Is Lubrication Data Missing From Your KPIs?

William D. Correll, Generation Systems, Inc.; Kirk Williams, Albemarle Corporation

In industrial operations the world over, lubrication remains a vexing challenge. Indeed, when machine bearings fail, there's a better than seventy percent chance that faulty or insufficient lubrication practices are ultimately to blame.[1] Lubrication-specific key performance indicators (KPIs) can go a long way to addressing this costly problem.

Tracking KPIs that target lubrication gives maintenance professionals unique insight they can harness to reduce the frequency of machine failure. In addition, lubrication-based KPIs can help organizations increase equipment uptime and productivity, enhance the availability, performance and lifespan of expensive assets, improve maintenance efficiency and reduce costs.

Examples of KPIs devoted to lubrication include those associated with the overall effectiveness of lubrication practices, such a lube tasks completed, tasks due, tasks past due (backlogs) and so forth. Lube task KPIs give maintenance staffs a highly accurate 360-degree view of the state of lubrication in their facilities. Consumption is another area of focus common in lubrication KPIs. They help reliability engineers and maintenance technicians rapidly identify and resolve equipment problems not easily found by other means.

For all of their considerable benefits, few maintenance organizations today are taking advantage of lubrication KPIs like these. A main reason why is that the tools most operations depend on to manage their lubrication programs, such as computerized maintenance management systems (CMMS), predictive maintenance (PdM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, are not capable of providing the detailed source data that lubrication KPIs often require.

To be meaningful, many lubrication KPIs require information generated at the level of the individual lube point. For example, in order to give an accurate picture of lube tasks in a given facility, the KPI must contain *verifiable* data about how often every lube point has been serviced, by whom, with which lubricant, in which amount, whether any lube points have been missed and other vital details. The same level of lube-point information is required to create relevant KPIs about consumption and a host of other KPI topics.

This granularity is found in only a handful of lubrication management systems (LMS). It's not available in comprehensive maintenance "catch all" solutions such as CMMS, PdM and ERP, which instead are able to provide lubrication information only at the work order, PM or spreadsheet level. Gleaning lube-point data from them for inclusion in KPIs is impractical at best and impossible in most cases.

For organizations looking to reduce the frequency of equipment failure and step up their lubrication efforts, KPIs that provide insight into lubrication practices can be a

very powerful tool. When assessing lubrication management solutions, an important question to ask is whether it provides computerized data at the point of lubrication. It's also helpful to seek out solutions that allow you to perform KPI analysis on such topics as lube consumption, failure trends, workloads and task history.

[1] Bannister, Kenneth E., "Lubrication for Industry, 2nd Edition," 2006.

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