



How can you save site maintenance cost?

More and more businesses are adding sensors to products to gather and analyze information. This can and should lead to better decision-making, increased transparency, more efficiency and lower maintenance costs. Industry expert Niels Bengtsson (Codab) writes about the benefits of new technologies for site operators.

Today's system components are far more intelligent, providing facilities with self-diagnosis and the capability of communicating into the cloud, which allows many stakeholders to take part in site operations. However, having a fancy dashboard it is not enough; you need skilled people to analyze and extract the "square root" of all these data.

Comparing volume sales at the pump with measurements from the tank level gauges makes a lot of sense both from an environmental and economic perspective. This is a usual form of action and there are many providers of Fuel Management services today. Following an increase in fuel prices and stronger environmental regulations, it is clear that any oil company needs reliable control systems to secure optimal, safe operation.

The monitoring of technical alarms for distribution companies is also a part of this. Pipe leaks, pressure drops, leaks in tanks and alarms in oil separators are nowadays fairly common; and again, someone needs to follow, analyze and diagnose upcoming errors before a technician is sent out to fix it.

More can be done

It seems as a number of oil companies have already implemented individual solutions, but a lot more can be done on service station maintenance.

The service/maintenance of a forecourt and a shop is still managed in a very traditional manner, not using the full capabilities of the technology provided, despite that the equipment already has many advanced features.

A reason could be that the product suppliers and service providers are different companies; another, that oil companies are buying services at fixed prices and not going into details about how the service is carried out in praxis.

Sensors and SW can help the service providers carry out diagnoses in an efficient way, and the better you can diagnose what's wrong, the higher fix rate and uptime you will have.

Not only can you diagnose more precisely and, therefore, ensure that you are sending the right technician with the correct spare part, but in a number of cases you may also fix these errors remotely with a remote start and skip the site visit.

This affects the forecourt business as well as other aspects of the energy chain where there is a lot to do. In the shop and car wash area there is even a bigger range of product suppliers. Take for instance equipment as coolers, heaters, AC, ventilation, door openers and lighting.

At the same time, it is a good way to help reduce CO2 emissions and thereby protect the environment.

There are several reasons why service monitoring should be centered around cloud-based solutions:

- Your service teams can access, edit and share data and documents anytime, from anywhere - they're able to do more together, and do it better. Cloud-based workflow and file sharing apps help them make updates in real time and gives them full visibility of their collaborations.
- Files and data are stored centrally, and everyone sees one version of the truth.
- Greater visibility means improved collaboration, which translates into better work and a healthier bottom line. Because data is stored in the cloud, you can access it no matter what happens to your machine/device, even remotely.

Conclusion

Look out for all the new features that are integrated in the equipment you have in the ground, above ground and in the shop, and make sure that your service providers have the knowledge and capacity to use them. Also, when buying new equipment check that the features are available and adapt to your service set up.

This sound extremely basic, and many will hopefully claim that they already have these systems in place. Good for them, but then try to be completely honest to yourselves and "test" the present system in detail.

Are you using all the services that your equipment can generate?

It is not enough to collect data if you are not analyzing it and finding the root cause, and then optimizing the processes. I am sure that there are many system integrators, service providers and product suppliers which are willing to assist you in how to get most out of your money.

Five months ago, Codab started a project monitoring, analyzing and correcting failures on 120 unattended sites with pumps and card terminals, reducing the downtime by 30% percent. At Lontech, meanwhile, they monitor a network of around 300 sites and are saving around 15% of service visits by doing remote service.

Niels Bengtsson is chairman of the board in Codab Ab, A2i systems and board member in Lontech Solutions A/S. He is also former CEO of Doms A/S which at that time was the leading service provider in Denmark as well as developer of the Doms PSS system. He has more that 40 years experience in the petroleum business.