



An Interview with
COPA-DATA CEO
Thomas Punzenberger

AUTOMATED ENGINEERING WITH ZENON - WHAT'S IT GOOD FOR?

Why are zenon and automated engineering such a good match?

The zenon philosophy is designed to fundamentally support efficient and error-free engineering. An important basis of this philosophy is "setting parameters instead of programming". This makes it possible to configure projects without the need for individual programming. At the same time, zenon provides everything that is required in order to play an active or passive role in the automation chain. The consistent object orientation and the centralized approach in zenon are also important here. As are the openness and the interfaces of our software. Automated engineering draws on all of these principles and consistently leads the zenon philosophy forward.

Does this mean that automated engineering is already an established "feature" of zenon?

Exactly; automated engineering has been a fundamental part of zenon for more than ten years. Over this time, we have significantly enhanced its capabilities and, meanwhile, the concept has become very powerful.

Who can profit from automated engineering?

First, one has to say that the scope of automated engineering with zenon is vast. It starts with simple wizards and goes as far as generating large, completely automated projects. Essentially, anybody who creates zenon projects can profit

from automated engineering. But it is mostly of interest to machine builders and system integrators.

What is exciting about it for a machine builder?

It begins with the integration of upstream engineering systems, in which machines and equipment are planned. Configuration files from these systems are used, in order to generate automated projects with zenon and this not only results in a huge time-saving, it is also helpful in avoiding errors.

Machine builders see a trend towards increasing individualization of their equipment. Does automated engineering play a role in this context too?

Yes, a very significant one, actually. End customers are less and less content with equipment "off the shelf" and are increasingly likely to demand tailored configuration to meet their individual requirements. This naturally then also affects the visualization. Projects must be individually compiled for each plant. For complex facilities, it would no longer be possible to achieve this by means of manual engineering. Automated engineering solves this problem.

How exactly does it work?

The equipment configuration for the end customer begins on the commercial level and can then be, for example, derived from the ERP system via a planning system directly

adopted by zenon in order to generate each individual zenon project automatically. The large amount of complexity which the individualization of equipment brings with it is thereby made manageable.

This means not only creating projects quickly and simply – through automated engineering – but also accurately. This is very important, because searching for errors later on is not only complex and painstaking, it can also, in the worst case, even delay the approval of the machine. This consumes manpower and capital. The advantages of automated engineering with zenon then has a direct effect on profitability and cashflow when machines are sold highly individualized but can still be rapidly and cost-efficiently handled.

For projects that are given a fixed price, the advantage is even clearer. Here, every minute saved in the engineering phase positively affects the integrator's margin.

Are speed and efficiency the only advantages for integrators?

Not entirely. In addition to the time-savings, as for a machine builder, a decisive advantage comes from the fact that errors are avoided. Projects or project parts that are created in an automated manner are reliable and repeatedly error-free. Many errors can therefore be avoided from the start, which in turn is an economic advantage. Particularly in the project completion phase, error correction can often be tedious and expensive for the system integrator.

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THOMAS PUNZENBERGER, CEO, COPA-DATA

What does automated engineering mean for a system integrator?

zenon is designed to save engineering time. Automated engineering is on exactly the same track. Automated processes during project creation simply save a huge amount of time.

Normally, a system integrator makes a living out of selling hours. Why would automated engineering still be interesting in this context?

In fact, some system integrators today still place too little value on efficient engineering. Global competition, however, puts end customers under permanent pressure in terms of both time and innovation. Therefore, end customers are increasingly acquiring project know-how by training themselves in order to reduce the cycle times of their automation projects. Furthermore, they want well-constructed and transparently-developed projects that allow for changes in the long-term. Projects that are automated offer these positive properties as a further advantage because they can be managed without code or special solutions.

Innovative system integrators recognize that they can only achieve long-term customer satisfaction if they can deliver their projects more quickly and better than the competition. This is where zenon can add value as a long-term success factor.

Meanwhile there is a new version of zenon available every year. Is more to be expected in terms of automated engineering in the future?

Definitely. Even though with zenon we are already leading the way in this area, our ambition makes us keen for further innovation. Each new zenon version will bring additional innovations in the area of automated engineering.

Finally, what advice would you like to pass on to our readers?

Anyone who wishes to be successful in these times of the Smart Factory and Industry 4.0 cannot get around automated engineering. Use it to your advantage – not only in terms of the technology of zenon, but you can also profit from the know-how of our experienced technical experts. Talk to us!

THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED BY
PHILLIP WERR, MARKETING MANAGER
AT COPA-DATA.