

Switching on to opportunities

Building automation technology is on the threshold of mass market adoption.

By **Slobodan Puljarevic**.

The search for cost effective commercial property solutions and the increasing desire for comfort, safety and energy saving is currently driving forward a technology which has in fact already been on the market for 30 years or more: building automation.

The increased interest is at present still being reflected fairly marginally in terms of concrete figures, according to VDMA – the German plant and machinery manufacturers' association – building automation sales in Germany have for years been relatively constant at around €1.1 billion, but that needs to be set against the

In the residential sector, home automation is likely to break through the threshold to the mass market when automation solutions are actively targeted at property owners. Industry experts worldwide are forecasting continuous growth. According to market research by electronics.ca publications, the global market for home automation products will be worth around \$2.4bn by 2010. At present, less than 2% of all homes are automated, so there is major potential for building automation technology to find broader application. And it is the desire for energy efficient, comfortable and secure homes

that will drive the spread of automation into the home environment.

One of the key issues in terms of increased acceptance of building automation is cost. Only those companies creating home automation solutions that offer value for money will achieve success on the market. Efficient development processes and use of reliable, low cost electronic components will be vital in enabling

building automation to cross the threshold to the mass market.

At the heart of building automation technology lies a wide range of electronic components – from diodes, through analogue devices such as power supply units to microcontrollers. However, all those components – usually from different manufacturers – must also fit together. That is precisely where EBV's strength lies: manufacturers of building automation products, such as controllers, drives and sensors, can not only find all the electronic components they need at EBV, but also the detailed advice needed to put the systems together.

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PULJAREVIC: "AT THE HEART OF BUILDING AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY LIES A WIDE RANGE OF ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS."

collapse in the European construction industry. Newbuild projects, in particular, have seen significant declines.

A stabilising factor amidst the turmoil, however, is increasing activity in the renovation sector. Here, new technologies – such as power line and wireless systems – are enabling old buildings to be brought up to the state of the art at low cost. Building automation is also a major factor in helping reduce energy consumption – without imposing any restrictions in terms of comfort, safety or reliability. Moreover, the current debate surrounding the life cycle costs of buildings is causing property owners and facility managers to focus more closely on building automation. Building automation not only cuts operating costs; the high flexibility it offers also helps maintain property values over many years.



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