



Keeping Obsolete Systems Up and Running

As aging automatic test systems face obsolescence and maintenance problems, Tabor makes sure that its new, advanced units provide smooth "drop-in" transition for slots vacated by out-of-order models.

By Ron Glazer, Business Development Manager, Tabor Electronics Ltd.

As years go by, more and more test systems, both in the commercial and military market, start to suffer from obsolescence and maintenance problems. The main reason is that though those systems were designed on the latest technologies available in the past, most of the units they were based on are no longer available in today's market.

This situation, though not new, has created a huge problem for many system engineers who have large, installed bases of systems that are running millions of TPS lines, already validated and paid for. The main problem is that most big vendors like HP (Agilent), Wavetek (Fluke) and Tek are always chasing new technologies and protocols, leaving the past behind, without thinking twice about what will happen to the clients that bought their products and have no alternative solution, if they stop working. "Let them rewrite their code" they often say, but is this a reasonable solution for loyal clients that have invested a lot of money in their products, counting on them for support for years to come?

In the past, these maintenance test engineers and managers had to choose from quite inadequate solutions offered by the market, in order to be able to keep their systems up and running. In the beginning, they simply repaired the units that failed. When the old components became obsolete as well, most of them were left with no other choices other than buying second-hand units that were still working, consider investing in rewriting their TPS codes or buy all sorts of external GPIB translators (TMAs) that would allow them to keep on working. All of these solutions were lacking for different reasons, resulting in longer downtime and ever-increasing costs of maintenance. The bottom line was: no real cost-effective "drop-in" replacement allowing them to maintain their huge investment in the code.

In 1991 Tabor took the lead on this matter, becoming the pioneer of a new solution: the "drop-in" replacements products, which not only emulate the old out-of-order models' command code, but are also compatible, the same or better, in specs. The new approach resulted in great success. Finally, maintenance engineers and managers had the "dream-solution" come true „Ï take the old out-of-order unit out, put the new Tabor product in and keep on working!

Throughout the years, more and more products have become obsolete, recreating the problem for many other systems. Some vendors saw it only as an opportunity to make money. Unfortunately,

their products were only "close to" solutions to solving the problem. In reality, none of them came even close to being a good "Form-Fit-Function" solution allowing the clients to "drop-in" their replacements. .

After years of delivering successful replacements for the HP8116a and others, Tabor has decided it's time to expand the drop-in line support to other HP (Agilent), Wavetek (Fluke), LeCroy and Tektronix models, allowing clients to keep their systems up and running with no worries, for many years to come. With the introduction of its new [Pulse Master Series](#), super high-performance, single and dual channel Pulse / Waveform Generators, Tabor plans to put an end to the "close-to replacement circus" that was generated by other vendors, and present one ultimate solution to most, if not all of TPS programmers' replacement issues existing today. .

Once again, Tabor has made it clear that it is committed to market leadership, continuously offering new and advanced platforms, while not forgetting clients that need replacements for legacy products. .

Here is what Mike Scott from Systems Engineer of Manufacturing Technologies, Inc. had to say about Tabor's drop-in products: We were able to drop the 8550s into a number of new systems that we built to replace obsolete military testers, and they have worked seamlessly with all of the TPSs. If we would have had to rewrite any of the test programs due to the HP 8116A's obsolescence, it would have significantly delayed fielding these systems around the world. He added, "It is reassuring to know that Tabor Electronics has taken a step to duplicate the 8550 and 8551 seamlessly fit as drop-in replacement to more obsolete models." .

For additional information on replacements for obsolete products, please contact the Saelig Tabor sales and support office or e-mail support@saelig.com.