



Remmele Engineering Inc.

Integrated web handling and assembly system with 100% leak testing and vision inspection

Choosing a Partner for Process Automation

Mark Turner

Medical Engineering Technologies Ltd, Ashford, UK

Why choose a partner?

Process automation is a complex and often expensive procedure. A carefully researched partner can provide essential support. There can be a variety of reasons to automate a process: to contain the unit cost of items in high-volume production, assistance with handling components from a dexterity or contamination point of view, shortage of suitable labour or

fulfilment of short production runs of slightly different product designs. The ultimate goal may be zero-defect production, made-to-order, with next-day delivery. Choosing the right partner is important, because the results of a process automation partnership are likely to last far longer than the actual contract. Below are some essential questions to ask potential partners. ●

How to choose a partner. Questions to ask prospective partners.

Criteria	Measure
Financial stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will they be around to finish the project? • Will they still be around to overhaul the equipment in 5 years time?
Experience of this type of process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will they have to be paid to develop a process or can they offer a solution from past experience?
Experience of the medical industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they understand the current regulatory systems? • Can they contribute meaningfully to the project?
Experience of other industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could there be opportunities to exploit technologies from other industries and gain a process advantage?
Broad experience of technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can they offer knowledge of all the processes in a project or only some of them?
Local support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can they offer local support during and after the project?
After sales support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they include guarantees, training and installation? • If a problem does occur with the equipment can they respond quickly?
Reliability of the equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can they demonstrate above-average growth of their own company through repeat custom?

Developing a specification for the assembly system. What kind of detail is required in the specification?

- What is the end product and how does it fit together?
- What are the product features that must in no way be altered?
- What components are there?
- How are the components supplied, including use and storage of subassemblies?
- What quality problems exist with the components?
- Which assembly stages present a particular problem?
- What other processes are required?
- What cycle time is required?
- How much spare capacity is required?
- Which components and materials are particularly costly?
- What quality inspections are required and what are their frequency and specification?
- How much space is available?
- Which services are available and how are they supplied?
- What is the specification of the clean room or working environment?
- How is the output product to be handled?
- Are there by-products, such as dust or unwanted web matrices?
- How much time is available to complete the project?

Mark Turner is Business Development Manager for Medical Engineering Technologies Ltd, Transport House, Apsley Street, Ashford TN23 1LF, UK, tel. +44 (0)1233 649 204, fax +44 (0)1233 663 853 www.metech.demon.co.