

GOING DIGITAL FOR MORE EFFECTIVE LUBRICATION MANAGEMENT

Mobil Serv platform gives operators more ability to track and plan equipment maintenance

By Lee Toop, Editor

Construction fleets of all sizes provide plenty of challenges when it comes to tracking and planning maintenance, especially where lubrication tasks are involved. With everything from daily grease points to major overhaul work to be managed, it's important to know what state each piece of equipment is in on a daily basis.

Collecting that data can be tough, however, since every operator may have a different way of recording their maintenance or reporting problems. A digital management approach provides a neater, easier way to track maintenance issues and address them more quickly – and one lubricant manufacturer is teaming with experienced data professionals to provide just such a targeted system.

Mobil Serv Lube Management, launched at CONEXPO-CON/AGG, is aimed at replacing the many different paper and spreadsheet solutions that companies currently use to share and track their maintenance goals. Bowman Mitchell, ExxonMobil brand advisor for commercial vehicle lubricants, explained that the company has paired with REDLIST, a software company known for cloud-based safety and maintenance apps, to develop its new solution.

Turnover causes lost knowledge

Traditionally, lubrication engineers would work with customers directly and provide a lubrication manual for all of their equipment. That becomes problematic very quickly, however, Mitchell noted.

“We would go into their plant or their construction fleet, go through each and every piece of equipment, document and build a nice booklet they can reference. Then, when they're doing their regular preventive maintenance program, they can reference the right information,” he said. “The problem that we find is there's a lot of turnover, a lot of new people, and that booklet becomes outdated. They're constantly buying new equipment and hiring new people. There's a big gap there.”

The continuing change in the labour force, with older employees retiring and new staff coming onboard, is expanding that gap in many ways, Mitchell noted, because as those employees leave they take a lot of personal experience with them.



Mobil lubrication experts are able to use information from the company's new lube management tool to provide advice to customers and reduce their maintenance costs.

“You're losing a lot of tribal knowledge and experience. People have a lot of information in their heads,” he pointed out. Losing that data is a problem, because often it's one or two people in a company that carry that experience with them. Being able to capture that information in an easy to reference tool like Mobil Serv keeps it accessible, potentially saving time and money.

That's where REDLIST came in – its existing mobile-ready cloud-based app was ideal for combining with ExxonMobil's institutional knowledge to produce the software.

“There are a number of different reasons why a company may try to capture information; some of that is operational and a lot is regulatory. Right now, people spend their time and energy just capturing that information and they don't actually get to use it; part of the reason for that is it's not really easily accessible,” explained REDLIST president John Keller.

Instead, that information is captured as it happens, whether that's a safety checklist, an inspection form, or something else that occurs frequently in a fleet operation, and the information input on mobile or other devices goes into a cloud-based system where it can be made use of far easier than paper. In addition, it breaks out of the silos that data can sometimes wind up

filed into, allowing for greater collaboration across the operation.

An example of how the system can work, Mitchell noted, comes from a crane company that suffered some serious truck crane boom failures that proved costly.

ExxonMobil's team integrated a daily safety inspection into the system and added questions that helped get to the root of the issue: the boom needed grease, but that wasn't the operator's department, and the message wasn't getting to the maintenance department.

“So, how do we connect the operator to the maintenance department? We integrated a couple of questions, like: is the boom chattering, yes or no? If he selects yes, the maintenance department needs to get someone out there ASAP, because if it doesn't get done for another week, you're going to have a boom failure. It costs hardly anything – maybe 10 dollars worth of grease and 30 minutes of that maintenance guy's time to save a million bucks,” Mitchell said. “There was no way to connect those stories without a two-week delay in taking that paper inspection in – and really, they weren't even asking the right question.”

Engineers stay in the loop

As companies integrate Mobil Serv Lube Management, ExxonMobil lu-

bricant engineers are also looped in to the information being gathered, so if there's a concern they can provide their own knowledge, Mitchell added. The platform can be used to visualize workflows, which helps employees using the tool better understand the processes and stay on the right track for their day.

Customizing the system can be done easily either by ExxonMobil or the customer themselves; one of the additional benefits of Mobil Serv is that the customer can build a variety of other maintenance aspects into the system to track the data that's important to them.

“Let's say you inspect the hydraulic hose on a 992K loader, and the hose could have five different failure modes – you want to know if it's cracked, leaking, crimped, ripped off, or whatever. So, the answers to your question in the form may be ‘normal’ or ‘fail’ – you click ‘fail’ and then you can break it down and have all of those different options to select,” Mitchell described. “Then you want it to build out a work order and send an email to a shift supervisor – you can create any kind of logic based on the responses to direct the flow of work. And I could literally spend five minutes with you and teach you to build your own form.” **HEG**