



A SIMPLE FOCUS

OKdo, a new global technology business, aims to deliver a range of services and development support for SBC and the IoT. By **Neil Tyler**

Earlier this month Electrocomponents, the company behind RS Components and Allied Electronics & Automation, announced the launch of OKdo (pronounced 'OK', then 'do'), a global technology business that will be focused on markets for single board computing (SBC) and the Internet of Things (IoT).

"OKdo is testament to our passion for innovation," said Electrocomponents CEO, Lindsley Ruth, "as it looks to bring SBC and IoT customers the latest products, solutions and ideas to inspire and enable them to create technology that makes life better."

Cutting through the hyperbole the new business is an interesting proposition that looks to provide end-to-end support for anyone engaged in the SBC and IoT segments.

According to Claire Doyle, OKdo's Global SVP, Commercial: "OKdo has one simple focus and that is to create an enhanced experience for all SBC and IoT customers, whatever their background, goals and ambitions."

"Our aim is to provide end-to-end

support to all forms of customer, whether that's makers, entrepreneurs, industrial designers, educators or re-seller partners," she explained.

"For us, the key driver behind setting up the business was the fact that while RS's proposition is to supply over 500,000 different products to a diverse range of customers, in particular those in the industrial space, the single board and IoT ecosystem have very different demands and requirements," explained Richard Curtin, the new company's Global SVP, Technology, "and we want to be relevant to that audience."

To that end OKdo is offering a much narrower, albeit more focused, range of products.

"Customers in this space have a narrower set of requirements and OKdo will be stocking around 1000 products across its entire portfolio. We want to consolidate and better support users, wherever they are in their development cycle," according to Curtin.



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'Design the World'

The company is operating under the banner - 'Design the World' - and will look to deliver a combination of hardware, software, development support and manufacturing services to help 'inspire' and enable its customers to generate new ideas and, more importantly, "turn them into a commercial reality," suggested Doyle.

OKdo is looking to build on existing relationships with SBC leaders including the likes of Arduino, BeagleBone and Raspberry Pi.

"But our customers will also benefit from a number of new partnerships that we have created with some of the world's most influential technology

companies, including Arm, NXP, Broadcom, Intel, and Seeed,” said Curtin. “But more than that, we don’t just want to work with established players, but also with rising tech start-ups like Zerynth and The Things Industries.”

The new company looks to address both B2C and B2B markets.

“I think it’s the first time those two markets have been addressed by one company,” Doyle suggested. “The B2C website is accessible in seven countries. We want to offer a global proposition to makers, industrial and entrepreneurs – integrators and engineers – across one brand, combining services, software and solutions in a way that is new for both the company and the market.”

Curtin added, “OKdo brings a global proposition to deliver all that and more. Not just hardware, but the additional support and services that customers in these segments need to succeed.”

The global website (www.okdo.com), mentioned by Doyle is now live and available in seven countries: the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, US and Japan.

The OKdo website includes a projects portal that will help makers connect and bounce ideas off one other. Entrepreneurs and industrial designers will benefit from industry-leading support, including manufacturing, prototyping, and a free cloud-based IoT development platform.

Curtin makes the point that SBC and IoT are demanding disruptive markets that expect imagination, creativity and technical expertise in abundance.

“We are looking to meet the needs of people around the world, wherever they are on their SBC and IoT journey. And they will be helped by our decision to bring in some of the best technology businesses to deliver the latest products, innovations and service.”

According to Curtin, “OKdo looks to make the Cloud available regardless of platform. It means that once you are part of the OKdo community you will be able to take data from prototypes and products and share it with the wider OKdo community.”

Curtin makes the point that, “OKdo is a business built on partnerships. In these types of markets, partnerships are critical – few companies can do everything themselves, so an ability to bring specialist technologies together and to provide the ecosystem necessary to help our respective customers was seen as crucial.”

“We are building a broad ecosystem of different services; but while that may be the case we are still looking to address the needs of business and the bulk of what we do will remain in the B2B space for the foreseeable future,” said Doyle.

She added, “We are, however, looking to engage and collaborate with resellers, extending our ecosystem in new and original ways. We want to engage with all types of customers.”

“We’ve brought sales and technical teams together that will be focused in a way they couldn’t be in a larger distributor. We are only focused on SBC and IoT – we want to be a customer specialist,” said Curtin.

“The technical team has been specially selected and recruited to address the needs of these markets – in many cases they have lived and breathed these technologies



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and I believe we are well placed to deploy that knowledge to develop a rich and meaningful dialogue with customers.”

Both Curtin and Doyle make the point that the new company is intended to be relevant to what is, in many cases, a younger audience.

“We need to be relevant to that market, so we’ve designed the website with that demographic in mind. Payment methods include credit cards and PayPal but we are also looking to launch Apple Pay.

“The site has been designed to showcase technology and we wanted it to inspire people; case studies and videos have been created to help with this, to help those looking to deliver new ideas to market.”

Talk of inspiring an audience could open the company up to critics – all marketing spin and no substance.

“It’s a difficult one,” concedes Curtin, “but we’ve tried to include material that is truly inspirational. We’ve put a lot of thought and energy into the content of the site, and we wanted to showcase, for example, how young engineers have started, how makers have developed their projects – these are stories that are real and relevant to our audience. I hope they resonate with them.”

With the launch of a new company talk of a future roadmap may seem premature but Curtin explained that within a matter of months the new company will be adding to its portfolio.

“This may be a new business, but it doesn’t come from a standing start,” said Doyle. “It is the result of 5 years of hard work; the building of extensive partnerships with leading technology businesses.”

“We want to differentiate from our competitors by being more focused and delivering solutions rather than simply components,” explained Curtin. “This offering will certainly evolve and increase as we go forward; we want to create a tailored partnership that embraces customers and suppliers alike.”

