 20 – 50% in cost and time to market in comparison with the past.

Do you feel there are benefits from harmonized standards that extend to your customers, equipment manufactures?

Absolutely, and they recognize those benefits. Standardized components mean common equipment designs for geographic markets which lower their design and qualification costs and time to market for our customers and all of this favorably impacts their global competitiveness.

Our customers still have to be mindful that some electrical products, beyond this example, may have local deviations to the harmonized standard and these products must take into account these local requirements to ensure electrical safety.

Do you believe that the benefits you’ve described as being realized as a result of having harmonized standards for motor controllers should be expected in

other product sectors, having or considering harmonized standards?

I can certainly see benefits for other product sectors however; we also recognize do to infrastructure constraints, geographical work practices and environmental consideration that may not be entirely achievable.

From your viewpoint as a product marketer, is your industry aware of CANENA and its role in harmonizing electro-technical standards?

Yes, the standards community for industrial control and automation products is very aware of CANENA both nationally and internationally. CANENA and its members have a great story to tell and I encourage CANENA and our industry trade associations to frequently communicate the importance and value of harmonizing our product standards.

Joel Solis is the Secretary General of CANENA.

Tom Folwer is Staff Product Specialist for Motor Controllers with Schneider Electric North America. He has 33 years of experience in the electrical industry. Mr. Fowler presented an overview of the benefits his company has realized from the harmonized standard for motor controllers at the 2009 CANENA Annual General Meeting in Orlando, FL on February 27, 2009. You can view his presentation "Using

Standards as a Tool" at www.CANENA.org/minutes.

For more information of the scope and work programs of CANENA Technical Harmonization Committee THC17B – AC Semiconductor Motor Controllers or Starters, and other CANENA committees, go to www.CANENA.org/committees.

The harmonized standard for motor control products is one of more than seventy electro-technical product standards that have been harmonized thus far through the CANENA process.