



## On the same page

Davis Larssen, CEO, Proserv and Steve Aitken, Founder, Intelligent Plant tell OGV Energy's Dan Hyland how shared values, compatible skill sets and even Covid-19 have ignited an alliance looking to take advantage of how data can be maximised.

At a very quick glance, Proserv, a long-standing controls technology business with multiple sites across the globe and rubbing shoulders with some of the biggest OEMs and service providers around, and Intelligent Plant, a small but growing award-winning data analytics disrupter, might not appear to be the most obvious of fits. But you need to take a closer look.

In truth, Proserv does have history for forging innovative partnerships, whether with fellow supply chain leaders in the US to underpin its subsea oil and gas offering or with university spin-outs to further its push into offshore wind. But it was a shared philosophy around data access and how it can unlock advantage for clients that brought these two Aberdeen based companies together. As Steve Aitken reveals:

"I first met Stuart Harvey, Proserv's VP, Digital Innovation when I was speaking at a conference and we got talking about some of the things we were doing. We realised that we were both facing similar challenges, but in different spaces. Us from a digital viewpoint and Proserv from a controls hardware perspective.

"We share many values and it was really great to find out that there was someone else out there who had the same regard and approach

to using data, the benefits of data analytics, and how this can empower operational strategy and performance."

### Positives from the pandemic

Davis Larssen adds that in the early days, as he and Steve began to connect personally, it was a question of building trust and a foundation. It was the advent of the first pandemic in a century that, quite conversely, enabled the two business leaders to forge greater understanding of their respective outlooks and to cement their relationship – just as social distancing was keeping many other people apart.

"With two companies of contrasting size and scale, it isn't necessarily easy for them to come together as a true partnership, and so Steve and I spent a lot of time establishing that solid ground.

"Ironically, while we talk about shared digital philosophies being at the heart of our alliance, Covid-19 actually played a positive role in moving it forward. Due to some of the restrictions in place, Steve and I would often simply meet up outside for a walk and a coffee. Sometimes this could be for up to a couple of

hours, and that allowed us to get to the core of a lot of issues and build a really fundamental basis for the two companies."

True to his innovative instincts, Aitken suggests the informal nature of these meetings acted as a unique catalyst to accelerating the Proserv and Intelligent Plant relationship. So, in December 2020, the two teams announced their first strategic partnership and the aim to roll out digital technology solutions that not only reflected their shared philosophy around secure yet open data access and visibility, but also mirrored their ethos of being independent, scalable, flexible and accessible.

### Compatible capabilities

Aitken says their compatible skill sets in fact make Proserv and Intelligent Plant a very good fit indeed:

"We are essentially software focused and so we do not have a background in hardware. But all of our software is effectively monitoring hardware. And in the energy industry, clients basically want software solutions that can look at and understand what's going on with their hardware. It's key.

"So to come together with Proserv's own domain knowledge, its reputation and long standing in the industry to recognise what sort of problems might exist, and even how we might better run our applications, is a real advancement for us and not something we could have done alone."

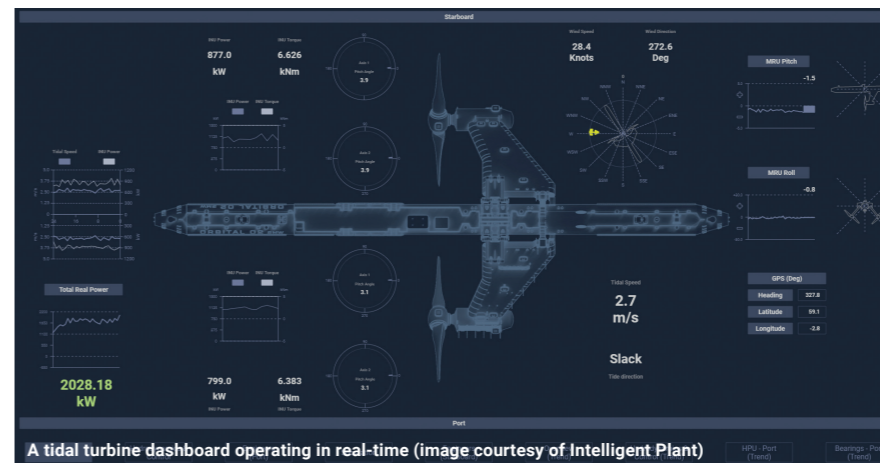
Larssen believes the incorporation of Intelligent Plant's specific capabilities have now enabled their mutual team to challenge clients to make a 360 about addressing impending issues or downtime.

"Proserv supplies control system solutions both topside and subsea and these allow our clients to get hold of the data that can tell them exactly what is happening across their asset. What would invariably happen is that an operational alarm would trigger, the customer would then call us, give us access to their firewall to grab the data and we would then tell them what had occurred.

"There's an opportunity to turn this approach around to be more productive. So rather than our clients needing to call us with a problem, often followed by a reactive investigation, if we have constant monitoring in place, then we can identify anomalies long before they cause real issues."

Larssen mentions that Intelligent Plant's input and expertise has "transformed our working relationships with several customers" due to its ability to "engage its applications to access data in the right way, while always recognising security protocols."

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### Digital into Renewables

Proserv and Intelligent Plant first took its combined offering to the oil and gas sector, working with a leading independent in the Gulf of Mexico that recognised how live data analytics could enhance O&M strategy and operational reliability. With the need to transition away from hydrocarbons, it is no surprise to see Larssen and Aitken emphasising the potential for their tie-up in renewables.

For Proserv's CEO, this marks another step on an on-going pivot that has seen its most tangible outcomes thus far through its ECG™ holistic cable monitoring system, very soon to be installed on the world's first commercial floating wind farm – Equinor's Hywind Scotland. Larssen sees Intelligent Plant's know-how being integrated into this solution:

"While a lot of our initial work with Steve has been with core oil and gas customers, we were already looking at incorporating Intelligent Plant's capabilities within ECG™. Cable failures are a massive challenge for offshore wind and we can work together with Intelligent Plant, alongside our wider ECG™ technology

consortium including Synaptec and BPP Cable Solutions, to address this. More broadly, we can take this technology wherever cables need to be monitored.

"We regard our alliance with Intelligent Plant as propelling our pivot into renewables and anywhere a client has data that can be extracted from its hardware to deliver insights as to how vital infrastructure is performing, we can work collectively on achieving that."

Intelligent Plant itself has previously linked up with the European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) to generate a data acquisition system for Orbital Marine Power's O2 floating tidal turbine located in the Orkney Islands, enabling remote access to real-time, mission critical data and supplying a cloud-based platform for EMEC to allow their clients to access information remotely, securely and live.

Aitken sees synergies across the sector. "The same challenges that exist in subsea oil and gas also occur in wind. It is all about making sure data can be accessed by the right people. Sometimes there can be multiple issues standing in the way of getting hold of data as a client. Someone might just say 'you don't own that, we do'.

"So, clients are interested in partners that take a different route, ones recognising this is their data and who want to help them access it."

Earlier this year, the two businesses announced a further tie-up, not only reinforcing Proserv's position as a worldwide distributor and supplier for Intelligent Plant's various products and applications, but to spark further collaboration and it saw Larssen join the Intelligent Plant Board. Aitken explains the thinking:

"Davis provides a unique and insightful view on how the company runs. He has the experience, and the valuable perspective, of leading a much bigger company yet has worked with smaller businesses too. With Davis joining our Board, we gain live feedback, in both directions, to take the partnership forwards. It was an entirely natural next step, and it demonstrates the commitment, respect and trust that exists between both teams."

### Inform Prize

Davis and Steve's relationship is rooted in shared values and later this month, Proserv and Intelligent Plant come together again for the latter's Inform Prize, a project in its tenth year and involving computer science students from both the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University. Proserv is a lead sponsor. Larssen remarks:

"This initiative fosters innovation, collaboration and teamwork to create solutions for challenges. Bringing skills together to drive change – very similar to what Proserv and Intelligent Plant are doing. It is an excellent platform and taps into our shared values around nurturing and supporting talent. We are currently looking at expanding the model into new territories, such as the Middle East, to support skills growth in that region.

"Another opportunity where we can collaborate once more."



Equinor's floating wind farm Hywind Scotland where Proserv's ECG™ is set to be installed. ©Equinor

