



Is MTI Proprietary?

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Abstract

The purpose of this document is to challenge the notion that MTI's products are not acceptable or desirable because they are "proprietary". This document will seek to show the fallacy of this assumption.

Definitions

Within the detention marketplace, the word "proprietary" is a difficult word to define. This is in part due to the many uses of the word. For one, architects use the word to talk about any product that cannot be purchased "off-the-shelf", which is to say any product that cannot be purchased from a local electronics store. End-Users define "proprietary" to mean any product that cannot be maintained or repaired by an agent of the end user, whether a local maintenance technician or a local service contractor.

Princeton University's WordNet defines the word "proprietary" as follows: "protected by trademark or patent or copyright; made or produced or distributed by one having exclusive rights".

It is obvious, given the most direct definition, that every product purchased from a manufacturer is "proprietary". An Omron® PLC is just as proprietary as an MTI PLC because both are manufactured exclusively by one company and both have copyrights associated with them. In this case, no facility, architect, or engineer can begin producing Omron® PLCs without risk of copyright infringement.

Within our market, though, the word "proprietary" has been misused to define any company that cannot provide national distribution or does not provide product that can be maintained or



repaired by anyone outside of that company. For the purpose of this discussion, we will work with this definition, since it is the more relevant use of the word.

Discussion

Now to the big question: Are MTI products (specifically the MTI PLC 2000) proprietary in the sense that the products cannot be purchased through national distribution and the products cannot be maintained or repaired by the end user. At the onset, we can simply say “No!” MTI products have never been proprietary in this sense of the word.

For one, MTI products CAN be purchased through national distribution. Granted, MTI products cannot be purchased from your local Radio Shack™ or hardware store, but they can be purchased through certified MTI distributors in most states. MTI products can also be purchased directly from MTI either by phone or through our website at www.mti-parts.com. Most direct orders are processed within 3 days. Besides, the idea that such specialized equipment as PLCs and I/O blocks can be purchased from a hardware store or electronics warehouse is simply preposterous. The vast majority of components that go into a detention control system are so specialized as to require the end user to purchase the parts from the original integrator.

Secondly, MTI products are designed with the end user in mind. The owner is immediately supplied with all of the software he or she will need to troubleshoot, maintain, and even modify the MTI system. With this software the owner can diagnose problems, change PLC programming, and even change the design of their touchscreen interface. Also, MTI hands over all programming and design work for a system to the owner. MTI does keep a copy of this information for use in technical support, should the customer need it, but the customer has the master copy from the date the equipment is shipped. Along with this, MTI provides quarterly training classes for all owners. This training is free to the owner, except for travel and lodging expenses. In addition, MTI provides free telephone technical support through our 800 number. Customers can call in for support on even the simplest of problems and we will work with them to fix the problem, free of charge. Finally, the MTI system is designed specifically for the detention marketplace, which typically demands a 10-15 year lifespan for electronic equipment. The



beauty of the MTI system is that “backwards compatibility” is a design requirement. New components of the system are designed to fit into the same slot for the component it replaces. This means that upgrades of MTI systems are a breeze. It also means that the customer will be able to get replacement parts for MTI components 10-15 years after their initial purchase.

In comparison, most of integrators do not provide national distribution. Sure, most of the components used by other integrators can be purchased through large distribution warehouses, but the manufacturers of these components cannot provide any assistance with the system because they did not do the programming and design of the system. Also, other integrators rarely provide the design and development tools necessary to maintain their systems. Nor do they provide the programming and design documents to the owner. Furthermore, most integrators do not provide free training and technical support, even over the telephone. Finally, most other PLC manufacturers design their products for the automotive industry, which has a 5 year depreciation cycle. This means that these manufacturers do not intend to design their new PLC system to be backwards compatible with the old system. These systems do not work well for the detention market. Most facilities do not plan to replace their equipment within 5 years, and by the time a facility is ready to replace their system, the components are so far out of obsolesce that they can no longer get replacement parts. This means that upgrades of these systems require a complete system replacement, including the I/O blocks and field termination boards.

Given all of this information, it would seem that MTI is the least “proprietary” of all detention control systems providers. With a 20 year track record and over 1,100 completed jobs, MTI has the proven record for providing replacement parts and service.