Six Ways Outsourced Maintenance Saves

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With today's limited internal resources, it's tough to transform machine maintenance from reactionary to preventive, and ultimately proactive, despite the obvious upsides in higher overall equipment efficiency (OEE), better process control, and lower total cost. Outsourcing this requirement to a third-party specialist, however, is a cost-effective alternative.

Manufacturers of all sizes — from single plant to multi-plant and multi-national — can benefit from outsourced maintenance to achieve world-class productivity and competitiveness. There are six primary areas where a single-source maintenance partner can optimize the capital investment and provide cost savings through lower total cost of ownership and increased return on investment.

1. Application Support

Machine tool experts can analyze the tasks assigned to each machine and provide recommendations on process improvements, cycle-time reduction strategies, proper cutting tools, and workholding configurations to optimize machine usage and performance. This helps reduce work in process, setup times, and costs per part.

2. Training

Knowledge is power, and knowledgeable operators are key to maximizing the production power of your machines. Ensuring your personnel are trained on the latest operation and maintenance developments and techniques is critical to getting the most out of your machine tools. Training can be individualized and conducted on-line for further cost savings.

3. Service Support

When a machine goes down it immediately transforms from income-generator to expense. Timely service support is the key to getting the machine back online and making parts. At times when on-site maintenance is cost- or time-prohibitive,

interactive tech support — via video, voice, and data communications over a standard phone line — can quickly diagnose problems remotely for faster service and less downtime.

4. Preventive Maintenance

Knowing what areas of the machine need preventive maintenance, and what level is cost-effective, are part of the support partner's holistic services. A supplier that has wide experience with many makes and kinds of machine tools will know the typical service life of various components and potential weak spots or problem areas with certain designs. This enables closer monitoring, trend tracking, and appropriately scheduled maintenance to prevent costly downtime.

5. Machine Monitoring

Trends in production monitoring are moving rapidly from machine-level to process-level intelligence, and Real-time Performance Management (RPM) from a service/support partner can optimize equipment utilization for greater manufacturing efficiency, productivity, and ROI. Computer-enabled data collection tools identify and resolve out-of-cycle events as they are happening, and provide on-demand reporting of production equipment performance.

6. Spindle Replacement

For plants operating high-volume machining systems — such as automotive — the service partner can take complete responsibility for spindle inventory and replacement, often working with a third-party spindle re-conditioner for new or rebuilt units, reducing turn-around time to hours, instead of days. At the same time, small-volume, high-value part manufacturers can’t afford to let the huge overhead of a giant gantry machine (both physically and financially speaking) sit dormant, making fast response to spindle or gear box replacement needs critical.

Bonus: Machine Certifications and More

Service/support partners can also assist with machine certifications after a relocation or in-plant re-assignment. This may include inspection of axis alignment, coolant/lube systems, toolchangers, and automation, as well as laser calibration, ballbar testing and axis alignment. The goal is to ensure the machine meets or exceeds OEM specs, and can make quality parts per the program/contract requirements and ISO 9000 or other standards.

A support partner can also provide consultation on control retrofits, mechanical rebuilds, and machine reassignments — analyzing the benefit to productivity and the impact on operations the changes may have. This allows you to see the "big picture" and thoroughly understand the condition of the equipment before investing in updating, rebuilding, or relocating it.

Working with a single-source maintenance provider is an economical way to ensure you are getting the most from your machines, operating at your highest possible

efficiency and poised to handle changes to, and adaptations for, future operations.

MAG is a machine tool and systems company serving the durable-goods industry worldwide with complete manufacturing solutions. Key industrial markets served by these technologies include aerospace, automotive and truck, heavy equipment, oil and gas, rail, solar energy, wind turbine production and general machining.

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