

Nexans and ffly4u connect customers to their cable drums through the Internet of Things

Nexans and ffly4u, the industrial Internet of Things (IoT) specialist, are pioneering a tracking and management service that not only lets DSO customers know the exact location of their drums, it even tells them how much cable is left.

Paris, March 9, 2017 – Returnable cable drums are the unsung workhorse of the cable manufacturing industry. Typically, they provide years of service in transporting cables from the factory to the customer and storing them on site until they are needed. And when empty they are collected and returned to the factory to begin another cycle. It seems a simple and straightforward process. So just why is Nexans interested in working with ffly4u to connect its cable drums to the Internet of Things (IoT)? The answer lies in the numbers. For example, a DSO (distribution service operator) like France's Enedis can spend several million Euros a year in renting cable drums. Nexans also incurs major costs in collecting the empty drums and purchasing new ones to replace those lost, stolen or damaged.

It became clear to Nexans that anything that could help improve the tracking and management of its cable drum fleet could offer substantial cost savings as well as enhancing traceability. Therefore, around 18 months ago, Nexans joined forces with ffly4u, the industrial IoT specialist, to carry out a pilot program on the Enedis fleet of 40,000 drums.

ffly4u has proven expertise in both developing wireless sensors together with the communications and management infrastructure that supports them. The company worked in partnership with Nexans to develop the tiny battery-powered sensor that is key to the tracking project. This sensor is embedded within each of the wooden drums, two or more metres in diameter, used to carry medium voltage (MV) cables for Enedis' power infrastructure projects. This sensor provides a unique way of identifying both the drum and the type and quantity of cable it is loaded with. It connects wirelessly to a cloud-based management system that provides Nexans and Enedis with real-time information on the drum's location and its status during a typical 150-day tour of duty on site. Among the information the sensor provides is how much cable has been used and it sends a message when the empty drum is ready for collection.

One of the most important financial benefits offered by the tracking service is that it helps reduce the amount of time that empty drums are left on site waiting for pickup, saving on costs and working capital. The service also lets site operators plan their daily operations more effectively as they can locate the cable drums easily as well as having detailed knowledge of the type and quantity of cable on each drum. In addition, being able to locate the drums on a large operating site makes the collection logistics much more efficient. This also offers a significant environmental benefit as the drums will never be lost or abandoned. Tracking also helps eliminate the risk of cable theft as it raises an alarm if the drum is moved outside its pre-set perimeter or during non-operational times, such as at night.

A further key operational advantage is that the tracking provides total traceability to confirm that the correct cable has been deployed on a project. It also helps manage the residual lengths of cable on drums held on site, facilitating their reassignment on other neighboring sites in order to minimize transport and scrap.

"Our new sensor-based service is taking cable drum fleet tracking and management to the next level, with cost savings of 20 percent easily achievable for MV drums. And if rolled out to high voltage drums that can cost 10 times as much, the potential savings could be huge," says Olivier Pinto, Nexans Services & Systems Director Europe.

“The concept has already been proved on a project of 100 drums and the next step is to extend it to several thousands. While drums are an immediate objective, the wireless tracking technology could have many other applications for electrical infrastructure such as transformers and generators. This is a very important example of our commitment to extending Nexans’ customer offering beyond supplying cables to providing a complete management service.”

“The internet of Things is now starting to make a major contribution across all aspect of industry. And as this project with Nexans and Enedis shows, smart thinking allied to cloud-based solutions can take even the most basic logistics operation such as cable drum management to the next level. Furthermore, it shows the capacity of ffly4u solutions to create business value and in fine customer value based on Supply Chains data” said Olivier Pages, CEO of ffly4u.

About ffly4u

Created in 2015, ffly4u is specialized in mobile and unpowered assets tracking on industrial sites. Based on low-bandwidth wireless networks such as SIGFOX, LoRa, ... and on the IoT platform Thingworx (PTC), ffly4u offers comprehensive solutions allowing indoor and outdoor geolocation of all type of mobile assets and the follow-up of environmental data (temperature, shocks, humidity, CO2, ...) in order to ensure assets integrity throughout the supply chain. What is at stake is preventing their loss, their misuse, tracking the content/container duo and therefore creating customer-value by allowing the transition from a “product-based business model” towards a “service-oriented business model” thanks to valuable embedded information on goods.

ffly4u offers a turnkey solution: design, industrialization and production of emitters to fix on the asset to track, contract with LPWAN operators in France and Europe, recovery of data on an IoT platform tailored to the specific needs of each partner, such as text message and e-mail sent on real-time. This solution is intended to any actor of the manufacturing industry: aerospace, food industry, automotive, chemistry, construction... but also to mass retail and health care industry.

Since its launch, ffly4u has successfully achieved several Proof of Concepts (POC) in France. Some demos have also already been achieved in Europe and overseas.

For more information, please consult: www.ffly4u.com and follow us on  

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About Nexans

Nexans brings energy to life through an extensive range of cables and cabling solutions that deliver increased performance for our customers worldwide. Nexans’ teams are committed to a partnership approach that supports customers in four main business areas: Power transmission and distribution (submarine and land), Energy resources (Oil & Gas, Mining and Renewables), Transportation (Road, Rail, Air, Sea) and Building (Commercial, Residential and

Data Centers). Nexans’ strategy is founded on continuous innovation in products, solutions and services, employee development, customer training and the introduction of safe, low-environmental-impact industrial processes.

In 2013, Nexans became the first cable player to create a Foundation to introduce sustained initiatives for access to energy for disadvantaged communities worldwide.

Nexans is an active member of Europacable, the European Association of Wire & Cable Manufacturers, and a signatory of the Europacable Industry Charter. The Charter expresses its members’ commitment to the principles and objectives of developing ethical, sustainable and high-quality cables.

Nexans, acting for the energy transition, has an industrial presence in 40 countries, commercial activities worldwide, is employing close to 26,000 people and generating sales in 2016 of 5.8 billion euros. Nexans is listed on Euronext Paris, compartment A.

Pour plus d’informations, consultez le site www.nexans.com

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