

Combining strength for remote service



Robbert van Leijsen of Assembléon (left) and Arnoud de Geus of Sioux: 'A partner that can look critically at whether your assumptions are realistic is invaluable – you keep one another on your toes.' Photo: Bart van Overbeeke

Solutions: 'With this model, the business objectives of the OEM – Assembléon in this case – are our business objectives. As a supplier, you learn to consider the interests of the OEM because we both benefit from limiting service costs through preventing machine problems or solving them as quickly and efficiently as possible. The collaboration is very open and transparent because we both have to lay all our cards on the table, which works very well.'

Installed base

Assembléon is part of Philips and develops and manufactures surface mount technology (SMT), i.e. pick & place machinery for the electronics industry. The Veldhoven-based company has an installed base of several thousand

systems in Asia, Europe and America, with each region having its own service centres and servicing responsibilities. Over a year ago, Assembléon decided to focus on remote service, for which the newest generations of pick & place machines are already prepared. Van Leijsen: 'Remote service is not completely new to us: our R&D department has been remote monitoring systems at reference sites for the last five years, with the aim of monitoring the performance of the machines and where necessary, taking quick (proactive) action.' In order to also launch remote service through the regular service channels for all their other clients, the tools had to be adapted to make them, for example, more user-friendly.

Standard solutions

Assembléon's search for a software supplier that could provide the solution took them to Sioux, whose Remote Solutions department specialises in making equipment accessible through the internet (machine2machine communication). Companies can monitor equipment from a distance – and tune their

service or marketing to the information that the equipment provides. To achieve this, Sioux has developed a modular software platform, Machine2World. De Geus: 'The platform can be integrated into a product that has yet to be developed or added to an existing solution. It consists of building blocks with which we can model all sorts of equipment quickly and simply. We can also safely transport and centrally collect data over the internet, which is then converted with the help of smart algorithms into key performance indicators that Assembléon can use.'

Sioux were chosen because they were capable of going along with the step-for-step approach that Assembléon had in mind. Van Leijsen: 'Generally speaking, we know where we want to go but it is difficult to know all details a year in advance. So rather than begin with a large programme of requirements, we looked for a partner that could work with us and with whom we could make the right software choices.' The collaboration is going well. 'In the

Beneficial for client and machine manufacturer alike

Remote service offers significant benefits to globally operating companies such as Assembléon. Because the connected machinery frequently (usually once every day) reports its status to Customer Support (read: where the knowledge is), immediate action can be taken should anything go wrong or threaten to go wrong. As a result, problems can be diagnosed more rapidly. For the client, this means a reduction in downtime – the time when machines are non-operational or are operating inadequately. For the service provider, this means cost savings

resulting from the fact that, for example, clients have to be visited less frequently and because a service engineer knows in advance what the problem is. Furthermore, remote service offers the possibility of optimising business processes including customer service processes. The latter is a condition needed to move from monitoring to servicing and finally prevention (predictive diagnostics) and to advise clients about improving the performance of their machinery.

to be done, and what has the most added value now? This is a monthly review.'

Roll-out underway

The roll-out began recently: every machine that was connected to the old environment is

being transferred to the new one. Van Leijsen: 'We are starting reactively, which is to say that we react to the client if they contact our call centre with a problem. If it concerns a remote connected system, it goes to the remote support desk, which can contact the equipment concerned and try to solve the problem from a distance. Error causes can also be retrieved by analysing older log files on the machinery.' The next step is to make remote service proactive. 'We are currently at a stage where we can take preventative action, for instance concerning maintenance. Proactive action will be the next phase.' ●

'In our payment model we share the cost savings'

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links
www.assembleon.com
www.sioux.nl

Assembléon in Veldhoven is offering its worldwide client base remote service under the guise of 'what's good for the client is good for us'. Initially reactive, the service will become proactive at a later stage. They found a software company 'just round the corner' that was happy to put itself in the client's place: Sioux Remote Solutions in Eindhoven.

by Pim Campman

The collaboration between the two companies is innovative for a number of reasons. It is not a traditional client-supplier relationship in which the former thrusts a programme of requirements under the latter's nose. The partnership was a deliberate choice: the ultimate aims are concrete, the means of reaching them determined in mutual consultation. 'We have worked closely together from the beginning,' says Robbert van Leijsen, Customer Support project manager at Assembléon and responsible for rolling out remote service worldwide. 'Sioux has, for example, helped us draw up the business case. A partner

that can look critically at whether your assumptions are realistic is invaluable – you keep one another on your toes.'

Compensation model

Sioux are also paid innovatively. Remote service leads to quantifiable cost savings that result from the fact that client visits are reduced, diagnoses are determined more quickly and certain machine defects – particularly software problems – are solved more rapidly. Van Leijsen: 'In our payment model we share the cost savings.' One advantage of this compensation model is that both companies are in the same boat. Arnoud de Geus, business development manager at Sioux Remote