

Take scheduled maintenance outside of shutdown periods for improved productivity

For many within manufacturing and heavy industry, 'factory fortnight' is the time of year when they can down tools and enjoy a well-earned rest. On the other hand, for maintenance managers and MRO teams it represents a period of long working days and a race against the clock to fix all the gremlins that have been identified over the past 12 months. But, what if you could schedule some of this maintenance work without halting production? To this end, Oilgear helps maintenance managers to spread the burden of maintenance throughout the year – reducing costs and improving productivity.

Dave Atkinson, Service Centre Manager for Oilgear, explains how the company's years of manufacturing experience help it offer flexible maintenance schedules.

Current research indicates that in the UK – and across Europe – the longstanding tradition of 'factory fortnight', during which manufacturing halts and maintenance and repair operations (MRO) are prioritised, is in decline. With Lean Manufacturing and Just-In-Time delivery growing in popularity it's hardly surprising that many manufacturers find little opportunity to halt production all together. Many of these manufacturers now report that not only has gross productivity increased as a result of changing their habits, but annual maintenance costs are actually decreasing.

If every factory in the country shuts down for maintenance at the same time, the MRO supply can't keep up with demand. When demand for a service outstrips available supply, it is only natural, in a competitive economic environment, that prices increase. So, when a manufacturer moves away from the annual shutdown model, they are able to avoid the seasonal peak.

As simple as this maintenance strategy may seem, there are many industries where it is simply impossible to continue with production while maintaining proper service intervals on vital equipment. Heavy industries such as metal production, power generation and defence work on lead time of months or years, so are unable to operate to lean principles. Here it can take a matter of days just to gain access to equipment in need of attention – so the factory shut-down period is vital.

With the pressure firmly on maintenance managers to schedule and source a year's worth of MRO over a few short weeks, is there anything they can do to reduce the workload and avoid the inflated prices of the peak season?

Oilgear says yes.

Oilgear offers a pro-active maintenance service plan for parts and systems manufactured in-house, as well as components from all other leading manufacturers. This service includes remote condition monitoring, regular site visits and inspection, so its engineers are able to carry out predictive maintenance on parts that are approaching failure, but have not yet slowed down production. This service level would be expected of most high-quality Aftermarket Service Providers; however, Oilgear is also one of the world's best respected manufacturers of electro-hydraulic systems, so can offer a further benefit.

Oilgear uses its vast experience as a manufacturer to provide maintenance services outside of the usual shutdown period. Offering substitute pumps or valves from stock to keep a customer system operating, while the problematic equipment is taken to the Oilgear workshop, allows the operator to benefit from off-peak maintenance costs, minimal engineering outlay, and a reduced burden of work when the inevitable shutdown period does occur. This plan improves the efficiency of the on-site maintenance team, provides system optimisation all year round and often gets production lines moving a few days earlier.

In today's competitive, global economy, manufacturers need to find partners that can understand the pressures their business faces. Every extra day of available production, every hour of reduced maintenance and every minute of reduced unplanned downtime is vital.

As a fellow manufacturer, Oilgear understands this better than many Aftermarket Service Providers do.

Photo Captions:

Photo 1: Oilgear helps maintenance managers spread the burden of maintenance throughout the year - reducing costs and improving productivity.

Photo 2: Oilgear offers a pro-active maintenance service plan for parts and systems manufacture in-house, as well as components from all other leading manufacturers.

Photo 3: Oilgear uses its vast experience as a manufacturer to provide maintenance services outside of the usual shutdown period.

About Oilgear.

Oilgear is a leading manufacturer and supplier of fluid power and hydraulic equipment, servicing the Metals, Oil & Gas and Marine sectors, including both civil and military applications. Its solutions include high pressure pumps, valves and systems technology; panel building and systems control solutions; and full aftermarket service packages for all hydraulic solutions. Its Leeds based facility boasts a modern production area, which specialises in high pressure components, as well as in-house test beds and an R&D division which is responsible for developing customised software packages designed to monitor and control the installed systems.

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