

Global distribution becoming a key factor for Smiths Interconnect

At DSEI last month, CIE editor, Amy Wallington sat down with Giuseppe Lancella, vice president global distribution, Smiths Interconnect, to talk about their focus on distribution



Giuseppe Lancella, VP global distribution, Smiths Interconnect

Last month, we saw one of the most significant gatherings of the aerospace and defence world come together at the London ExCel Centre for DSEI 2017. Smiths Interconnect exhibited with an interesting array of its latest connectors and cable assemblies, subsystems, microwave and RF components.

Smiths Interconnect was able to show visitors its comprehensive high performance portfolio of innovative connectivity solutions. This follows the major announcement earlier this year that the company combined its technology brands EMC Technology, Hypertac, IDI, Lorch, Millitech, RF Labs, TECOM and TRAK under a single brand identity, providing customers with a single point of supply across multiple applications and markets.

It's clear that customers come first with Smiths Interconnect and having the right distributors is something the company finds very important in order to market and sell their products in the best possible way.

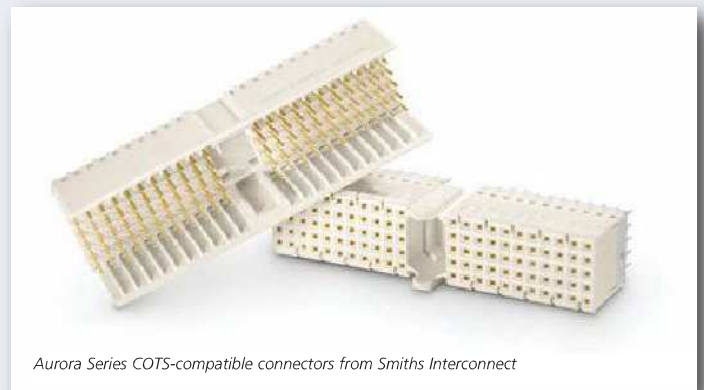
Giuseppe Lancella, vice president global distribution, explained how recent changes within the company have led them to a better-structured distribution channel. "In the past, we had very localised, small to medium distribution companies, but as we grew we decided to change the structure of our channel. We decided to take on some "tier one" distributors such as TTI and RFMW, our global master distributors who can now cover the three main regions: EMEA, Asia and Americas. This means that we are able to get our products out to our customers much more easily and efficiently."

As well as taking on "tier one" distributors, Smiths Interconnect has also appointed specialised distributors to access specific customers or application markets like Aerco, Microtek and CSL in UK. "You see, we have achieved a blend of the bigger, "tier one" distributors, but then we have specialised distributors for more specific products like cables, connectors and testing products," explained Lancella.

"In our view, distributors play such an important role for us, helping us to serve all of our customers and reach out to new ones as well by providing additional services such as 24hr assembly facilities, for example. This helps us to grow more organically and help us ultimately to maintain a leading position in our industry serving a broader customers base, that is difficult to achieve directly," added Lancella.

The main markets for Smiths Interconnect are defence, aerospace, space, semiconductor testing, rail and medical. Lancella said, "These markets are our focus and therefore we need to make sure we have distributors that are able to sell products into these markets, whether that is a "tier one" distributor or a specialised or local distributor – essentially maximising our service capability to our global customer base."

"Our technology brands now operate under the umbrella of Smiths Interconnect, which supports a comprehensive portfolio



Aurora Series COTS-compatible connectors from Smiths Interconnect

of connectivity solutions. Prior to that, our engineers would go out to customers and talk about the products under their single brand names. One of the key reasons for re-branding at Smiths Interconnect is that it has made it far easier for customers to deal with us, having one person within our company as a single contact for everything.

It has been an important move for us to, comprehensively, train our sales channels to enable to sell all the brands," Lancella continued. As well as selling globally, we want to make sure our distributors have good inventory and a substantial range of products within this inventory to serve our customers, well. In addition, we also want them to be able to help smaller customers who might be designing in with our products, without the quantity or value limitation requested to buy direct from the factory," commented Lancella.

Smiths Interconnect's aerospace and defence capability means that this is a market that the company is very well known and prominent in. Lancella added: "We fit very well into the defence market, in particular, because the connectors have to be rugged and reliable, something we believe we do very well. Within the defence industry, the most important factors – apart from reliability and performance – are weight and space saving; so everything has to be much lighter and packaged very small with light hardware to fit inside the application together with all the other electronics. So, our constant objective is towards miniaturisation at the moment and for the foreseeable future," continued Lancella.

"This isn't just the case for the aerospace and defence market though. Connectors need to be rugged and durable in many markets including space and of course, medical. One series of products that was on display at the DSEI show was the high performance Aurora Series, a COTS Plus 2mm hard metric connector for compact PCI applications. The innovative connector range is made to deliver a broad set of features and benefits to customers by addressing their high-reliability connectivity needs.

One key feature of the Aurora Series is its enhanced gold plating with 1.27 µm coverage on contact mating surfaces. This gold thickness provides significant durability, improved contact resistance and stability (25 per cent better than COTS after test cycle) and high resistance to fretting, which is crucial in a challenging environment. This ultimately lowers total system cost, and consequently the cost of ownership, by increasing Mean Time Between Failure (MTBF) by approximately 40 per cent.

The Aurora Series is COTS compatible which allows for reduced non-recurring costs due to common tooling and board layout. It is also lubricant-free, reducing the occurrence of secondary contamination while offering electrical stability throughout the product's life. It has been specifically developed for both telecom and aerospace applications and is designed to perform and withstand operating environments that have extremely harsh conditions," concluded Lancella.

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