

Brewing business benefits from better SCADA systems

SCADA systems are frequently seen as only a PC based plant mimic and alarm annunciator. Today, thanks to SCADA databases being ODBC compliant and a range of software tools to link and then view data gathered by a SCADA system, we now see SCADA systems in the role of being front end to enterprise resource planning systems and a variety of production data reporting tools.

The Brewing industry is a prime example of an environment where analysis of material used and energy consumed can lead to elimination of waste and optimisation of plant and materials. Several companies have benefited by stepping back and reassessing the potential data collection and reporting tool sitting in almost every control room-the PC based SCADA system.

Like many improvements the process begins with the need to find out what is happening to a range of variables over a period of time, and then to make knowledge based decisions on what to do to improve it. The start point is to assess the capability of the existing system and determine what can be built onto or expanded in the system to give the required data collection ability. In some cases the need may justify a total system upgrade. An assessment must then be made of benefits against the cost. The benefits criteria are accurate, consistent, reliable data collection, wide range and types of reporting, ability to factor in other variables such as cost or material usage and in some cases deviation, extrapolation or project capability.

One benefit that has not always been considered up front but has come to light at a later time is the contribution towards quality assurance, due to the immensely powerful ability to analyse deviation from the normal criteria.