

NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS CORP /DE/

Form 10-K

February 07, 2012

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(D) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the fiscal year ended: December 31, 2011 or

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(D) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____

Commission file number: 0-25426

NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS CORPORATION
(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware (State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization)	74-1871327 (I.R.S. Employer Identification Number)
11500 North MoPac Expressway Austin, Texas (address of principal executive offices)	78759 (zip code)

Registrant's telephone number, including area code: (512) 338-9119

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of Each Class	Name of Each Exchange on Which Registered
Common Stock, \$0.01 par value	The NASDAQ Stock Market, LLC

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:
Preferred Stock Purchase Rights

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was

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required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§229.405 of this chapter) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer", "accelerated filer" and "smaller reporting company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer Non-accelerated
filer Smaller reporting company

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes No

The aggregate market value of voting and non-voting common equity held by non-affiliates of the registrant at the close of business on June 30, 2011, was \$2,326,245,669 based upon the last sales price reported for such date on the NASDAQ Stock Market. For purposes of this disclosure, shares of Common Stock held by persons who hold more than 5% of the outstanding shares of Common Stock and shares held by officers and directors of the registrant as of June 30, 2011, have been excluded in that such persons may be deemed to be affiliates. This determination is not necessarily conclusive.

At the close of business on February 2, 2012, registrant had outstanding 120,678,169 shares of Common Stock.

Form 10-K
For the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

<u>Item 1.</u>	<u>Business</u>
<u>Item 1A.</u>	<u>Risk Factors</u>
<u>Item 1B.</u>	<u>Unresolved Staff Comments</u>
<u>Item 2.</u>	<u>Properties</u>
<u>Item 3.</u>	<u>Legal Proceedings</u>
Item 4.	Reserved

PART II

<u>Item 5.</u>	<u>Market for Registrant’s Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities</u>
<u>Item 6.</u>	<u>Selected Financial Data</u>
<u>Item 7.</u>	<u>Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations</u>
<u>Item 7A.</u>	<u>Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk</u>
<u>Item 8.</u>	<u>Financial Statements and Supplementary Data</u>
<u>Item 9.</u>	<u>Changes in and Disagreements With Accountants on Accounting and Financial Disclosure</u>
<u>Item 9A.</u>	<u>Controls and Procedures</u>
<u>Item 9B.</u>	<u>Other Information</u>

PART III

<u>Item 10.</u>	<u>Directors, Executive Officers and Corporate Governance</u>
<u>Item 11.</u>	<u>Executive Compensation</u>
<u>Item 12.</u>	<u>Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management and Related Stockholder Matters</u>
<u>Item 13.</u>	<u>Certain Relationships and Related Transactions, and Director Independence</u>
<u>Item 14.</u>	<u>Principal Accounting Fees and Services</u>

PART IV

<u>Item 15.</u>	<u>Exhibits, Financial Statement Schedules</u>
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DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Part III incorporates certain information by reference from the definitive proxy statement to be filed by the registrant for its Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be held on May 8, 2012 (the "Proxy Statement").

PART I

This Form 10-K contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933 and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. Any statements contained herein regarding our future financial performance or operations (including, without limitation, statements to the effect that we "believe," "expect," "plan," "may," "will," "project," "continue," or "estimate" or other variations thereof or comparable terminology or the neg thereof) should be considered forward-looking statements. Actual results could differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements as a result of a number of important factors including those set forth under the heading "Risk Factors" beginning on page 11, and elsewhere in this Form 10-K. Although we believe that the expectations reflected in the forward-looking statements are reasonable, we cannot guarantee future results, levels of activity, performance or achievements. You should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We disclaim any obligation to update information contained in any forward-looking statement.

ITEM 1. BUSINESS

National Instruments Corporation ("NI", "we", "us" or "our") designs, manufactures and sells tools to engineers and scientists that accelerate productivity, innovation and discovery. Our graphical system design approach to engineering provides an integrated software and hardware platform that speeds the development of systems needing measurement and control. We believe our long-term vision and focus on technology supports the success of our customers, employees, suppliers and shareholders.

We are based in Austin, Texas and were incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas in May 1976 and were reincorporated in Delaware in June 1994. On March 13, 1995, we completed an initial public offering of our common stock. Our common stock, \$0.01 par value, is quoted on the NASDAQ Stock Market under the trading symbol NATI.

Our Internet website address is <http://www.ni.com>. Our annual report on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K and amendments to those reports filed or furnished pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T are available through our Internet website as soon as reasonably practicable after we electronically file such materials with, or furnish them to, the SEC, or upon written request without charge. Our Internet website and the information contained therein or connected thereto are not intended to be incorporated into this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

Industry Background

Engineers and scientists use instruments to observe, understand and manage the real-world phenomena, events and processes related to their industries or areas of expertise. Instruments measure and control electrical signals, such as voltage, current and power, as well as temperature, pressure, speed, flow, volume, torque and vibration. Common general-purpose instruments include voltmeters, signal generators, oscilloscopes, data loggers, spectrum analyzers, cameras, and temperature and pressure monitors and controllers. Some traditional instruments are also highly application-specific, designed with fixed functionality to measure specific signals for particular vertical industries or applications. Instruments used for industrial automation applications include data loggers, strip chart recorders, programmable logic controllers ("PLCs"), and proprietary turn-key devices and/or systems designed to automate

specific vertical applications.

Measurement and automation applications can be generally categorized as test and measurement (“T&M”) or industrial/embedded (“IE”). T&M applications are used to research, design, manufacture and service a wide variety of products before they go to market. IE applications are used to design, prototype and deploy machinery to produce and distribute a wide variety of products and materials.

Historically, engineers and scientists have used a variety of cost-prohibitive instruments and systems that operated independently and could be difficult to customize. Due to the limitations of these systems, adapting them to changing needs can be expensive and time-consuming, and users must often purchase multiple single-purpose instruments.

Our Approach to Measurement and Automation

National Instruments provides engineers and scientists with an integrated software and hardware platform that accelerates the design and implementation of systems that need measurement and control. Our customers use our platform to develop test, measurement, control and embedded systems throughout industry from design to production; in advanced research; and in teaching engineering and science.

Reconfigurable Platform for System Design. Our graphical system design platform integrates fundamental elements of engineering in software and hardware, giving scientists and engineers the essential elements to create and customize systems that need measurement and control. Users can scale from design to test, from small to large systems, reusing the tools and our flexible platform of Graphical System Design.

Accelerate Development. Users accelerate their development by using our highly productive LabVIEW software that integrates and abstracts the complexity of systems at multiple levels, including unprecedented visualization of system timing. The NI graphical system design platform can lower total systems cost, increase flexibility, and integrate new technology using off-the-shelf customizable hardware that meets system needs from low power to high performance.

Innovate Rapidly. The NI graphical system design platform gives customers the power to innovate rapidly. The flexibility and scalability of the platform, supported by a growing ecosystem of reusable intellectual property (“IP”) and applications, gives users a strong competitive advantage in completing more projects with less time and resources. Tens of thousands of engineers successfully use the NI graphical system design platform today to innovate, discover, and invent their own solutions.

Compared with traditional solutions, we believe our products and our graphical system design platform provides the following significant benefits to our customers:

Performance and Efficiency

Our software brings the power of commercial computers, handheld devices, networks and the Internet to instrumentation and embedded devices. With features such as graphical programming, automatic code generation, graphical tools libraries, ready-to-use example programs, libraries of specific instrumentation functions, and the ability to deploy applications on a range of platforms, scientists and engineers can quickly build a system that meets individual application needs. Because the continuous performance improvement of personal computers (“PC”), Field Programmable Gate Arrays (“FPGA”) and networking technologies are the core platforms for our approach, scientists and engineers can quickly realize direct performance benefits, faster execution for measurement and automation applications, shorter test times, faster automation, higher performing embedded systems and higher manufacturing throughput.

Modularity, Reusability and Reconfigurability

Our products include reusable hardware and software modules to provide considerable flexibility in configuring systems. This ability to reconfigure measurement and automation systems allows users to quickly adapt their systems to new and changing needs, eliminate duplicated programming efforts, and ultimately improve their efficiency and productivity. In addition, these features help protect both hardware and software investments against obsolescence.

Lower Total Solution Cost

National Instruments solutions offer price/performance and energy-efficiency advantages over traditional proprietary systems. Graphical System Design allows customers to equip powerful industry-standard computers, with reusable system design software and modular cost-effective hardware. In addition, these systems give engineers and scientists the flexibility and portability to adapt to changing needs, while offering a smaller form factor that occupies less space on the manufacturing floor and consumes less energy than traditional instrumentation equipment.

Products, Technology and Services

We offer an extensive line of measurement and control products to work either separately, as stand-alone products or as an integrated solution; however, customers generally purchase our software and hardware together. We believe that the flexibility, functionality and ease of use of our system design software promotes sales of our other software and hardware products.

System Design Software

For the past 25 years, National Instruments has invested in its flagship software product, LabVIEW, which the company believes is the ultimate system design software for measurement and control. LabVIEW promotes problem-solving, accelerates productivity, and empowers innovation. With LabVIEW, users program graphically and can design custom virtual instruments by connecting icons with software wires to create “block diagrams” which are natural design notations for scientists and engineers. Users can customize front panels with knobs, buttons, dials and graphs to emulate control panels of instruments or add custom graphics to visually represent the control and operation of processes.

National Instruments believes that LabVIEW is the comprehensive development environment with the unprecedented hardware integration and wide-ranging compatibility that engineers and scientists need to design and deploy measurement and control systems. The LabVIEW programming environment is graphical, with engineering-specific libraries of software functions and hardware interfaces. It also offers data analysis, visualization and sharing features. Engineers and scientists can bring their vision to life with LabVIEW, and have access to a vast ecosystem of partners and technology alliances, and a global and active user community to innovate with confidence. When customers use LabVIEW, combined with the modular hardware approach with NI Data Acquisition, CompactRIO and PCI Extensions for Instrumentation (“PXI”) platforms, they are able to quickly integrate system components and do their jobs faster, better and at a lower cost.

LabVIEW Real-Time and LabVIEW FPGA are strategic modular software add-ons. With LabVIEW Real-Time, the user can easily configure their application program to execute using a real-time operating system kernel instead of the Windows operating system, so users can easily build virtual instrument solutions for mission-critical applications. In addition, with LabVIEW Real-Time, users can easily configure their programs to operate remotely on embedded processors in PXI-based systems, on embedded processors inside CompactRIO distributed I/O systems, or on processors embedded on plug-in PC data acquisition boards. With LabVIEW FPGA, the user can configure their application to execute directly in silicon via a Field Programmable Gate Array (“FPGA”) residing on one of our reconfigurable I/O hardware products. LabVIEW FPGA allows users to build their own highly specialized, custom hardware devices for ultra high-performance requirements or for unique or proprietary measurement or control protocols.

Programming Tools

In addition to LabVIEW, National Instruments offers LabWindows/CVI and Measurement Studio as alternative programming environments. LabWindows/CVI users use the conventional, text-based programming language of C for creating test and control applications. Measurement Studio consists of measurement and automation add-on libraries and additional tools for programmers who prefer Microsoft's Visual Basic, Visual C++, Visual C#, and Visual Studio.NET development environments.

Application Software

National Instruments also offers a suite of complementary software products, including NI TestStand, NI VeriStand, NI DIAdem and NI Multisim.

NI TestStand is targeted for T&M applications in a manufacturing environment. TestStand is a test management environment for organizing, controlling, and running automated prototype, validation, and manufacturing test systems. It also generates customized test reports and integrates product and test data across the customers' enterprise and across the Internet. TestStand manages tests that are written in LabVIEW, LabWindows/CVI, Measurement Studio, C and C++, and Visual Basic, so test engineers can easily share and re-use test code throughout their organization and from one product to the next. TestStand is a key element of our strategy to broaden the reach of our application software products across the corporate enterprise.

NI VeriStand is a ready-to-use software environment for configuring real-time testing applications, including hardware-in-the-loop ("HIL") test systems. With NI VeriStand, users configure real-time I/O, stimulus profiles, data logging, alarming, and other tasks; implement control algorithms or system simulations by importing models from a variety of software environments; build test system user interfaces quickly; and add custom functionality using NI LabVIEW, NI TestStand, and other software environments.

NI DIAdem offers users configuration-based technical data management, analysis, and report generation tools to interactively mine and analyze data. DIAdem helps users make informed decisions and meet the demands of today's testing environments, which require quick access to large volumes of scattered data, consistent reporting, and data visualization.

NI Multisim equips engineers, educators, and students with powerful and innovative circuit design technology. Educators and students can take advantage of easy-to-use teaching tools to overcome the traditional hurdles in electronics education. Professional engineers can improve productivity with intuitive capture tools, interactive simulation, board layout, and design validation.

We offer volume licensing that helps customers maximize their software investment by reducing total cost of ownership and simplifying their software budgeting and purchasing.

Hardware Products and Related Driver Software

Using cutting-edge commercial technology, such as the latest processors, Analog to Digital Converters ("ADCs"), FPGAs, and PC busses, our hardware delivers modular and easy-to-use solutions for a wide range of applications – from automated test and data logging to industrial control and embedded design. Our hardware and related driver software products include data acquisition ("DAQ"), PXI chassis and controllers, image acquisition, motion control, distributed I/O, modular instruments and embedded control hardware/software, industrial communications interfaces, General Purpose Interface Bus ("GPIB") interfaces, and VME Extension for Instrumentation ("VXI") Controllers. The high level of integration among our products provides users with the flexibility to mix and match hardware components when developing custom virtual instrumentation systems.

Data Acquisition (DAQ) Hardware/Driver Software. Our DAQ hardware and driver software products are “instruments on a board” that users can combine with sensors, signal conditioning hardware and software to acquire analog data and convert it into a digital format that can be accepted by a computer. Computer-based DAQ products are typically a lower-cost solution than traditional instrumentation and exploit the processing power, display, and connectivity capabilities of industry-standard computers. Applications suitable for automation with computer-based DAQ products are widespread throughout many industries, and many systems currently using traditional instrumentation (either manual or computer-controlled) could be displaced by computer-based DAQ systems. We offer a range of computer-based DAQ products with a variety of form factors and degrees of performance. In 2006, we introduced NI CompactDAQ, a rugged, portable, USB data acquisition system designed for high-performance mixed-signal measurement systems. Since its introduction, we have expanded the CompactDAQ platform with wireless and Ethernet technologies that have extended the reach of computer-based DAQ from across the lab to around the world. Some of our latest introductions in this area include X Series DAQ which delivers state-of-the-art measurement, generation, timing and triggering on a single device.

PXI Modular Instrumentation Platform. Our PXI modular instrument platform, which was introduced in 1997, is a standard PC packaged in a small, rugged form factor with expansion slots and instrumentation extensions for timing, triggering and signal sharing. It combines mainstream PC software and PCI hardware with advanced instrumentation capabilities. In essence, PXI is an instrumentation PC with several expansion slots supporting complete system-level opportunities and delivering a much higher percentage of the overall system content using our own products. We continue to expand our PXI product offerings with new modules, which address a wide variety of measurement and automation applications. The platform is now a testing standard, with a wide array of companies developing on the platform and investing in its future through the PXI System Alliance (“PXISA”). In 2006, we introduced our first PXI Express products which provide backward software compatibility with PXI while providing advanced capabilities for high-performance instrumentation, such as RF instrumentation. Today, we have a rapidly expanding portfolio of PXI Express products that are further expanding the capabilities of this important platform.

Modular Instruments. We offer a variety of modular instrument devices used in general purpose test and communication test applications. These devices include digitizers, digital multimeters, signal generators, RF analyzers/generators, power supplies, source measurement units and switch modules that users can configure through software to meet their specific measurement tasks. Because these instruments are modular and software-defined, they can be quickly interchanged and easily repurposed to meet evolving test needs. Additionally, our modular instruments provide high-speed test execution by harnessing the power of industry-standard PC FPGAs and advanced timing and synchronization technologies. Options are available for a variety of platforms including PXI, PXI Express, PCI, PCI Express, and USB.

Machine Vision/Image Acquisition. Our machine vision platform includes a range of hardware platform options, from embedded NI Smart Cameras that integrate the sensor and processor in a single package to NI Embedded and NI Compact Vision Systems to plug-in boards for PCI and PXI systems. We offer two software options for use across the entire NI vision hardware portfolio. A user can configure a system with NI Vision Builder for Automated Inspection, an easy-to-use, stand-alone package for machine vision, or program it using the NI Vision Development Module, a comprehensive library of imaging functions. With NI Vision hardware, a user can build high-performance, PC based systems using the latest processor techniques with NI Frame Grabbers, save on cost and space by combining an image sensor and real-time embedded processors into one rugged, industrial package with NI Smart Cameras, or harness multicore performance with fanless designs, connectivity to multiple cameras and reconfigurable digital I/O with NI Vision systems.

Motion Control. By integrating flexible software with high-performance hardware, our motion control products offer a powerful solution for motion system design. From automating test equipment and research labs to controlling biomedical, packaging, and manufacturing machines, engineers use our motion products to meet a diverse set of application challenges. Our software tools for motion easily integrate with our other product lines, so users can combine motion control with image acquisition, test, measurement, data acquisition, and automation to create robust,

flexible solutions. We introduced our first line of motion control hardware, software and peripheral products in 1997.

NI RIO Hardware Platform. NI reconfigurable I/O (“RIO”) hardware combined with NI LabVIEW system design software provides a commercial off-the-shelf solution to simplify development and shorten time to market when designing advanced measurement and control systems. All NI RIO hardware systems, which include products like CompactRIO, NI Single-Board RIO, R Series boards and PXI-based FlexRIO, feature a standard, high-performance architecture that combines a powerful floating-point processor, reconfigurable FPGA, and modular I/O. Engineers can program all NI RIO hardware components with NI LabVIEW, including the LabVIEW FPGA Module, to rapidly create custom timing, signal processing and control for I/O without requiring expertise in low-level hardware description languages or board-level design. NI provides a breadth of NI RIO hardware targets that provide varying degrees of performance, cost, I/O rates, and ruggedness, to meet any unique application need. NI first released NI RIO hardware in 2003 with the release of the first R Series PXI plug-in board along with the release of the first CompactRIO rugged, high-performance embedded system. To date, NI has released over 60 NI RIO FPGA-based hardware products.

Industrial Communications Interfaces. In 1995, we began shipping our first interface boards for communicating with serial devices, such as data loggers and PLCs targeted for industrial/embedded applications, and benchtop instruments, such as oscilloscopes, targeted for test and measurement applications. We offer hardware and driver software product lines for communication with industrial devices—Controller Area Network (“CAN”), DeviceNet, Foundation Fieldbus, and RS-485 and RS-232.

GPIB Interfaces/Driver Software. We began selling GPIB products in 1977 and are a leading supplier of GPIB interface boards and driver software to control traditional GPIB instruments. These traditional instruments are manufactured by a variety of third-party vendors and are used primarily in T&M applications. Our diverse portfolio of hardware and software products for GPIB instrument control is available for a wide range of computers. Our GPIB product line also includes products for controlling GPIB instruments using the computer’s standard parallel, USB, Ethernet, and serial ports.

VXI Controllers//Driver Software. We are a leading supplier of VXI computer controller hardware and the accompanying NI-VXI and NI-VISA driver software. We also offer LabVIEW, LabWindows/CVI, Measurement Studio and TestStand software products for VXI systems.

Services

System Configuration and Deployment. Our trained technicians install software and hardware and configure our customers’ PXI, PXI/SCXI combination, NI CompactRIO, or NI Compact FieldPoint system to their specifications.

Calibration. We provide calibration solutions, including recalibration services, manual calibration procedures, and automated calibration software. In 2011, the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) accredited NI Calibration Services Austin to one of the highest international calibration standards in the industry, ISO/IEC 17025:2005. National Instruments now offers 17025 calibration services for OEMs and other organizations seeking to maintain compliance with the strictest governmental, medical, transportation and electronics regulations. The new calibration service offering is ideal for companies standardizing their automated test and measurement systems on PXI modular instrumentation, which provides some of the most advanced technology for addressing the latest engineering challenges.

Warranty and Repair. We offer standard and extended warranties to help meet project life-cycle requirements and provide repair services for our products, express repair, and advance replacement services.

Customer Training Courses. We offer fee-based training classes and self-paced course kits for many of our software and hardware products. On-site courses are quoted per customer requests and we include on-line course offerings with

live teachers. We also offer programs to certify programmers and instructors for our products.

Software Maintenance

Software maintenance revenue is post-purchase contract customer support that provides the customer with unspecified upgrades and/or updates and technical support.

Markets and Applications

Our products are used across many industries in a variety of applications including research and development, simulation and modeling, product design, prototype and validation, production testing and industrial control and field and factory service and repair. We serve the following industries and applications worldwide: advanced research, automotive, automated test equipment, consumer electronics, commercial aerospace, computers and electronics, continuous process manufacturing, education, government/defense, medical research/pharmaceutical, power/energy, semiconductors, telecommunications and others.

Customers

We have a broad base of over 35,000 customers worldwide, with no customer accounting for more than 4% of our sales in 2011 and 2010 or 3% of our sales in 2009.

Marketing

Through our worldwide marketing efforts, we strive to educate engineers and scientists about the benefits of our graphical system design philosophy, products and technology, and to highlight the performance and cost advantages of our products. We also seek to present our position as a technology leader among producers of instrumentation software and hardware and to help promulgate industry standards that can benefit users of computer-based instrumentation.

We reach our intended audience through our website at ni.com as well as through the distribution of written and electronic materials including demonstration versions of our software products, participation in tradeshow and technical conferences and training and user seminars.

We actively market our products in higher education environments, and we identify many colleges, universities and trade and technical schools as key accounts. We offer special academic pricing and products to enable universities to utilize our products in their classes and laboratories. We believe our prominence in the higher education area can contribute to our future success because students gain experience using our products before they enter the work force.

Sales and Distribution

We sell our software and hardware products primarily through a direct sales organization. We also use independent distributors, OEMs, VARs, system integrators and consultants to market our products. Sales through any one of these channels accounted for less than 5% of our total sales in 2011. Our Hungarian manufacturing facility sources a substantial majority of our sales throughout the world. We have sales offices in the U.S. and sales offices and distributors in key international markets. Sales outside of the U.S. accounted for approximately 63%, 62% and 61%, of our revenues in 2011, 2010 and 2009, respectively. We expect that a significant portion of our total revenues will continue to be derived from international sales. (See Note 12 – Segment information of Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements for details concerning the geographic breakdown of our net sales, operating income, interest income and identifiable assets.)

We believe the ability to provide comprehensive service and support to our customers is an important factor in our business. We permit customers to return products within 30 days from receipt for a refund of the purchase price less a restocking charge. Our products are generally warranted against defects in materials and workmanship for one year from the date we ship the products to our customers. Historically, warranty costs and returns have not been material.

The marketplace for our products dictates that many of our products be shipped very quickly after an order is received. As a result, we are required to maintain significant inventories. Therefore, inventory obsolescence is a risk for us due to frequent engineering changes, shifting customer demand, the emergence of new industry standards and rapid technological advances including the introduction by us or our competitors of products embodying new technology. We strive to mitigate this risk by monitoring inventory levels against product demand and technological changes. Additionally, many of our products have interchangeable parts and many have long lives. There can be no assurance that we will be successful in these efforts in the future.

Our foreign operations are subject to certain risks set forth on page 16 under “We are Subject to Various Risks Associated with International Operations and Foreign Economies.”

See discussion regarding fluctuations in our quarterly results and seasonality in ITEM 1A, Risk Factors, “Our Revenues are Subject to Seasonal Variations.”

Competition

The markets in which we operate are characterized by intense competition from numerous competitors, some of which are divisions of large corporations having far greater resources than we have, and we may face further competition from new market entrants in the future. A key competitor is Agilent Technologies Inc. (“Agilent”). Agilent offers hardware and software products that provide solutions that directly compete with our virtual instrumentation products and has recently released its own line of PXI based hardware. Agilent is aggressively advertising and marketing products that are competitive with our products. Because of Agilent’s strong position in the instrumentation business, changes in its marketing strategy or product offerings could have a material adverse effect on our operating results.

We believe our ability to compete successfully depends on a number of factors both within and outside our control, including:

- general market and economic conditions, particularly in the Euro zone;
 - success in developing new products;
 - timing of our new product introductions;
 - new product introductions by competitors;
- the ability of competitors to more fully leverage low cost geographies;
 - the impact of foreign exchange rates on product pricing;
 - product pricing;
 - effectiveness of sales and marketing resources and strategies;
- adequate manufacturing capacity and supply of components and materials;
 - efficiency of manufacturing operations;
 - strategic relationships with our suppliers;
 - quality and performance;
- protection of our products by effective use of intellectual property laws;
 - the outcome of any material intellectual property litigation;
 - the financial strength of our competitors;
- barriers to entry imposed by competitors with significant market power in new markets; and
 - government actions throughout the world.

We currently believe that we compete effectively with respect to the foregoing factors; however, there can be no assurance that we will be able to compete successfully in the future.

Research and Development

We believe that our long-term growth and success depends on delivering high quality hardware and software products on a timely basis. We intend to focus our research and development efforts on enhancing existing products and developing new products that incorporate appropriate features and functionality to be competitive with respect to technology and price/performance characteristics.

Our research and development staff strives to build quality into our products at the design stage in an effort to reduce overall development and manufacturing costs. Our research and development staff also designs proprietary application specific integrated circuits (“ASICs”), many of which are designed for use in several of our products. The goal of our ASIC design program is to further differentiate our products from competing products, to improve manufacturability and to reduce costs. We seek to reduce our time to market for new and enhanced products by sharing our internally developed hardware and software components across multiple products.

As of December 31, 2011, we employed 1,868 people in product research and development. Our research and development expenses were \$199 million, \$158 million and \$133 million for 2011, 2010 and 2009, respectively.

Intellectual Property

We rely on a combination of patent, trade secret, copyright and trademark law, contracts and technical measures to establish and protect our proprietary rights in our products. As of December 31, 2011, we held 610 U.S. patents (607 utility patents and 3 design patents) and 23 patents in foreign countries (22 patents registered in Europe in various countries; and 1 patent in Japan), and had 280 patent applications pending in the U.S. and foreign countries. 170 of our issued U.S. patents are software patents related to LabVIEW, and cover fundamental aspects of the graphical programming approach used in LabVIEW. Our patents expire from 2012 to 2030. The expiration of any patents in the short term is not expected to have any significant negative impact on our business. No assurance can be given that our pending patent applications will result in the issuance of patents. We also own certain registered trademarks in the United States and abroad. See further discussion regarding risks associated with our patents in ITEM 1A. Risk Factors, “Our Business Depends on Our Proprietary Rights and We are Subject to Intellectual Property Litigation.”

Manufacturing and Suppliers

We manufacture a substantial majority of our products at our facilities in Debrecen, Hungary. Additional production primarily of low volume, complex or newly introduced products is done in Austin, Texas. Our product manufacturing operations can be divided into four areas: electronic circuit card and module assembly; chassis and cable assembly; technical manuals and product support documentation; and software duplication. We manufacture most of the electronic circuit card assemblies and modules in-house, although subcontractors are used from time to time. We have used a subcontractor in Asia to manufacture a significant portion of our chassis but most of that production was moved in house during 2010. We manufacture some of our electronic cable assemblies in-house, but many assemblies are produced by subcontractors. We primarily subcontract our software duplication, our technical manuals and product support documentation.

Our long term manufacturing and warehousing capacity planning contemplates a third manufacturing and warehousing facility in Penang, Malaysia. We began warehousing and distribution operations out of Penang, Malaysia via a third party logistics provider in October 2010. We began construction of our manufacturing and logistics facility in Malaysia in the third quarter of 2011.

Our manufacturing processes use large volumes of high-quality components and subassemblies supplied by outside sources in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Several of these components are available through limited sources. Limited source components purchased include custom ASICs and other RF or custom components. Any disruption of our supply of limited source components, whether resulting from business demand, quality, production or delivery problems, could adversely affect our ability to manufacture our products, which could in turn adversely affect our business and results of operations. See “Our Business is Dependent on Key Suppliers” at page 12 for additional discussion of the risks associated with limited source suppliers.

See “Our Manufacturing Operations are Subject to a Variety of Environmental Regulations and Costs” at page 17 for discussion of environmental matters as they may affect our business.

Backlog

Backlog is a measure of orders that are received but that are not shipped to customers at the end of a quarter. We typically ship products shortly following the receipt of an order. Accordingly, our backlog typically represents less than 5 days sales. Backlog should not be viewed as an indicator of our future sales.

Employees

As of December 31, 2011, we had 6,235 employees worldwide, including 1,868 in research and development, 2,854 in sales and marketing and customer support, 808 in manufacturing and 705 in administration and finance. None of our employees are represented by a labor union and we have never experienced a work stoppage. We consider our employee relations to be good. For thirteen consecutive years, from 1999 to 2011, we have been named among the 100 Best Companies to Work for in America according to FORTUNE magazine.

ITEM 1A. RISK FACTORS

Uncertain Economic Conditions Could Materially Adversely Affect Our Business and Results of Operations. Our business is sensitive to fluctuations in general economic conditions, both in the U.S. and globally. Uncertainty associated with financial markets, negative financial news, foreign currency markets, natural disasters, energy costs, budget and tax policies throughout the world's developed economies, employment levels, labor costs, healthcare costs, declining income or asset values and credit availability, could negatively impact the global industrial economy. Historically, our business cycles have generally followed the expansion and contraction cycles in the global industrial economy as measured by the PMI. The most recent reading for December 2011, showed the PMI had increased to 50.8 up from readings below 50 for the previous three months, but continues to indicate overall weakness in the global industrial economy. A reading above 50 indicates an expanding industrial economy while a reading below 50 indicates a contracting industrial economy. We are unable to predict whether the industrial economy, as measured by the PMI will strengthen or contract during 2012. If the industrial economy, as measured by the PMI, contracts or remains at a neutral reading at or around 50, indicating general weakness, it could have an adverse effect on the spending patterns of businesses including our current and potential customers which could adversely affect our revenues and result of operations.

Our Revenues are Subject to Seasonal Variations. In previous years, our revenues have been characterized by seasonality, with revenues typically growing from the first quarter to the second quarter, being relatively constant from the second quarter to the third quarter, growing in the fourth quarter compared to the third quarter and declining in the first quarter of the following year from the fourth quarter of the preceding year. This historical trend has been affected and may continue to be affected in the future by broad fluctuations in the global industrial economy, the economic impact of larger orders as well as the timing of new product introductions or acquisitions, if any. The economic contraction in the Euro zone during the fourth quarter of 2011 could persist or worsen in 2012. If this instability in the Euro zone continues, worsens or negatively affects other economic regions in 2012, it may have a material adverse effect on the seasonal patterns described above as well as on our overall results of operations and profitability. Our total operating expenses have in the past tended to increase in each successive quarter and have fluctuated as a percentage of revenue based on the seasonality of our revenue.

Concentrations of Credit Risk and Uncertain Conditions in the Global Financial Markets May Adversely Affect Our Business and Result of Operations. By virtue of our holdings of cash, investment securities and foreign currency derivatives, we have exposure to many different counterparties, and routinely execute transactions with counterparties in the financial services industry, including commercial banks and investment banks. Many of these transactions expose us to credit risk in the event of a default of our counterparties. We continue to monitor the stability of the financial markets, particularly those in the European region and have taken steps to limit our direct and indirect exposure to these markets; however, we can give no assurance that we will not be negatively impacted by any adverse outcomes in those markets. There can be no assurance that any losses or impairments to the carrying value of our financial assets as a result of defaults by our counterparties, would not materially and adversely affect our business, financial position and results of operations.

Changes in the Amount of Revenue Derived from Large Orders Could Adversely Affect our Gross Margin and Could Lead to Greater Variability in our Quarterly Results. Our large order business, defined as orders with a value greater than \$20,000, continues to grow as a percent of our overall business. As a percent of our overall business, larger orders reached a new high during 2011 and represented 45%, 42% and 38% of our total sales during 2011, 2010 and 2009, respectively. Larger orders may be more sensitive to changes in the global industrial economy, may be subject to greater discount variability and may contract at a faster pace during an economic downturn. Historically, our gross margins have been stable from period to period. To the extent that the amount of our revenue derived from larger orders increases in future periods, both in absolute dollars and as a percent of our overall business, our gross margins could experience greater volatility and see a greater negative impact from future downturns in the global industrial

economy. This dynamic may also have an adverse effect on the historical seasonal pattern of our revenues and our results of operations.

Risks or Claims Associated With the Compliance With Our Pricing Provisions of Our Previous GSA Contract Could Have a Material Adverse Impact on Our Results of Operations. From November 1999 to May 2011, we sold products to the U.S. government under a contract with the General Services Administration ("GSA"). During such time, our sales under the contract were approximately 2% of our total sales. Our previous contract with GSA contained a price reduction or "most favored customer" pricing provision. For the past several months, we have been in discussions with GSA regarding our compliance with this pricing provision and have provided GSA with information regarding our pricing practices. GSA conducted an on-site review of our GSA pricing practices and orally informed us that GSA did not agree with our previous determination of the potential non-compliance amount. GSA subsequently requested that we conduct a further analysis of the non-compliance amount based upon a methodology that GSA proposed. This analysis resulted in calculated overpayments (including added interest) by GSA to us of approximately \$13.1 million. GSA is reviewing the analysis and has not yet officially responded, and has not made any formal demand for pricing adjustments related to our previous GSA contract. However, GSA may make such a demand in the future, and there can be no assurance that the amount of any such demand, if we were required to pay it, would not have a material adverse impact on our results of operations. If GSA believes that our pricing practices did not comply with the contract, GSA could conduct a formal investigation of such matter or could refer such matter to the U.S. Department of Justice for investigation, including an investigation regarding potential violations of the False Claims Act, which could result in litigation and the possible imposition of a damage remedy that includes treble damages plus civil penalties, and could also result in us being suspended or debarred from future government contracting. As a result of the foregoing, during the quarter ended September 30, 2011, we established an accrual of \$13.1 million which represents the amount of the loss contingency that is reasonably estimable at this time. There can be no assurance that our actual losses will not exceed such reserve amount. Due to the complexities of conducting business with GSA, the relatively small amount of revenue we realized from our previous GSA contract, and our belief that we can continue to sell our products to U.S. government agencies through other contracting methods, we cancelled our contract with GSA in April 2011, effective May 2011. To date, we have not experienced any material adverse impact on our results of operations as a result of the cancellation of our previous GSA contract.

Our Acquisitions are Subject to a Number of Related Costs and Challenges that Could Have a Material Adverse Effect on Our Business and Results of Operations. During the second quarter of 2011, we completed the acquisitions of AWR Corporation (AWR) and Phase Matrix Inc. (PMI). We may in the future acquire additional complementary businesses, products or technologies. Achieving the anticipated benefits of an acquisition depends upon whether the integration of the acquired business, products or technology is accomplished efficiently and effectively. In addition, successful acquisitions generally require, among other things, integration of product offerings, manufacturing operations and coordination of sales and marketing and R&D efforts. These difficulties can become more challenging due to the need to coordinate geographically separated organizations, the complexities of the technologies being integrated, and the necessities of integrating personnel with disparate business backgrounds and combining different corporate cultures. The integration of operations following an acquisition also requires the dedication of management resources, which may distract attention from our day-to-day business and may disrupt key R&D, marketing or sales efforts. Our inability to successfully integrate AWR and PMI or any future acquisition could harm our business. The existing products previously sold by entities we have acquired may be of a lesser quality than our products and/or could contain errors that produce incorrect results on which users rely or cause failure or interruption of systems or processes that could subject us to liability claims that could have a material adverse effect on our operating results or financial position. Furthermore, products acquired in connection with acquisitions may not gain acceptance in our markets, and we may not achieve the anticipated or desired benefits of such transactions.

Our Quarterly Results are Subject to Fluctuations Due to Various Factors that May Adversely Affect Our Business and Result of Operations. Our quarterly operating results have fluctuated in the past and may fluctuate significantly in the future due to a number of factors, including:

- changes in the global economy or global credit markets, particularly in the Euro zone;
 - adjustments to acquisition earn-out accruals;
 - changes in the amount of revenue derived from large orders;
 - fluctuations in foreign currency exchange rates;
- the timing, cost or outcome of any future intellectual property or commercial disputes including under our previous GSA contract;
 - changes in the mix of products sold;
- the availability and pricing of components from third parties (especially limited sources);
- the difficulty in maintaining margins, including the higher margins traditionally achieved in international sales;
 - changes in pricing policies by us, our competitors or suppliers;
 - delays in product shipments caused by human error or other factors; and,
 - disruptions in transportation channels.

Our Business is Dependent on Key Suppliers. Our manufacturing processes use large volumes of high-quality components and subassemblies supplied by outside sources. Several of these components are available through limited sources. Limited source components purchased include custom application specific integrated circuits (“ASICs”), chassis and other components. We have in the past experienced delays and quality problems in connection with limited source components, and there can be no assurance that these problems will not recur in the future. Accordingly, our failure to receive components from limited suppliers could result in a material adverse effect on our revenues and operating results. In the event that any of our limited suppliers experience significant financial or operational difficulties due to adverse global economic conditions or otherwise, our business and operating results would likely be adversely impacted until we are able to secure another source for the required materials.

We May Experience Component Shortages that May Adversely Affect Our Business and Result of Operations. As has occurred in the past and as may be expected to occur in the future, supply shortages of components used in our products, including limited source components, can result in significant additional costs and inefficiencies in manufacturing. If we are unsuccessful in resolving any such component shortages in a timely manner, we will experience a significant impact on the timing of revenue, a possible loss of revenue, and/or an increase in manufacturing costs, any of which would have a material adverse impact on our operating results.

A Substantial Majority of Our Manufacturing Capacity is Located in Hungary. Our Hungarian manufacturing and warehouse facility sources a substantial majority of our sales. In order to enable timely shipment of products to our customers we also maintain the vast majority of our inventory at our Hungary warehouse facility. In addition to being subject to the risks of maintaining such a concentration of manufacturing capacity and global inventory, this facility and its operation are also subject to risks associated with doing business internationally, including:

- a changing and unstable political environment;
- significant and frequent changes in the corporate tax law;
- the volatility of the Hungarian forint relative to the U.S. dollar;
- difficulty in managing manufacturing operations in a foreign country;
 - challenges in expanding capacity to meet increased demand;
 - difficulty in achieving or maintaining product quality;
- interruption to transportation flows for delivery of components to us and finished goods to our customers;
 - a restrictive labor code; and,
 - increasing labor costs.

No assurance can be given that our efforts to mitigate these risks will be successful. We are currently operating our manufacturing facility in Hungary at a high level of capacity utilization and are selectively increasing our capacity to meet anticipated demand for our products. Any failure to effectively deal with the risks above could result in an interruption in the facility’s operation or delays in expanding its capacity, either of which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results and limit our revenue growth opportunities.

Our long term manufacturing and warehousing capacity planning contemplates a third manufacturing and warehousing facility in Penang, Malaysia. We began warehousing and distribution operations out of Penang, Malaysia via a third party logistics provider in October 2010. We began construction of a manufacturing, logistics and research and development facility in Malaysia in the third quarter of 2011. We can give no assurance that we will be successful in deploying our new facility in Malaysia on schedule or that we will not exceed our cost estimates. Our failure to successfully deploy our new facility in Malaysia or our failure to deploy this facility without exceeding our cost estimates could have a material adverse effect on our ability to meet customer demands, our ability to grow our business as well as our liquidity, capital resources and results of operations. If we succeed in deploying our Malaysian manufacturing facility on schedule and the demand for our products does not grow as expected, we will have excess manufacturing capacity which will cause an increase in overhead that will negatively impact our gross margins and results of operations.

We Have Established a Budget and Variations From Our Budget Will Affect Our Financial Results. We established an operating budget for 2012. Our budgets are established based on the estimated revenue from sales of our products which are based on economic conditions in the markets in which we do business as well as the timing and volume of our new products and the expected penetration of both new and existing products in the marketplace. Throughout 2011, we increased our overall headcount by 955. During 2012, we will see the full year impact of these headcount additions on our operating expenses. If demand for our products in 2012 is less than the demand we anticipated in setting our 2012 budget, our operating results could be negatively impacted. If we exceed the level of expenses established in our 2012 operating budget or if we cannot reduce budgeted expenditures in response to a decrease in revenue, our operating results could be adversely affected. Our spending could exceed our budgets due to a number of factors, including:

- increased costs from hiring more product development engineers or other personnel;
 - increased costs from hiring more field sales personnel;
- the timing cost or outcome of any future intellectual property or commercial disputes including under our previous GSA contract;
 - increased manufacturing costs resulting from component supply shortages or component price fluctuations;
 - additional marketing costs for new product introductions or for conferences and tradeshows;
- increased component costs resulting from vendors increasing prices in response to increased economic activity; or
 - additional costs related to acquisitions, if any.

Our Income Tax Rate is Affected by our Tax Benefits in Hungary. The profit from our Hungarian operation benefits from the fact that it is subject to an effective income tax rate that is lower than the U.S. federal statutory tax rate of 35%. Our earnings in Hungary are subject to a statutory tax rate of 19%. The difference between this rate and the statutory U.S. rate of 35% resulted in income tax benefits of \$16 million and \$13 million for the years ended December 31, 2011 and 2010, respectively. In addition, effective January 1, 2010, certain qualified research and development expenses became eligible for an enhanced tax deduction. The enhanced tax deduction for research and development expenses resulted in income tax benefits of \$17 million and \$13 million for the years ended December 31, 2011 and 2010, respectively. This tax benefit may not be available in future years due to changes in political conditions in Hungary or changes in tax laws in Hungary and in the U.S. The reduction or elimination of these benefits in Hungary or future changes in U.S. law pertaining to the taxation of foreign earnings could result in an increase in our future effective income tax rate which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. No countries other than Hungary had a significant impact on our effective tax rate. We have not entered into any advanced pricing or other agreements with the Internal Revenue Service with regard to any foreign jurisdictions.

We are Subject to Risks Associated with Our Centralization of Inventory and Distribution. Currently, shipments to our customers worldwide are primarily sourced from our warehouse facility in Debrecen, Hungary. Shipments to some of our customers in Asia are currently made either out of local inventory managed by our branch operations in various Asian countries or from a centralized distribution point in Penang, Malaysia. We plan to continue to devote

resources to centralizing our distribution to a limited number of shipping points. Our centralization of inventory and distribution from a limited number of shipping points is subject to inherent risks, including:

- burdens of complying with additional and/or more complex VAT and customs regulations; and,
- severe concentration of inventory increasing the risks associated with fire, natural disasters and logistics disruptions to customer order fulfillment.

Any difficulties with the centralization of our distribution or delays in the implementation of the systems or processes to support this centralized distribution could result in an interruption of our normal operations, including our ability to process orders and ship products to our customers. Any failure or delay in distribution from our facilities in Hungary and Malaysia could have a material adverse effect on our operating results.

We Operate in Intensely Competitive Markets. The markets in which we operate are characterized by intense competition from numerous competitors, some of which are divisions of large corporations having far greater resources than we have, and we may face further competition from new market entrants in the future. A key competitor is Agilent Technologies Inc. (“Agilent”). Agilent offers hardware and software products that provide solutions that directly compete with our virtual instrumentation products and Agilent has released its own line of PXI based hardware. Agilent is aggressively advertising and marketing products that are competitive with our products. Because of Agilent’s strong position in the instrumentation business, changes in its marketing strategy or product offerings could have a material adverse effect on our operating results.

We believe our ability to compete successfully depends on a number of factors both within and outside our control, including:

- general market and economic conditions, particularly in the Euro zone;
 - success in developing new products;
 - timing of our new product introductions;
 - new product introductions by competitors;
- the ability of competitors to more fully leverage low cost geographies;
 - the impact of foreign exchange rates on product pricing;
 - product pricing;
 - effectiveness of sales and marketing resources and strategies;
- adequate manufacturing capacity and supply of components and materials;
 - efficiency of manufacturing operations;
 - strategic relationships with our suppliers;
 - quality and performance;
- protection of our products by effective use of intellectual property laws;
 - the outcome of any material intellectual property litigation;
 - the financial strength of our competitors;
- barriers to entry imposed by competitors with significant market power in new markets; and,
 - government actions throughout the world.

There can be no assurance that we will be able to compete successfully in the future.

We Rely on Management Information Systems and Interruptions in our information technology systems could adversely affect our business. We rely on the efficient and uninterrupted operation of complex information technology systems and networks to operate our business. We rely on a primary global center for our management information systems and on multiple systems in branches not covered by our global center. As with any information system, unforeseen issues may arise that could affect our ability to receive adequate, accurate and timely financial information, which in turn could inhibit effective and timely decisions. Furthermore, it is possible that our global center for information systems or our branch operations could experience a complete or partial shutdown. Significant

system or network disruption could be the result of new system implementations, computer viruses, security breaches, facility issues or energy blackouts. If such a shutdown or disruption occurred, it would impact our product shipments and revenues, as order processing and product distribution are heavily dependent on our management information systems. Such an interruption could also result in a loss of our intellectual property or the release of sensitive competitive information or partner, customer or employee personal data. Any loss of such information could harm our competitive position, result in a loss of customer confidence, and cause us to incur significant costs to remedy the damages caused by the disruptions or security breaches. Accordingly, our operating results in such periods would be adversely impacted.

We are continually working to maintain reliable systems to control costs and improve our ability to deliver our products in our markets worldwide. Our efforts include, but are not limited to following: firewalls, antivirus, patches, log monitors, routine backups with offsite retention of storage media, system audits, data partitioning and routine password modifications. No assurance can be given that our efforts will be successful.

During 2010, we devoted significant resources to completing the upgrade of our Americas business application suite to Oracle's version R12. During 2011, we devoted significant resources to completing the upgrade of our business application suite used primarily by our European, Japanese, and global manufacturing operations to Oracle's version R12 and completing an upgrade to the underlying infrastructure of our website, ni.com. We continue to devote resources to the development of our web offerings.

There can be no assurance that we will not experience difficulties with these new systems. Difficulties with these new systems may interrupt normal operations, including the ability to provide quotes, process orders, ship products, provide services and support to our customers, bill and track our customers, fulfill contractual obligations and otherwise run our business. Any disruptions of the systems may have a material adverse effect on our results of operations.

Adoption of Complex Health Care Legislation and Related Regulations and Financial Reform Could Increase our Operating Costs and Adversely Affect Our Result of Operations. The adoption of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the related reconciliation measure, the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, and the regulations resulting from such legislation could increase the costs of providing health care to our employees. Due to the complexity of the legislation and the uncertain timing and content of the related regulations, we are unable to predict the amount and timing of any such increased costs. In addition, it is likely that we will incur additional administrative costs to comply with certain provisions of this legislation. Due to the fact that many of the rules and regulations have not yet been defined, we are unable to predict the amount of these costs or to what extent we may need to divert other resources to comply with various provisions of this legislation. Additionally, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act could result in increased costs to us either as a result of our efforts to comply with the corporate governance provisions which may be applicable to us or due to the impact of such legislation on the derivative contracts or other financial instruments or financial markets that we utilize in the normal course of our business.

Our Product Revenues are Dependent on Certain Industries. Sales of our products are dependent on customers in certain industries, particularly the telecommunications, semiconductor, consumer electronics, automotive, automated test equipment, defense and aerospace industries. As we have experienced in the past, and as we may continue to experience in the future, downturns characterized by diminished product demand in any one or more of these industries may result in decreased sales, and a material adverse effect on our operating results.

Our Success Depends on New Product Introductions and Market Acceptance of Our Products. The market for our products is characterized by rapid technological change, evolving industry standards, changes in customer needs and frequent new product introductions, and is therefore highly dependent upon timely product innovation. Our success is dependent on our ability to successfully develop and introduce new and enhanced products on a timely basis to replace declining revenues from older products, and on increasing penetration in domestic and international markets.

As has occurred in the past and as may be expected to occur in the future, we have experienced significant delays between the announcement and the commercial availability of new products. Any significant delay in releasing new products could have a material adverse effect on the ultimate success of a product and other related products and could impede continued sales of predecessor products, any of which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. There can be no assurance that we will be able to introduce new products in accordance with announced release dates, that our new products will achieve market acceptance or that any such acceptance will be sustained for any significant period. Failure of our new products to achieve or sustain market acceptance could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. Moreover, there can be no assurance that our international sales will continue at existing levels or grow in accordance with our efforts to increase foreign market penetration.

We are Subject to Risks Associated with Our Website. We devote resources to maintain our Website as a key marketing, sales and support tool and expect to continue to do so in the future. However, there can be no assurance that we will be successful in our attempt to leverage the Web to increase sales. We host our Website internally. Any failure to successfully maintain our Website or any significant downtime or outages affecting our Website could have a material adverse impact on our operating results.

Our Products are Complex and May Contain Bugs or Errors. As has occurred in the past and as may be expected to occur in the future, our new software products or new operating systems of third parties on which our products are based often contain bugs or errors that can result in reduced sales or cause our support costs to increase, either of which could have a material adverse impact on our operating results.

We are Subject to Various Risks Associated with International Operations and Foreign Economies. Our international sales are subject to inherent risks, including:

- difficulties and the high tax costs associated with the repatriation of earnings;
 - fluctuations in local economies;
- fluctuations in foreign currencies relative to the U.S. dollar;
 - difficulties in staffing and managing foreign operations;
 - greater difficulty in accounts receivable collection;
- costs and risks of localizing products for foreign countries;
 - unexpected changes in regulatory requirements;
 - tariffs and other trade barriers; and,
- the burdens of complying with a wide variety of foreign laws.

In many foreign countries, particularly in those with developing economies, it is common to engage in business practices that are prohibited by U.S. regulations applicable to us such as the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Although we have policies and procedures designed to ensure compliance with these laws, there can be no assurance that all of our employees, contractors and agents, including those based in or from countries where practices which violate such U.S. laws may be customary, will not take actions in violation of our policies. Any violation of foreign or U.S. laws by our employees, contractors or agents, even if such violation is prohibited by our policies, could have a material adverse effect on our business. We must also comply with various import and export regulations. The application of these various regulations depends on the classification of our products which can change over time as such regulations are modified or interpreted. As a result, even if we are currently in compliance with applicable regulations, there can be no assurance that we will not have to incur additional costs or take additional compliance actions in the future. Failure to comply with these regulations could result in fines or termination of import and export privileges, which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. Additionally, the regulatory environment in some countries is very restrictive as their governments try to protect their local economy and value of their local currency against the U.S. dollar.

The vast majority of our sales outside of North America are denominated in local currencies, and accordingly, the U.S. dollar equivalent of these sales is affected by changes in the foreign currency exchange rates. The change in

exchange rates had the effect of increasing our consolidated sales by \$27 million or 3% in 2011, and increasing our consolidated sales by \$13 million or 2% in 2010. Since most of our international operating expenses are also incurred in local currencies, the change in exchange rates had the effect of increasing our consolidated operating expenses by \$19 million or 3% in 2011, and increasing our consolidated operating expenses by \$9 million or 3% in 2010.

During the first half of 2011, the U.S. dollar generally declined against most of the major currencies in the markets in which we do business. During the six month period ended December 31, 2011, we saw the U.S. dollar turn significantly stronger against most of the major currencies in the markets in which we do business. We cannot predict to what degree or how long this recent volatility in the foreign currency exchange markets will continue. In the past, we have noted that significant volatility in foreign currency exchange rates in the markets in which we do business has had a significant impact on the revaluation of our foreign currency denominated firm commitments, on our ability to forecast our U.S. dollar equivalent revenues and expenses and on the effectiveness of our hedging programs. In the past, these dynamics have also adversely affected our revenue growth in international markets and may pose similar challenges in the future. We recognize the local currency as the functional currency in virtually all of our international subsidiaries.

Our Business Depends on Our Proprietary Rights and We Have Been Subject to Intellectual Property Litigation. Our success depends on our ability to obtain and maintain patents and other proprietary rights relative to the technologies used in our principal products. Despite our efforts to protect our proprietary rights, unauthorized parties may have in the past infringed or violated certain of our intellectual property rights. We from time to time engage in litigation to protect our intellectual property rights. In monitoring and policing our intellectual property rights, we have been and may be required to spend significant resources. We from time to time may be notified that we are infringing certain patent or intellectual property rights of others. There can be no assurance that any future intellectual property litigation will not result in significant litigation expense, liability, injunction against the sale of some of our products, and a diversion of management's attention, any of which may have a material adverse effect on our operating results.

Our Reported Financial Results May be Adversely Affected by Changes in Accounting Principles Generally Accepted in the United States. We prepare our financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the U.S. These accounting principles are subject to interpretation by the Financial Accounting Standards Board and the Securities and Exchange Commission. A change in these policies or interpretations could have a significant effect on our reported financial results, and could affect the reporting of transactions completed before the announcement of a change.

Our Business Depends on the Continued Service of Key Management and Technical Personnel. Our success depends upon the continued contributions of our key management, sales, marketing, research and development and operational personnel, including Dr. Truchard, our Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, and other members of our senior management and key technical personnel. We have no agreements providing for the employment of any of our key employees for any fixed term and our key employees may voluntarily terminate their employment with us at any time. The loss of the services of one or more of our key employees in the future could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. We also believe our future success will depend upon our ability to attract and retain additional highly skilled management, technical, marketing, research and development, and operational personnel with experience in managing large and rapidly changing companies, as well as training, motivating and supervising employees. Our failure to attract or retain key technical or managerial talent could have an adverse effect on our operating results. We also recruit and employ foreign nationals to achieve our hiring goals primarily for engineering and software positions. There can be no guarantee that we will continue to be able to recruit foreign nationals at the current rate. There can be no assurance that we will be successful in retaining our existing key personnel or attracting and retaining additional key personnel. Failure to attract and retain a sufficient number of our key personnel could have a material adverse effect on our operating results.

Our Manufacturing Operations are Subject to a Variety of Environmental Regulations and Costs that May Have a Material Adverse Effect on our Business and Results of our Operations. We must comply with many different

governmental regulations related to the use, storage, discharge and disposal of toxic, volatile or otherwise hazardous chemicals used in our manufacturing operations in the U.S. and in Hungary. Although we believe that our activities conform to presently applicable environmental regulations, our failure to comply with present or future regulations could result in the imposition of fines, suspension of production or a cessation of operations. Any such environmental regulations could require us to acquire costly equipment or to incur other significant expenses to comply with such regulations. Any failure by us to control the use of or adequately restrict the discharge of hazardous substances could subject us to future liabilities.

We Are Subject to the Risk of Product Liability Claims. Our products are designed to provide information upon which users may rely. Our products are also used in “real time” applications requiring extremely rapid and continuous processing and constant feedback. Such applications give rise to the risk that a failure or interruption of the system or application could result in economic damage or bodily harm. We attempt to assure the quality and accuracy of the processes contained in our products, and to limit our product liability exposure through contractual limitations on liability, limited warranties, express disclaimers and warnings as well as disclaimers contained in our “shrink wrap” license agreements with end-users. If our products contain errors that produce incorrect results on which users rely or cause failure or interruption of systems or processes, customer acceptance of our products could be adversely affected. Further, we could be subject to liability claims that could have a material adverse effect on our operating results or financial position. Although we maintain liability insurance for product liability matters, there can be no assurance that such insurance or the contractual limitations used by us to limit our liability will be sufficient to cover or limit any claims which may occur.

Provisions in Our Charter Documents and Delaware Law and Our Stockholder Rights Plan May Delay or Prevent an Acquisition of Us. Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and Delaware law contain provisions that could make it more difficult for a third party to acquire us without the consent of our Board of Directors. These provisions include a classified Board of Directors, prohibition of stockholder action by written consent, prohibition of stockholders to call special meetings and the requirement that the holders of at least 80% of our shares approve any business combination not otherwise approved by two-thirds of the Board of Directors. Delaware law also imposes some restrictions on mergers and other business combinations between us and any holder of 15% or more of our outstanding common stock. In addition, our Board of Directors has the right to issue preferred stock without stockholder approval, which could be used to dilute the stock ownership of a potential hostile acquirer. Our Board of Directors adopted a stockholders rights plan on January 21, 2004, pursuant to which we declared a dividend of one right for each share of our common stock outstanding as of May 10, 2004. This rights plan replaced a similar rights plan that had been in effect since our initial public offering in 1995. Unless redeemed by us prior to the time the rights are exercised, upon the occurrence of certain events, the rights will entitle the holders to receive upon exercise thereof shares of our preferred stock, or shares of an acquiring entity, having a value equal to twice the then-current exercise price of the right. The issuance of the rights could have the effect of delaying or preventing a change of control of us.

Compliance With Sections 302 and 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 is Costly and Challenging. As required by Section 302 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, this Form 10-K contains our management’s certification of adequate disclosure controls and procedures as of December 31, 2011. This report on Form 10-K also contains a report by our management on our internal control over financial reporting including an assessment of the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2011. This Form 10-K also contains an attestation and report by our external auditors with respect to the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting under Section 404. While these assessments and reports did not reveal any material weaknesses in our internal control over financial reporting, compliance with Sections 302 and 404 is required for each future fiscal year end. We expect that the ongoing compliance with Sections 302 and 404 will continue to be both very costly and very challenging and there can be no assurance that material weaknesses will not be identified in future periods. Any adverse results from such ongoing compliance efforts could result in a loss of investor confidence in our financial reports and have an adverse effect on our stock price.

ITEM 1B. UNRESOLVED STAFF COMMENTS

None.

ITEM 2. PROPERTIES

Our principal corporate and research and development activities are conducted in three buildings we own in Austin, Texas. We own approximately 69 acres of land in north Austin, Texas, on which are a 232,000 square foot office facility, a 140,000 square foot manufacturing and office facility, and a 380,000 square foot research and development facility. We also own a 136,000 square foot office building in Austin, Texas which is being leased to third-parties. Our principal manufacturing and distribution activities are conducted at our 239,000 square foot manufacturing and distribution facility in Debrecen, Hungary which we own. Our German subsidiary, National Instruments Engineering GmbH & Co. KG, owns a 25,500 square foot office building in Aachen, Germany in which a majority of its activities are conducted. National Instruments Engineering owns another 19,375 square foot office building in Aachen, Germany, which is partially leased to third-parties. National Instruments Corporation (UK) Limited, United Kingdom, owns a 29,270 square foot office building in Newbury, UK. We own approximately 23 acres of land comprised of two tracts in an industrial park in Penang, Malaysia. One tract is approximately 17 acres and the other tract is approximately 6 acres. We are in the process of constructing a new 314,000 square foot manufacturing, R&D, and G&A facility in Penang, Malaysia.

As of December 31, 2011, we also leased a number of sales and support offices in the U.S. and various countries throughout the world. Our sales and support facilities are currently being utilized below maximum capacity to allow for future headcount growth and design/construction cycles, as needed. We believe our existing facilities are adequate to meet our current requirements.

ITEM 3. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

We are not currently a party to any material litigation. However, in the ordinary course of our business, we are involved in legal actions, both as plaintiff and defendant, and could incur uninsured liability in any one or more of them. We also periodically receive notifications from various third parties related to alleged infringement of patents or intellectual property rights, commercial disputes or other matters. See Note 13 – Commitments and Contingencies in the Notes to our Consolidated Financial Statements, for discussion of the accrual we have recorded in connection with our previous GSA contract. No assurances can be given with respect to the extent or outcome of any future litigation or dispute.

ITEM 4. RESERVED

PART II

ITEM 5. MARKET FOR THE REGISTRANT'S COMMON EQUITY, RELATED STOCKHOLDER MATTERS AND ISSUER PURCHASES OF EQUITY SECURITIES

Our common stock, \$0.01 par value, began trading on The NASDAQ Stock Market under the symbol NATI effective March 13, 1995. Prior to that date, there was no public market for our common stock. The high and low closing prices for our common stock, as reported by Nasdaq for the two most recent fiscal years, are as indicated in the following table:

	High	Low
2011		
First Quarter		
2011	\$ 32.80	\$ 25.26
Second Quarter		
2011	32.93	27.50
Third Quarter		
2011	31.02	22.16
Fourth Quarter		
2011	28.29	21.72
2010		
First Quarter		
2010	\$ 22.46	\$ 18.83
Second Quarter		
2010	24.47	19.88
Third Quarter		
2010	22.29	18.91
Fourth Quarter		
2010	25.29	21.30

At the close of business on January 27, 2012, there were approximately 426 holders of record of our common stock and approximately 27,265 beneficial holders of our common stock.

We believe factors such as quarterly fluctuations in our results of operations, announcements by us or our competitors, technological innovations, new product introductions, governmental regulations, litigation, changes in earnings estimates by analysts or changes in our financial guidance may cause the market price of our common stock to fluctuate, perhaps substantially. In addition, stock prices for many technology companies fluctuate widely for reasons that may be unrelated to their operating results. These broad market and industry fluctuations may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

Our cash dividend payments for the two most recent fiscal years, on a per share basis, are indicated in the following table. The dividends were paid on the dates set forth below:

	Dividend Amount
2011	
	\$0.10

February 21, 2011	
May 31, 2011	0.10
August 29, 2011	0.10
November 28, 2011	0.10
2010	
March 1, 2010	\$0.09
June 1, 2010	0.09
August 30, 2010	0.09
November 29, 2010	0.09

Our policy as to future dividends will be based on, among other considerations, our views on changes in tax rates applied to dividend income, potential future capital requirements related to research and development, expansion into new market areas, strategic investments and business acquisitions, share dilution management, legal risks, and challenges to our business model.

On January 24, 2012, our Board of Directors declared a quarterly cash dividend of \$0.14 per common share, payable March 5, 2012, to stockholders of record on February 13, 2012.

See [Item 12](#) for information regarding securities authorized for issuance under our equity compensation plans.

Performance Graph

The following graph compares the cumulative total return to holders of NI's common stock from December 31, 2006 to December 31, 2011 to the cumulative return over such period of the (i) Nasdaq Composite Index and (ii) Russell 2000 Index. We use the Russell 2000 Index due to the fact that we have not been able to identify a published industry or line of business index that we believe appropriately reflects our industry or line of business. We considered that our primary competitors are divisions of large corporations that have other significant business operations such that any index comprised of such competitors would not be reflective of our industry or line of business. We have also considered using a peer group index but do not believe such index is appropriate as we have not been able to identify other public companies that we believe are principally in the same line of business as we are.

The graph assumes that \$100 was invested on December 31, 2006 in NI's common stock and in each of the other two indices and the reinvestment of all dividends, if any. Stockholders are cautioned against drawing any conclusions from the data contained therein, as past results are not necessarily indicative of future performance.

The information contained in the Performance Graph shall not be deemed to be "soliciting material" or to be "filed" with the SEC, nor shall such information be incorporated by reference into any future filing under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act"), or the Exchange Act, except to the extent that NI specifically incorporates it by reference into any such filing. The graph is presented in accordance with SEC requirements.

Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

Period	Total number of shares purchased	Average price paid per share	Total number of shares purchased as part of publicly announced plans or programs	Maximum number of shares that may yet be purchased under the plans or programs (1)
October 1, 2011 to October 31, 2011	-	-	-	3,932,245
November 1, 2011 to November 30, 2011	-	-	-	3,932,245
December 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011	-	-	-	3,932,245
Total	-	-	-	

(1) For the past several years, we have maintained various stock repurchase programs. At December 31, 2011, there were 3,932,245 shares available for repurchase under the plan approved on April 21, 2010. This repurchase plan does not have an expiration date.

ITEM 6. SELECTED CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL DATA

The following selected consolidated financial data should be read in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements, including the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements contained in this Form 10-K. The information set forth below is not necessarily indicative of the results of our future operations. The information should be read in conjunction with “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations.”

	Years Ended December 31, (in thousands, except per share data)				
	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Statements of Income Data:					
Net sales:					
Americas	\$ 411,006	\$ 359,895	\$ 292,999	\$ 355,878	\$ 331,482
Europe	308,619	261,118	210,188	267,373	230,940
Asia Pacific	304,548	252,207	173,407	197,286	177,956
Consolidated net sales	1,024,173	873,220	676,594	820,537	740,378
Cost of sales	240,964	200,083	169,884	207,109	185,267
Gross profit	783,209	673,137	506,710	613,428	555,111
Operating expenses:					
Sales and marketing	388,768	319,606	269,267	307,409	264,060
Research and development	199,071	158,149	132,974	143,140	126,515
General and administrative	82,658	67,069	57,938	67,162	62,445
Total operating expenses	670,497	544,824	460,179	517,711	453,020
Operating income	112,712	128,313	46,531	95,717	102,091
Other income (expense):	1,319	1,391	1,629	5,996	9,822

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Interest income					
Net foreign exchange gain (loss)	(2,755)	(2,585)	734	(3,737)	1,672
Other income (expense), net	(142)	993	1,351	161	(158)
Income before income taxes	111,134	128,112	50,245	98,137	113,427
Provision for income taxes	17,062	18,996	33,160	13,310	6,394
Net income	\$ 94,072	\$ 109,116	\$ 17,085	\$ 84,827	\$ 107,033
Basic earnings per share	\$ 0.79	\$ 0.93	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.72	\$ 0.90
Weighted average shares outstanding - basic	119,836	116,973	116,280	117,850	119,202
Diluted earnings per share	\$ 0.78	\$ 0.92	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.71	\$ 0.88
Weighted average shares outstanding - diluted	121,220	118,572	117,039	119,272	121,564
Cash dividends declared per common share	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.23

	2011	2010	December 31, (in thousands) 2009	2008	2007
Balance Sheet Data:					
Cash and					