

20 years of leading innovations in open network technology with the CLPA

November 2020 marks a significant milestone for the CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA), as the organization will celebrate its 20th anniversary. Over these two decades, the CLPA has been supporting automation vendors and end users worldwide to create converged Smart Factories by providing state-of-the-art open network solutions that leverage the latest, most promising technologies, such as Time-Sensitive Networking (TSN).

Since its foundation, the CLPA has actively contributed to advancing manufacturing, such as supporting the current focus on Industry 4.0. This has resulted in the development and application of innovative open networking technologies that help manufacturers leverage the power of data. Ultimately, this capability empowers companies to enhance flexibility in their processes, helping them to be competitive in a dynamic, global market.

In particular, the CLPA has supported the creation of well-integrated platforms that link together all the different domains of manufacturing. These are an essential element of smart, connected factories that are ready for Industry 4.0. This is why the last decades have seen key advances in network technologies, which evolved from fieldbuses to industrial Ethernet and is now seeing the adoption of TSN.

Evolving technologies to address current and future needs

At the forefront of these innovations and developments, the CLPA has provided ever evolving, ground-breaking solutions to address the changes in the industry. The organization's very first technology, CC-Link open fieldbus, quickly became a *de facto* networking standard in Japan and then in the entire Asian market as well as globally

Perceptive to the most promising new technologies, the organization subsequently launched a world's first – CC-Link IE, the only open industrial Ethernet with 1 Gbit/s bandwidth for industrial automation applications. Back when the solution was released in 2007, only 10 to 100 Mbit systems were common. CC-Link IE was therefore offering a futureproof network technology that would be able to address the continually increasing need for bandwidth in manufacturing.

In effect, this solution still leads the global market today, 13 years after its initial release. The popularity of the industrial Ethernet and fieldbus systems are also confirmed by the continuous growth in the number of nodes, CLPA partners and compatible automation products. According to the latest reports, there are nearly 30 million installed nodes, 3,800 partner companies and more than 2,100 certified products available from over 340 manufacturers. These figures are no longer a representation solely of the Asian market, but refer to the global acceptance of the organization and its technologies.

Ready for the next 20 years

While CC-Link IE is still widely used and offers state-of-the-art performance, the CLPA continues to look forward and provide solutions that will address current and future needs. Having recognized the benefits of innovative TSN technology and its potential in supporting the factories of the future, the organization recently released CC-Link IE TSN. This is another world's first, as the solution is the only one currently available to bring open gigabit Ethernet to the next level by leveraging key TSN capabilities. Furthermore, the technology was designed to support manufacturing businesses in the forthcoming years, as TSN evolves.

Interoperability and information integration are essential to implement Industry 4.0 applications and create Smart Factories that leverage the power of data to gather key information in the world of IT/OT convergence. With CC-Link IE TSN, the CLPA provides the foundation technology necessary for data acquisition from previously disconnected devices, providing the necessary reliability and determinism to control applications to an unprecedented level while providing actionable insight to the enterprise.

Thomas Burke, Global Strategic Advisor at CLPA, comments: "We are excited to celebrate our 20th anniversary and reach this significant milestone. Our organization has experienced a tremendous success and continuous growth over the years. This clearly attests to the level of the acceptance of our family of open networks in a wide variety of industries. As an established industry player, we offer a strong, proven and future-oriented open networking technologies that can truly benefit manufacturers worldwide. We look forward to innovating further within the sector to continue delivering cutting-edge solutions that will lead the industry for the next 20 years and beyond."

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CLPAUS041 20th Anniversary

Image Caption: The CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA) celebrates its 20th anniversary in November 2020.

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About The CC-Link Partner Association (CLPA)

The CLPA is an international organisation founded in 2000, now celebrating its 20th Anniversary. Over the last 20 years, the CLPA has been dedicated to the technical development and promotion of the CC-Link family of open automation networks. The CLPA's key technology is CC-Link IE TSN, the world's first open industrial Ethernet to combine gigabit bandwidth with Time Sensitive Networking (TSN), making it the leading solution for Industry 4.0 applications. Currently the CLPA has almost 3,800 member companies worldwide, and more than 2,000 compatible products available from over 340 manufacturers. Around 30 million devices using CLPA technology are in use worldwide.

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