



Strength in NUMBERS

This Year's Readers' Choice Award Results Affirm Continuing Excellence From Many Suppliers, but Suggest That Great Service Is Not a Given

by Joe Feeley, editor in chief

NUMBERS DON'T LIE. Well, at least not in this election. Here, a certain clarity emerges, and while companies that did well will celebrate, and those that didn't might grumble, there's not much to dispute.

Our readers voted and told us which companies they think are doing right by them in product value and service. So, here are the results of the balloting in the 7th Annual Readers' Choice Awards.

Our model for this balloting hasn't changed since we first presented these awards in 2001. During the summer, we sent questionnaires to about 15,000 CONTROL DESIGN subscribers, who tell us they have authority to specify, recommend, or purchase industrial automation and control products for industrial machines.

Vendors can't vote, so we didn't knowingly let any supplier get a ballot. If we did come across a vendor in the responses, we deleted it from the tally. This voting is entirely and only for our machine builder and system integrator readers.

As always, the ballot is what's known as an unaided survey. We don't include a list of vendors or product brands to choose from. We listed 50-odd hardware and software categories, and asked participants to name the companies that provide them the best value for the products with which they have experience. We received responses from 275 readers.

Once they chose the best technology value providers, we also had them rate the service and support

they receive from these companies on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent).

Our published results include only those companies that received at least a 5% share of the vote in the category.

Change Is Good

In the 54 product categories for which we report results, the number of companies making the cut this year dropped a bit to 94, compared with 100 companies in the 2006 results. We also saw an increased level of turnover, with 17 companies joining the elite list for the first time, or returning after at least a year's absence. Voters did not re-endorse 21 companies listed in 2006.

Many companies are clear winners in their category. This year 35 (versus 34 last year) of the 54 categories had winners with greater than 10 percentage points. Among that group, six companies received a majority vote in their categories, down from eight last year and nine in 2005.

Close races decided by a margin of five percentage points or less decreased to seven, compared with 12 in 2005. Four races ended in statistical dead heats between two or more companies, same as last year. But the overall trend was to closer races. The average margin of victory in 2006 was nearly 20 percentage points. This year it was just over 15 percentage points.



Eight companies, the same number as in 2006, won in multiple categories. Rockwell Automation won in 16 hardware and six software categories. Other multiple winners include Emerson Process Measurement with four category wins; Danaher Motion, General Electric/GE Fanuc, Honeywell, and National Instruments won three times, while Hoffman and Pepperl+Fuchs each won twice.

Service Findings Are Mixed

Of the 94 individual companies in the product category results, you awarded 65 of them with service and support scores of very good-to-excellent performance as measured on a scale of 1 to 5. That's a less-generous result than 2006. In contrast to this 69% rate, last year you gave service kudos to 82% of the listed companies.

Highest service praise this year (4.5) was awarded to Phoenix Contact for connectors and cordsets, and Rockwell Automation rated 4.5 for both its motion controller and wired network components.

Any company on the service and support list should

be pleased to receive this vote of confidence, and some of the companies achieved terrific service marks more than just once. The Service and Support table (p. 53) lists companies that voters identified as providing service they rated as very good or better.

Voters awarded 29 companies (compared with 28 last year) a service score of 4.0 or better in more than one category. Rockwell Automation achieved this in some 29 product categories. AutomationDirect received 4.0 or better ratings in eight categories. Banner Engineering, General Electric, and Siemens each were honored six times, while Emerson, National Instruments, Phoenix Contact, and Schneider Electric made the grade five times. Bosch Rexroth, Danaher, Eaton, Endress+Hauser, IDEC, ifm efector, Omron, Parker Hannifin, Pepperl+Fuchs, and Turck were named three times. ABB, Advantech, Baldor, Beckhoff, Cisco, Invensys, Omega Engineering, Red Lion, Wago, and Yaskawa each were recognized twice.

With product categories and ties listed alphabetically, here are this year's celebrated firms. As always, we welcome analysis and thoughts about the outcome. ☞

*Differences of less than 3% are not statistically significant.



Red Lion Controls Panel Meters

Panel Meter

1. Red Lion Controls	30%
2. Simpson Electric	23%
3. Precision Digital	7%



Honeywell UDC3500 Controller and Rockwell Automation/Allen-Bradley Bulletin 900 Single-Loop Process

Controller, Loop

1. Honeywell	16%
Rockwell Automation	16%
3. Red Lion	9%
Emerson Process	8%
Siemens E&A	8%
6. Invensys	6%

The 2007 Readers' Choice Service and Support Leaders

CONTROL DESIGN's readers tell us these companies provide very good (4.0) to excellent (5.0) service in these categories. Only those companies that received the minimum 5% vote share in the preceding pages were considered.

4.5

Phoenix Contact	Connectors/Cordsets
Rockwell Automation	Motion Controller
Rockwell Automation	Wired Network Components

4.4

Cisco	Hubs/Routers
Emerson Motor Technologies	Electronic Drive
Endress+Hauser	Flow Measurement
Endress+Hauser	Level Measurement
Invensys	Data Acquisition System
Invensys	Data Recorder
National Instruments	Data Acquisition System
Rockwell Automation	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Rockwell Automation	Electronic Drive
Rockwell Automation	Input/Output Systems
Rockwell Automation	Loop Controller
Turck	Intrinsic Safety Systems

4.3

ABB	Flow Measurement
Advantech	Single-Board Computer
AutomationDirect	Input/Output Systems
AutomationDirect	Operator Interface Terminal
AutomationDirect	PLC Programming Software
Banner Engineering	Intrinsic Safety Systems
Banner Engineering	Safety Relay
Dataq Instruments	Data Acquisition System
Emerson Process Management	Flow Measurement
Emerson Process Management	Level Measurement
Emerson Process Management	Temperature Measurement
GE Fanuc	Motion Control Software
GE Fanuc	Servo Motor
IDEC	Stack Tower Lights
ifm efector	Flow Measurement
ifm efector	Presence Sensing
National Instruments	Data Recorder
NSK	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Numerics	Pneumatic Components
Ohmart Vega	Level Measurement
Phoenix Contact	Power Supply
Phoenix Contact	Wired Network Components
Red Lion	Loop Controller

Rockford Ball Screw	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Rockwell Automation	Data Acquisition System
Rockwell Automation	Electric Motor
Rockwell Automation	Industrial Computer
Rockwell Automation	Motor Starter
Rockwell Automation	Power Supply
Saginaw Engineering	Industrial Enclosure, Metallic
Siemens E&A	Input/Output Systems
Simpson	Panel Meter

4.2

AutomationDirect	Terminal Blocks
Banner Engineering	Machine Vision
Banner Engineering	Presence Sensing

Banner Engineering	Programmable Safety Controller
Banner Engineering	Safety Network Components
Bosch/Indramat	Motion Controller
Cisco	Wireless Network Components
Cognex	Machine Vision
Danaher Motion	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Danaher Motion	Stepper Motor
Emerson Process Management	Pressure Measurement
Floke	Data Recorder
Hirschmann	Wireless Network Components
Hoffman	Enclosure Purge
Honeywell	Data Recorder
ifm efector	Level Measurement
Mastercam	CNC Software
Mitsubishi	Electronic Drive
National Instruments	Data Acquisition Software
N-Tron	Hubs/Routers/Switches
Omega Engineering	Temperature Measurement
Omron/STI	Safety Relay
Oriental Motors	Stepper Motor
Parker Bayside	Stepper Motor
Patlite	Stack Tower Lights
Phoenix Contact	Terminal Blocks
Precision Digital	Panel Meter
Regal-Beloit	Electric Motor
Rockwell Automation	Data Acquisition Software
Rockwell Automation	Encoder/Resolver
Rockwell Automation	Motion Control Software
Rockwell Automation	Operator Interface Terminal
Rockwell Automation	PLC Programming Software
Rockwell Automation	Presence Sensing
Rockwell Automation	Relays
Rockwell Automation	Servo Motor
Schneeberger	Linear Actuator/Slide/Guide
Schneider Electric	PLC
Schneider Electric	Stack Tower Lights
SEW-Eurodrive	Electronic Drive
SMC	Pneumatic Components
Turck	Presence Sensing
Yaskawa	Motion Controller
Yaskawa	Servo Motor

4.1

Advantech	Industrial Computer
AutomationDirect	HMI Software
AutomationDirect	Servo Motor
AutomationDirect	Stepper Motor
Baldor	Electric Motor
Eaton Electrical	Stack Tower Lights
Endress+Hauser	Pressure Measurement
EZ-Automation	Operator Interface Terminal
Festo	Pneumatic Components
GE Energy	Vibration Measurement
GE Fanuc	CNC Software
Heidenhain	Encoder/Resolver
Hubbell	Industrial Enclosure, Metallic
IDEC	Relays

Parker Bayside	Servo Motor
Pepperl+Fuchs/BPS	Enclosure Purge
Phoenix Contact	Relays
Red Lion	Panel Meter
Rockwell Automation	Connectors/Cordsets
Rockwell Automation	PLC
Sola/Hevi-Duty	Power Supply

4.0

ABB/Entelec	Terminal Blocks
Acopian	Power Supply
AutomationDirect	PLC
Baldor	Electronic Drive
Beckhoff Automation	Industrial Computer
Beckhoff Automation	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Bosch/Indramat	Motion Control Software
Bosch/Indramat	Servo Motor
Danaher Motion	Servo Motor
Eaton Electrical	Motor Starter
Eaton/Vickers	Hydraulic Components
GE Fanuc	CNC Controller
GE Fanuc	PC-Based Machine Control Software
IDEC	Power Supply
National Instruments	Machine Vision
National Instruments	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Omega Engineering	Pressure Measurement
Omron	Relays
Omron/STI	Programmable Safety Controller
Opto 22	Input/Output Systems
Parker Hannifin	Hydraulic Components
Pepperl+Fuchs	Intrinsic Safety Systems
Pepperl+Fuchs	Wired Network Components
Pliz Automation Safety	Safety Relay
Puls	Power Supply
Rittal	Industrial Enclosure, Non-Metallic
Rockwell Automation	Alarm/Annunciator
Rockwell Automation	CNC Controller
Rockwell Automation	CNC Software
Rockwell Automation	Intrinsic Safety Systems
Rockwell Automation	Linear Actuator/Slide/Guide
Rockwell Automation	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Rockwell Automation	Programmable Safety Controller
Rockwell Automation	Safety Network Components
Schneider Electric	Motor Starter
Schneider Electric	PLC Programming Software
Schneider Electric	Relays
Siemens E&A	CNC Controller
Siemens E&A	CNC Software
Siemens E&A	Motion Controller
Siemens E&A	Wired Network Components
THK	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Turck	Connectors/Cordsets
Tyco Electronics/Amp	Connectors/Cordsets
Wago	Input/Output Systems
Wago	Terminal Blocks