Press Release

ABB, Accenture, Intel, Microsoft align to help manufacturers connect plant operations to enterprise business systems

New alliance enables 'shop floor to top floor' connectivity across global network of plants to enhance business visibility, decision-making, financial performance

CHICAGO (National Manufacturing Week) -- March 3, 2003 -- ABB, Accenture, Intel Corporation and Microsoft Corp. announced today an alliance to help manufacturers bridge the gap between plant floor operations and enterprise IT systems. The alliance aims to help manufacturers by simplifying integration, gaining greater visibility into their businesses, making informed, real-time business decisions and enhancing their financial performance.

The four companies will provide a full range of computing diagnostics, solution design, development and integration services for manufacturers. The team's joint development work will help customers gain access to manufacturing automation technology that will work seamlessly in a plant environment and integrate with a wide collection of enterprise IT systems.

"Removing the barriers to real-time data synchronization must be part of the overall business equation for collaborative manufacturing," said Larry O'Brien, Director of Process Industry Research for ARC Advisory Group. "No single company today can do this across the enterprise. To achieve this in a way that yields a common direction for manufacturers will take the combined efforts of strong companies such as those included in the Industrial IT alliance."

The collective resources of the alliance members bring automation and power products, manufacturing solution expertise, robust computing and networking, and program management and integration skills together to support a powerful open architecture for enterprise solutions.

The alliance draws upon ABB's Industrial IT, a comprehensive, standards-based architecture designed for compatibility of diverse manufacturing components and faster "plug and produce" integration. Each element within the plant – including equipment, raw material and finished goods – is represented in the automation hierarchy by a dynamic software shell called an "Aspect Object" which speeds navigation to critical information. By simply right clicking on the Aspect Object for any component, users can directly access documentation, configuration and connectivity tools to speed up installation, control, troubleshooting and lifecycle maintenance. ABB has "information enabled" and certified more than 30,000 hardware and software products to work within Industrial IT.

Accenture designed and built an integration layer that is based on Industrial IT and the Microsoft BizTalk Server to help enable the real-time exchange of data between the enterprise and plant floor systems. Within the alliance, Accenture also will provide program management support to help clients with diagnostics, solution delivery, hosting and large-scale systems integration.

Intel brings standards-based, high-performance microprocessing technologies and computing platforms to the alliance. Intel Architecture enables modular IT infrastructure that mixes wired and wireless communications capabilities with open and scalable Intel-based servers, networks and storage to generate lower operation costs and increased flexibility.

The addition of Microsoft .NET technologies enables customers to more easily integrate diverse legacy systems and business processes with more current and future technology. Microsoft's enterprise technologies and products also provide manufacturers greater visibility into the enterprise, making it possible to optimize and automate business processes with a faster time to benefit and lower cost of ownership than with other enterprise IT systems.

The alliance will also provide development, consulting and solution support to major application providers and independent software vendors to help them develop and replicate applications that leverage the Industrial IT architecture and companion technologies from Accenture, Intel and Microsoft.

About the Alliance Members

ABB (NYSE "ABB") is a leader in power and automation technologies that enable utility and industry customers to improve performance while lowering environmental impact. The ABB Group of companies operates in more than 100 countries and employs about 139,000 people. www.abb.com

Accenture (NYSE: ACN) is the world's leading management consulting and technology services company. Committed to delivering innovation, Accenture collaborates with its clients to help them realize their visions and create tangible value. With deep industry expertise, broad global resources and proven experience in consulting and outsourcing, Accenture can mobilize the right people, skills, alliances and technologies. With more than 75,000 people in 47 countries, the company generated net revenues of $11.6 billion for the fiscal year ended August 31, 2002. www.accenture.com.

Intel is the world's largest chip maker and a leading manufacturer of computer, networking and communications products. www.intel.com.

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and Internet technologies for personal and business computing. The company offers a wide range of products and services designed to empower people through great software — any time, any place and on any device. www.microsoft.com

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For more information on the alliance, visit www.industrialitalliance.com.

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