



# The River Heights View

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## OMAC—User Based Open Architecture Automation

### Travel Back in Time

Imagine for a moment you have traveled back in time to 1988. You are a Controls Engineer for a major North American company. You have just been asked to lead the controls group of a new green-field project. Wow, talk about excitement... Then, like a lightning bolt hurled from heaven above, you discover your exciting new project has a vendor spec. A voice inside you says: "This would have been easy, except – I grew up programming Allen-Bradley, and this plant is scheduled Modicon (or ABB, AVG Automation, Eaton, GE, Horner APG, LS Industries, Mitsubishi, OMRON, Panasonic, Siemens, Sheffield Automation, or any of the other 421 PLC manufacturers listed by GlobalSpec.com)." We at AHTD have made pretty good livings helping Controls Engineers through similar situations.

### OMAC Background

Automation users have discussed an open architecture since the early days of the PLC. The OMAC (Open, Modular, and Architecture Control) Users Group was founded in 1994 to provide a vehicle to push for the types of open architecture dreamed of by our young Controls Engineer (above). Their website states their mission as:

- Collectively derive common solutions for both technical and non-technical issues in the development, implementation, and commercialization of open, modular architecture control (OMAC) technologies.
- Promote OMAC development among control technology providers and OMAC adoption among end users, OEMs, and system integrators.
- Act as a repository for OMAC requirements and operating experience from users, software developers, hardware builders and OEMs in manufacturing applications.
- Facilitate the accelerated development and convergence of industry- and government-developed technology guidelines to one set that satisfies common use requirements.
- Collaborate with users groups around the world in pursuit of common international technology guidelines.

OMAC's roots lie in ISA and the process industry, but today the organization includes strong representation within nearly every aspect of automation. Today OMAC has over 500 members with representation running high in the Fortune 500 manufacturing segment and the companies serving corporate America. If you do business in North America today, you are no doubt selling to an OMAC member.

### Partial List of OMAC Member Corporations

3M	Anheuser-Busch	Boeing
Bristol-Myers-Squibb	Cargill	Caterpillar
Coors Brewing	Corning	Cummins Engine
Daimler Chrysler	Deere & Company	Dow
DuPont	Gallo Winery	Eastman Kodak
Eli Lilly	Exxon Mobile	Ford
Frito Lay	General Dynamics	General Mills
General Motors	Georgia Pacific	Goodyear
Hershey	Honda	Hyundai
Intel	Johnson & Johnson	Kaiser Aluminum
Kimberly Clark	Kraft	Michelin
Miller Brewing	Nestle	Olin Corp
Pfizer	Philip Morris	Pratt and Whitney
Proctor & Gamble	William Wrigley	

**OMAC**  
is building the momentum required to change the landscape of the Automation Industry



Frank Hurtt of River Heights Consulting combines "in the trenches" experience with long range strategic thinking.

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We are "writing the book" on the Product Specialist in a Competitive Future.

As you might expect this list of user members has attracted the attention of a number of OEM's, automation suppliers, and integrator companies. ARC Advisory Group has aligned itself with OMAC and each year they co-host meetings. This produces a symbiotic relationship that allows ARC to showcase their expertise in automation and better attract vendors to the annual ARC Technology conference.

### OMAC Today

OMAC currently operates three Working Groups: Packaging Machinery, Manufacturing Infrastructure, and Machine Tool. Each of these groups works to develop "consensus based" standards to improve flexibility and reduce system integration time. At ARC 2006, OMAC member speakers gave "real world" examples of areas being affected by OMAC design criteria. Miller Brewing and two packaging machinery OEMs discussed the reduction in machine program testing driven by the use of standard program modules. In this example, they develop program modules that are functionally equivalent (on the outside) using both Rockwell and Siemens Controllers. The man/day savings for integrating the first machine to integrating subsequent machines dropped from 150 man/days to 40 man/days. In private conversations, a number of companies indicated they are applying the same techniques to machines outside of packaging.

### Conclusions for AHTD Members

OMAC would like to see the automation world mirror the Personal Computer world – where customers select components based on specification and price. This is a trend that AHTD first heard in 1996. Fortunately, our products haven't turned into commodities at rate predicted, but we have felt first pangs of commodity pressure. OMAC is not the boogie-man; they are just one of a number of factors pushing us to open architecture and control commoditization.

Distributors are a component lacking from the current OMAC mix. Manufacturers positioned themselves with the group early on; systems integrators are joining the group now. I encourage AHTD to extend itself to this organization. OMAC members are concerned about a growing shortage of human bandwidth within the automation industry. Few of them understand how to harness the power of a qualified local distributor. ASP's across our organization need to think about their role in an open architecture environment. A number of issues need to be addressed. How do we:

- Measure and document the value we provide?
- Charge for services when called upon to fill the human bandwidth problem?
- Provide service across far flung manufacturing facilities?
- Troubleshoot systems built from the components of a number of manufacturers?

We already know, AHTD is the only organization capable of providing the help industry needs in their automation future. It's up to us to understand and educate the OMAC members.

### Suggested Actions

Join OMAC – it's free

[http://www.omac.org/OMACTemplate.cfm?Section=Join\\_OMAC&Template=/OMAC/forms/MemberForm.cfm](http://www.omac.org/OMACTemplate.cfm?Section=Join_OMAC&Template=/OMAC/forms/MemberForm.cfm)

### And, Read

[www.OMAC.org](http://www.OMAC.org) – OMAC website provides complete lists members, suppliers, meetings, etc.

[www.ARCnet.com](http://www.ARCnet.com) – ARC Advisory Group provides a newsletter and other information.

[www.AutomationFederation.org](http://www.AutomationFederation.org) - ISA – OMAC – WBF organization for Automation Professionals



**“Vendor partners find a well focused distributor Product Specialist can provide a return on their investment in additional growth.”**

**“Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought...”**

**Heneri-Louis Bergson**



Let River Heights Consulting assist you on with your strategic business issues.

## River Heights Consulting: The Story behind the Story.

River Heights Consulting was founded by Frank Hurtt to address the needs of the distribution channel. Frank Hurtt, RHC Founder, is fond of saying, “In sports, everybody wants to practice running, but in the

game, it's the hand-off that makes the difference.” Whether the hand-off is between distributors and their suppliers, distributors and their customers, or between multiple distributors, River Heights can help. To re-

ceive complimentary issues of “The River Heights View” please send an email to; [info@riverheightsconsulting.com](mailto:info@riverheightsconsulting.com) Frank and his staff would like to hear from you.