7 key considerations in choosing an industrial remote monitoring solution

In many continuous process industries, vital equipment is aging. It can be difficult to get funding for capital investment or find the skilled labor needed to keep critical systems running. Remote monitoring can help you increase plant productivity by reducing unplanned downtime. Here are 7 key questions to consider when evaluating industrial remote monitoring solution providers.

1 Do they understand the risks and operational challenges of your industry?

A complete remote monitoring system provides much more than off-the-shelf hardware. Look for an industrial remote monitoring solution partner who understands your industry and can assess the needs of your site and its critical equipment, perhaps on a site visit. Be sure they can appropriately scope a solution for your needs based on the specific challenges within your operations and facility as well as best practices for your industry, equipment and environment. Its particularly important to find a provider who has experience with power management systems and continuous process industries, including the equipment and services to support them.

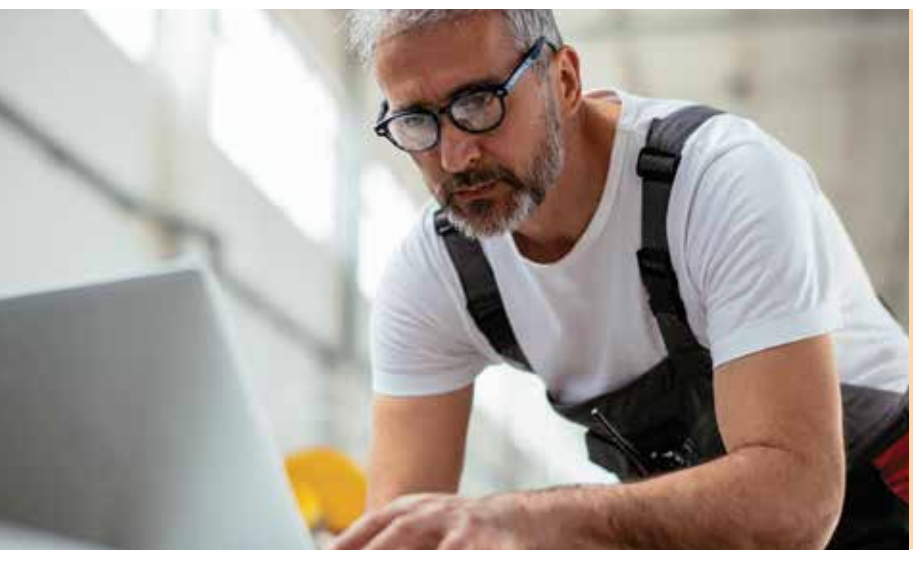
2 Do they provide installation and ensure successful implementation?

Dedicating your limited staff resources to installing remote monitoring hardware may not be the best use of their time. It may also be outside their skill set. If using your own staff to install remote monitoring hardware would take them away from mission-critical tasks or go beyond their skills, consider a solution provider who offers installation services. If you choose to install the hardware yourself, be sure your vendor can kit hardware so it's easier for your staff to do the work.

If your provider will install a solution, ask if they offer training so your team also knows how to use the system.

3 Do they provide ongoing service and consultation?

Buying off-the-shelf hardware may mean that your relationship with the supplier ends when that hardware is delivered to your plant. That means you don't have anyone to call when a gateway loses connectivity at 11pm and no one onsite knows how to fix it. Consider a full-service solution provider with a strong network of service hubs as well as experience with your specific equipment and challenges so they can help you manage unexpected events.



4 Do they offer an end-to-end solution?

"Monitors" or "alarms" are not the same as a true remote monitoring solution. You gain the full value of remote monitoring only if the telemetry delivers data to where it can be used to gain insights and inform decisions. Look for a provider who goes beyond alarms to deliver data from your monitors into useful dashboards with drilldown capabilities, and into your existing software systems. Also be sure that your provider's alarms trigger specific system-generated actions such as additional data capture and escalating notifications to key team members.

5 Do they stand by their solution with an SLA?

Do-it-yourself remote monitoring means that accountability for the system rests with you. Consider a provider who backs their remote monitoring solution with a well-defined service-level agreement (SLA).

6 Can they advise you on a data journey?

A remote monitoring solution offers many opportunities to capture data from your equipment to reduce downtime, increase productivity and support management's metrics. Choose a provider who can guide you as you consider additional ways to monitor your equipment and gain value from your remote monitoring solution.

Maintaining a dialog with your remote monitoring solution provider ensures that your solutions work properly and you can adjust monitoring as your goals and needs evolve. A provider with extended services like energy audits, power system analysis and electrical modernization can be an invaluable partner over time.

7 Do they ensure cybersecurity, data security and data privacy?

No one wants to make the news because of a data security breach. Be sure the solution you select ensures platform cybersecurity through the application of technical standards, tools and processes. Ask your provider about their level of expertise in securing both data and privacy. What happens to the data when a gateway stops transmitting due to a power outage or cell network outage? Who gets the data then? Verify that the solution you choose ensures data security through training, technology, best practices and industry standards.

Bare-bones industrial remote monitoring options are tempting, but also risky. Consider the value of working with a solution provider who can help you evaluate risk at your facility, ensure you have the right hardware to monitor your systems for the factors that matter most, and can support you with training, service and consultation as you work to better understand your systems, prevent downtime and ensure productivity of critical equipment.

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