Case Study

Solar-Power Provider Improves Integration, Data Analysis, and Reporting

Powerful Software Also Provides Faster Development

It's not easy keeping up with DEPCOM Power. Based in Scottsdale, Ariz., DEPCOM has been growing rapidly, and has plans to continue its expansion. DEPCOM Power designs, builds, and operates utility-scale solar power plants. With all the growth, the company needs a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system that will scale quickly and easily for years to come.

DEPCOM chose Ignition by Inductive Automation® — an industrial application platform with tools for building flexible solutions in SCADA, human-machine interface (HMI), and the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT). Ignition provides the unlimited licensing DEPCOM needs — allowing it to add tags, clients, and projects without additional costs.

DEPCOM has been using Ignition since 2015, after it was suggested by system integration company Vertech — another fast-growing company with plenty of solar experience. Vertech and DEPCOM have created several projects in Ignition.

DEPCOM uses Ignition for monitoring and controlling solar power plants — and also for data analysis, troubleshooting, design, and reporting. By analyzing historical data from Ignition, DEPCOM continually improves plant performance and efficiency. DEPCOM also likes Ignition for its fast development tools and flexibility in integrating with other platforms.

"Seven of the nine power plants we operate and maintain are on Ignition," said Jimmy Hood, director of plant operations for DEPCOM. "Ignition is a big improvement in SCADA integration. Other platforms can run you up in costs and headaches in a hurry. Ignition is very user-friendly, and easy to integrate with every data type, connection, and platform."

DEPCOM Power controls and monitors seven solar-power plants with Ignition.

Keep the Customer Satisfied

DEPCOM has numerous stakeholders and customers including its own operators, independent engineers, banks, utilities, plant owners, and independent power producers. Integration with various entities and technologies has been much easier with Ignition than with previous systems DEPCOM has used. And customers like it. "We've got all kinds of customers now that are abandoning their usual platforms in favor of Ignition," said John Schroeder, senior vice president of plant operations for DEPCOM.

Ignition's unlimited licensing model saves money for DEPCOM. "When we looked at Ignition compared to some of its competitors, something that really stuck out to us was the unlimited licensing, and the pricing, especially per tag," said Schroeder. "Our business is very cost-competitive. We need to be as cost-competitive on software as we are when building these plants. The pricing and scalability of Ignition were very attractive to us."

> *"We have big plans to integrate all future projects with Ignition. We have customers requesting it on our second and third projects with them. It's just been a powerful, great option for us."*
>
> – Jimmy Hood
>   Director of Plant Operations, DEPCOM Power

Better + Faster

Ignition's performance has also been impressive, Schroeder noted. "Usually, when you get to this type of scale, you see breakdowns," said Schroeder. "That hasn't happened with Ignition."

Fast development has also set Ignition apart. "Something that took two or three weeks before, now it takes two hours," said Hood. DEPCOM rolls out sites very quickly, and Ignition allows the company to create customized applications in a hurry.

Kris Grindstaff, a renewable energy specialist with Vertech, has been working with DEPCOM closely, and he's not surprised that DEPCOM is leveraging Ignition for numerous benefits. "I believe Ignition is the easiest platform to learn," said Grindstaff. "And the designer is so intuitive. It allows you to build screens very quickly. It really seems like it was designed with the end user in mind; it bypasses a lot of the complexities you get with other systems."

Finding Value in More Data

DEPCOM now has more data than ever before, and it's able to make sense of that data. "One of the great benefits for DEPCOM is Ignition's ability to quickly generate reports and data, so they can see how their plants are performing," said Grindstaff. "Every one of their sites has something different from the others, so it's very helpful for them to be able to quickly and easily see this data."

"Ignition helps us trend data on a daily basis," said Hood. "We can troubleshoot the ins and outs of the power plants, from trackers, to the inverters, to the substation." Immediate access to data helps operators solve some problems themselves. For problems that need further study, it's easy to pull up the details. If there's an issue, operators can see the data right away, and begin identifying the root cause of the problem. Ignition has sped up the process, automating some of the data analysis. Also with Ignition, DEPCOM has greater trust in the quality of the data. Overall, solutions and decisions are happening faster at the company since Ignition was implemented.

DEPCOM isn't slowing down anytime soon. "At the end of 2018, we'll be rolling our operations center into a building about three times the size of what we have currently," said Schroeder. "We have plans to increase our footprint about 4X on the power plant side. And we expect Ignition to scale and grow along with us."

"We've also selected Ignition to help us design our new Fleet View system," added Hood. "It will help monitor all plants on a single platform. From there we can remote in to each of the individual projects and further assess. Ignition will allow us to integrate all of the projects seamlessly on one platform. We have big plans to integrate all future projects with Ignition. We have customers requesting it on our second and third projects with them. It's just been a powerful, great option for us."

Vertech has offices in Phoenix, Ariz.; Irvine, Calif.; and Nashville, Tenn. Vertech works in numerous industries, including solar, water/wastewater, aerospace, and craft brewing and distilling. For more information, visit vertech.com.

Watch the video online at:
bit.ly/ia-DEPCOM