

Head of the Pack

The 2008 Roster of Readers' Choice Award-Winning Fast Companies Has Grown. Service Scores Indicate a Tune-Up Might Be Needed



EVERY SUPPLIER IN our automation and control space wants to be recognized as the best. It's a grueling, relentless ordeal to become the leader in such a race. Few make it. Our annual Readers' Choice Awards balloting is one of the races that determines which companies get to be called winners. In this case, it's the automation users who decide.

Our model for this award hasn't changed since we first presented Readers' Choice Awards results in 2001. During the summer, we sent questionnaires to 15,000 CONTROL DESIGN subscribers who specify, recommend or buy industrial automation and control products.

Vendors are ineligible, so we didn't knowingly let any supplier vote. If we did spy a vendor in the mix, we deleted it. The voting is only for our machine-builder and system-integrator readers.

As always, we provide an unaided ballot. We don't include a list of vendors or product brands to choose from. We list 50-odd hardware and software categories and ask participants to name the companies that provide them the best value for the products with which they have experience. We received responses from nearly 300 readers.

Once they chose the best providers, they rate service and support they received from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent).

Spread the Wealth

In 54 product categories, individual companies making the cut this year rose to 107 (mentioned a total of 276 times), compared with 91 companies (258 mentions) last year. We saw 27 companies join the elite list in '08, either for the first time or after at least a one-year absence. Voters banished

11 companies that were listed in '07.

Twelve companies, four more than in '07, won in multiple categories. Perennial heavyweight Rockwell Automation won or tied for first place in 20 hardware and software categories. Other multiple winners include Emerson Process Measurement with four category wins; Danaher Motion, General Electric and Parker Hannifin won three times, while Belden, Cisco, Hoffman, National Instruments, Pepperl+Fuchs, Phoenix Contact and Turck each won twice.

Many firms were clear winners in their category. This year, 39 (vs. 35 last year) categories had winners with margins of greater than 10 percentage points.

Despite more clear wins, close races decided by a margin of five percentage points or less increased to eight, compared with seven in 2007. Five of those races ended in statistical dead heats between two or more companies.

Service Scores Continue to Sag

Of the 107 individual companies in the product category results, you awarded 69 service and support scores of 4.0 or better (very good-to-excellent performance on a 1-to-5 scale). Compared to this 64% rate, last year you gave service kudos to 70% of the companies, and 80% in '06.

Again this year, more service recognition fell in the 4.0-to-4.1 score ranges. You assigned 56% of the service recognitions to the 4.0-to-4.1 ranges, compared with 43%

last year. Awards in the 4.3 or higher score ranges dropped to a total of 29, or 17% of the total service recognitions, compared with 47 (nearly 30% of the total) last year.

Highest service praise this year—at 4.4—was awarded to Endress+Hauser in the Flow Measurement category, Phoenix Contact for Connectors and Cordsets, and Siemens E&A for Flow Measurement.

Every company making the service and support list should be pleased. Some achieved great service marks more than once. The table on p. 44 lists those companies that voters say have terrific service/support in specific product categories.

Rockwell Automation was recognized in 25 product categories. Phoenix Contact, Yokogawa and Siemens E&A garnered seven recognitions. Emerson Process Management received six.

AutomationDirect, Banner Engineering, National Instruments and Schneider Electric each received five, while Beckhoff, Danaher Motion and Invensys each were recognized four times.

Endress+Hauser, General Electric, Honeywell, Mitsubishi and Yaskawa achieved service/support recognition three times, and B&R Industrial Automation, Belden, Eaton, IDEC, Omron, Pepperl+Fuchs, Pilz Automation Safety, Red Lion Controls, Rittal, Sick, Tolomatic, Turck and Wago all were recognized twice.

Listed alphabetically, here are '08's fast companies.



Red Lion Controls Panel Meters

Panel Meter

1. Red Lion Controls	43%
2. Precision Digital	17%
3. Yokogawa	12%
4. Newport Electronics	7%
Simpson Electric	6%



The 2008 Readers' Choice Awards 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.

4.4

Endress+Hauser	.....	Flow Measurement
Phoenix Contact	.....	Connectors/Cordsets
Siemens E&A	.....	Flow Measurement

4.3

B&R Industrial Automation	.....	Industrial Computer
Banner Engineering	.....	Machine Vision
Banner Engineering	.....	Safety Relay
Cognex	.....	Machine Vision
Emerson Process	.....	Pressure Measurement
Emerson Process	.....	Temperature Measurement
Invensys	.....	Data Acquisition Software
Mitsubishi	.....	CNC Controller
National Instruments	.....	Machine Vision
N-Tron	.....	Network Hubs/Routers/Switches
Ohmart/Vega	.....	Level Measurement
Pepperl+Fuchs	.....	Intrinsic Safety System
Phoenix Contact	.....	Wired Network Components
Red Lion	.....	Panel Meter
Rockwell Automation	.....	Connectors/Cordsets
Rockwell Automation	.....	Data Acquisition System
Rockwell Automation	.....	Intrinsic Safety System
Rockwell Automation	.....	Operator Interface Terminals
Rockwell Automation	.....	Safety Network Components
Rockwell Automation	.....	Servo Motor
Rockwell Automation	.....	Wired Network Components
Tolomatic	.....	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Turck	.....	Connectors/Cordsets
Turck	.....	Presence Sensing
Yokogawa	.....	Flow Measurement
Yokogawa	.....	Level Measurement

4.2

AMCI	.....	Encoder/Resolver
Banner Engineering	.....	Programmable Safety Controller
Belden/Hirschmann	.....	Network Hubs/Routers/Switches
Danaher Motion	.....	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
Danaher Motion	.....	Encoder/Resolver
Emerson Process Management	.....	Level Measurement
Emerson Process Management	.....	Vibration Measurement
Emerson Process Management	.....	Wireless Network Components
Encoder Products	.....	Encoder/Resolver
Endress+Hauser	.....	Level Measurement
Endress+Hauser	.....	Temperature Measurement
Festo	.....	Pneumatic Components
Finder	.....	Relays
General Electric	.....	Electric Motor
Hardy Instrument	.....	Load Cell/Weight Measurement
Lenze/ACTech	.....	Electric Drive
National Instruments	.....	Data Acquisition Software
National Instruments	.....	Data Acquisition System
Pepperl+Fuchs/BPS	.....	Enclosure Purge
Phoenix Contact	.....	Input/Output System
Precision Digital	.....	Panel Meter
Rockwell Automation	.....	Alarm/Annunciator
Rockwell Automation	.....	Data Acquisition Software
Rockwell Automation	.....	Industrial Computer

Rockwell Automation	.....	Input/Output System
Rockwell Automation	.....	Motor Starter
Rockwell Automation	.....	Programmable Safety Controller
Rockwell Automation	.....	Safety Relay
Rockwell Automation	.....	Stack Tower Lights
Schneider Electric	.....	Safety Relay
Schneider Electric/CST	.....	Encoder/Resolver
Sick	.....	Presence Sensing
Sick/Stegmann	.....	Encoder/Resolver
Siemens E&A	.....	Safety Network Components
Tolomatic	.....	Linear Actuator/Slide/Guide
Yaskawa	.....	Servo Motor
Yokogawa	.....	Data Acquisition System
Yokogawa	.....	Data Recorder
Yokogawa	.....	Panel Meter
Yokogawa	.....	Pressure Measurement

4.1

ABB Entelec	.....	Terminal Blocks
Autodesk	.....	E-CAD Software
AutomationDirect	.....	Operator Interface Terminals
AutomationDirect	.....	PLC
AutomationDirect	.....	PLC Programming Software
AutomationDirect	.....	HMI Software
AutomationDirect	.....	Terminal Blocks
Baldor	.....	Electric Motor
Beckhoff	.....	Industrial Computer
Beckhoff	.....	Motion Control Software
Beijer	.....	Operator Interface Terminals
Belden/Hirschmann	.....	Wired Network Components
Cisco/Linksys	.....	Network Hubs/Routers/Switches
Danaher Motion	.....	Linear Actuator/Slide/Guide
Dell	.....	Industrial Computer
Eaton Electrical	.....	Motor Starter
Emerson Process Management	.....	Flow Measurement
Eplan	.....	E-CAD Software
Honeywell	.....	Pressure Measurement
ifm efector	.....	Presence Sensing
Invensys	.....	HMI Software
Invensys	.....	Pressure Measurement
Lapp USA	.....	Wire & Cable
Omega Engineering	.....	Temperature Measurement
Phoenix Contact	.....	Relays
Pilz Automation Safety	.....	Safety Network Components
Pilz Automation Safety	.....	Safety Relay
Red Lion	.....	Loop Controller
Rittal	.....	Industrial Enclosure, Non-metallic
Rockwell Automation	.....	CNC Controller
Rockwell Automation	.....	Electric Motor
Rockwell Automation	.....	HMI Software
Rockwell Automation	.....	Motion Control Software
Rockwell Automation	.....	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Rockwell Automation	.....	PLC
Rockwell Automation	.....	PLC Programming Software
Saginaw Engineering	.....	Industrial Enclosure, Metallic
Schneider Electric	.....	Motor Starter
Siemens E&A	.....	CNC Controller
Siemens E&A	.....	Input/Output System

Siemens E&A	.....	Loop Controller
Siemens E&A	.....	Programmable Safety Controller
Siemens E&A	.....	PLC Programming Software
Wago	.....	Input/Output System
Wago	.....	Terminal Blocks
Yaskawa	.....	Motion Controller
Yokogawa	.....	Loop Controller

4.0

Advantech	.....	Single-Board Computer
Agilent	.....	Data Acquisition System
B&R Automation	.....	CNC Software
Banner Engineering	.....	Intrinsic Safety Components
Banner Engineering	.....	Wireless Network Components
Beckhoff	.....	Input/Output System
Beckhoff	.....	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Danaher Motion	.....	Servo Motor
Eaton/Vickers	.....	Hydraulic Components
Exlar	.....	Ballscrew/Leadscrew
GE Fanuc	.....	CNC Controller
GE Fanuc	.....	Servo Motor
Heidenhain	.....	Encoder/Resolver
Hoffman	.....	Industrial Enclosure, Metallic
Honeywell	.....	Load Cell/Weight Measurement
Honeywell	.....	Loop Controller
Hydraforce	.....	Hydraulic Components
IDEC	.....	Power Supply
IDEC	.....	Stack Tower Lights
Invensys	.....	Data Recorder
Keyence	.....	Presence Sensing
MasterCam	.....	CNC Software
Mitsubishi	.....	CNC Software
Mitsubishi	.....	Motion Controller
Moxa	.....	Network Hubs/Routers/Switches
National Instruments	.....	Data Recorder
National Instruments	.....	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Omron	.....	Relays
OmronSTI	.....	Safety Network Components
Opto 22	.....	Input/Output System
Parker Hannifin	.....	Hydraulic Components
Patlite	.....	Alarm/Annunciator
Phoenix Contact	.....	PC-Based Machine Control Software
Phoenix Contact	.....	Power Supply
Phoenix Contact	.....	Terminal Blocks
Puls	.....	Power Supply
Rice Lake	.....	Load Cell/Weight Measurement
Rittal	.....	Industrial Enclosure, Metallic
Rockwell Automation	.....	Loop Controller
Rockwell Automation	.....	Motion Controller
Rockwell Automation	.....	Power Supply
Schneider Electric	.....	Safety Network Components
Schneider Electric	.....	Stack Tower Lights
Sola Hevi-Duty	.....	Power Supply
Sprecher+Schuh	.....	Motor Starter
Tyco/Potter & Brumfield	.....	Relays
Watlow	.....	Temperature Measurement
Yaskawa	.....	Motion Control Software