



Polestar Sheffield

Keeping the presses of Europe's Number One independent printer rolling

Background

It would be a dull world indeed without Polestar's colourful products! Mail order catalogues, newspaper colour supplements, magazines - and more - Polestar's brimming-with-colour creations are found in every home and workplace in the land and, increasingly, across Europe. Polestar prints more magazines than any other UK printer - titles include Radio Times, Country Life, TV Times, Now, Woman and Woman's Own. Specialising in time-sensitive publications, Polestar has 60% of the European market for this type of media.

The brand new Sheffield plant is the group's flagship gravure facility. The cathedral-sized, 700,000 square foot (65000 square metres) plant cost £100 million - the biggest single investment ever made in the history of the industry in the UK. Even with its cutting edge automation, the site will eventually employ 1000 people. Construction began in 2004 and the first of five Cerutti presses was commissioned in 2005.

◀ One of the Ferag post press systems

The management at this state-of-the-art plant has done everything by the book to implement lean management principles, starting with 5S and process mapping. Polestar uses the balanced scorecard system to manage total performance and is entirely committed to world class maintenance practices to maximise uptime as well as cutting costs and waste.

Needs

To manage the maintenance workload during the new plant's start-up period, the engineering team adopted a make-do manual system using spreadsheets. However, with the scale of the routine maintenance demands and planned preventive maintenance program at such a large and complex facility - one bindery line alone needing 200 essential maintenance tasks to be carried out each week - this couldn't be any more than a stopgap measure. A computerised maintenance management system was an absolute necessity to help deliver the required uptime at the

mammoth, time-sensitive product facility.

Solution

The Engineering Manager shopped around for suitable off-the-shelf maintenance software and settled on FrontLine Maintenance Management from Shire. FrontLine had been used at other sites in the Polestar group for many years and enjoyed a high reputation for its ease of use and powerful capability. 15 of the Sheffield engineering team undertook systems training at Shire's Learning Centre and use of FrontLine began in 2005.

Anna Baker, Engineering Administrator, explains how the system is used, "We're using FrontLine's Maintenance and Work Requester modules to manage weekly cleaning by operators as well as weekly, fortnightly and monthly maintenance tasks for the engineering department." In the print and paper industry, the extent and quality of operator maintenance has a considerable influence on the amount of engineering maintenance



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“ *Adding the handheld module will streamline maintenance and management reporting even further* ”

attention ultimately needed by the machines – so Polestar closely monitors the number of maintenance department manhours that have to be allocated in comparison with the actual number of operator maintenance manhours completed.

FrontLine is also used to record and analyse unplanned down-time. Baker explains, “Engineers use the ‘Events’ field to record breakdowns - and log engineering time and production down-time - in addition to the time spent on routine maintenance. This helps us to keep up-to-date records of the work that’s been completed and provides a useful report on breakdowns in each area.”

Baker observes, “Adding FrontLine has been a process of evolution, starting with the basic module and then refining and adding new modules at our own pace.”

Benefits

Baker says FrontLine’s greatest benefits come from its performance reporting ability and capacity to build a complete history of events.

For example, complete details of each breakdown by area are available in Breakdown Reports – providing management with the ability to home-in on specific problems and initiate corrective action. Baker explains, “For example, the stitching head on Line 1 may have been identified as a problem area and this information can be used to liaise with other departments and demonstrate how the problem is being resolved. This helps engineering to formulate and schedule corrective action plans for non-immediate problems.”

To the great satisfaction of the engineers, it’s easy to retrieve the complete life history of any machine. The system holds time and date-stamped records of every failure, details of all maintenance work carried out and all parts used.

Future plans

Polestar is already moving towards a paperless system with FrontLine’s ‘On the Move’ module - which dramatically cuts admin. Baker

observes, “Adding the handheld module will streamline maintenance and management reporting even further.”

Handheld computers are used to process job information, capture signatures, log meter readings, and record test and inspection results. Production machinery has been barcode-labelled so that ID information can be read directly into a handheld by means of a built-in barcode scanner - saving time and data entry errors. Polestar has trialled machine barcoding in the post press area and, because of its proven advantages, intends to roll it out across the site.

Insight

Polestar Sheffield is a text book case of maintenance management best practice – it’s as simple as that! ■

