

What To Consider Before Selecting An Integrator For A Robotic Welding System

White Paper

OVERVIEW

If your company is considering automation to improve quality and productivity, it is important to carefully consider which integrator you choose for your robotic welding system. This white paper will explore the various factors that should be taken into account to ensure you are selecting the most qualified integrator to meet your specific needs, whether you are purchasing a standard cell or a customized cell.

SHOULD YOU AUTOMATE?

The trend toward automation is accelerating as companies all over the world realize it's a necessity in order to remain competitive, but is robotic automation right for your process? Deciding whether or not you need to automate is important. You can't assume a bottlenecked manual process will automatically work when automated. Here are some things to consider in determining whether or not your process is suitable for robotic automation:

- **Are the parts in the same location?**
Execute the same weld repeatedly
- **Do the parts go together the same all the time?**
Accurate, repeatable part designs
- **Are the parts the same sizes?**
No gaps, poor fit-up or poor joint access
- **Is the process stable and robust?**
Consistent process flow

If you can answer yes to these questions, or even if you are unsure, the next step is identifying an external expert in the process – selecting the right integrator.

SELECTING AN EXPERT

There are many factors to consider before deciding which integrator can best meet your needs. Begin by doing research on companies that are very knowledgeable about the process, and include those that also have inside stakeholders with the same expertise. This could include a Certified Welding Inspector (CWI), a weld engineer or someone with a higher level of welding knowledge.



- **Trade shows**
Attend industry trade shows to talk with different integration companies and equipment manufacturers the integrators are using to determine their expertise.
- **Internet**
Use the internet to learn as much as possible about the various companies. Review their websites to learn about not only their products, but also their financial stability and what projects they have done. It's important to know that the integrator you choose will be there to help you in the future.
- **Trade associations**
The Robotic Industries Association (RIA) is an excellent resource for additional information about the skills of an integrator. You can find a listing of RIA Platinum Integrators at www.robotics.org.
- **Trade journals**
Research what information has been published about the companies. Is it positive? Is their expertise in your process and not just automation? A lot of integrators specialize in robotics, but do not necessarily have the process knowledge.

REFINE YOUR SEARCH

Determine their location

Where the integrator is located is important in your selection process. Having a local company with the ability to respond quickly across multiple boundaries is important. If something goes wrong, you want a company that can have someone there the same day to service the system and get it running again.

If you are a global company, or if you are planning to expand internationally, does the integrator have the ability to service you globally? Knowing that you can go to the same integrator to get the same integrated product anywhere in the world offers many advantages. You will have commonality of parts, standardized programming and the ability to have the system serviced by the same company no matter where you are located.

Conduct a site visit

Visit the integrator to see what equipment they have on their floor. What exactly are they integrating? Can they customize a solution to meet your exact needs? Ask questions about their business and their expertise to help determine if they have the ability to meet your specific needs. Find out what level of training, onsite support and programming support they provide. Do they provide a standard class with every robot they sell?



Check references

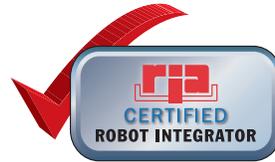
Be sure to talk to their customers/references who have a similar process or application. If they are welding a material similar to what you use, it doesn't matter if they are in a different industry. Ask these customers about their experiences with the integrator. Are they satisfied with their work, their ability to service their system and the training/support they provided?

CONCLUSION

Selecting the right integrator for your robotic welding system is important to ensure you are working with a company that can not only provide the right cell for your process, but is also an expert in your process and provides excellent service and training. To find out more about what to consider when selecting an integrator and robotic welding system options, call 888.935.3878 or visit www.lincolnelectric.com.

ABOUT LINCOLN ELECTRIC

Lincoln Electric is the world leader in the design, development and manufacture of arc welding products, robotic arc welding systems, plasma and oxyfuel cutting equipment and has a leading global position in the brazing and soldering alloys market. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, Lincoln has 45 manufacturing locations, including operations and joint ventures in 19 countries and a worldwide network of distributors and sales offices covering more than 160 countries. For more information about Lincoln Electric and its products and services, visit www.lincolnelectric.com.



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