

## For On The Floor: You And Your CMMS

Written by Rick Carter, Executive Editor  
Thursday, 16 August 2012 15:33

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While today's Web-based and EAM-integrated computerized maintenance management systems (CMMS) are light years beyond their forebears, their purpose (i.e., to systematize and schedule maintenance activities, track inventory and record equipment history) remains the same as 30+ years ago. The same goes for how well these systems are understood and used. According to our Maintenance Technology Reader Panel, this valuable tool can still be vexing to users.

As one Midwest-based consultant observes, "Many companies have a CMMS and most of them do not use even the minimal part of its features." Edited for brevity and clarity, here's what our Panelists told us about their own experiences:

***Q: To what degree does your team use all CMMS functions available to them?***

"We use our system mainly for maintenance management and spending tracking. Unfortunately, some purchasing functions are done through P-Card and another computer-based system that doesn't allow complete cost-tracking back to the asset. Utilization of work type codes and failure codes was never fully implemented [making KPI measurement less than complete.]"

*... Plant Engineer, South*

"We use approximately 25% of the functions."

*... Maintenance Team Coordinator, New England*

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“We do not use all functions [because of limited IT support for the required programming].”

... *Reliability/Maintenance Engineer, South*

“Our team uses almost all functions in the CMMS [based on position-specific training]. A nice feature is the ability to assign certain privileges of the CMMS functions, based on a person’s position. This helps maintain the integrity of the information.”

... *Production Support Manager, Midwest*

“Our maintenance group is very active using the CMMS portion of Oracle, which ties nicely into the financial side of Oracle.”

... *Mechanical Maintenance Supervisor, Upper Midwest*

“We have used it fairly well, except for the purchasing function because it does not interface with our accounting software.”

... *Maintenance Supervisor, South*

“We use about 60% of the functions available. Purchasing and Warehousing use a different system [than Operations and Maintenance], with a minimal tie-in between the two. This prevents us from effectively using important features like bills of materials, parts lists, etc.”

... *Maintenance Engineer, West*

### ***Q: What do you like and dislike about the CMMS you currently use?***

“I like the ability to make changes as we need to and not rely on an outside company to do this. I dislike what our CMMS has to offer for reports and data-mining capabilities.”

*... Production Support Manager, Midwest*

“I do not like the usability of our current system. It does not report well and is cumbersome to enter data into.”

*... Reliability Maintenance Engineer, South*

“[Our system is] OK, as it is all we have, but I have to export files and use other software to get my KPI information into a usable form for tracking performance. I do like that we have user fields in the inventory module.”

*... Maintenance Supervisor, South*

“My biggest dislike is not the software’s fault, but the fact that it isn’t fully utilized by our warehousing and purchasing people, preventing planners from fully benefitting from what a CMMS should do. I like that the system is easily customizable, but dislike that it is difficult for the average user to customize. Also, customization leads to a lack of consistency from one user to the next.”

*... Maintenance Engineer, West*

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“Because our system is a corporate database, personalization to the needs of the individual sites is hampered by administrative control of higher-level functions. It also does not allow easy exportation of data to Excel spreadsheets without extensive reformatting. The custom report generator is also very complicated.”

*... Plant Engineer, South*

“I like that we can track all assets, parts and employees’ labor. I don’t like that we can’t search by the comment field for historical data. Also, it doesn’t show part location on the same page as the part description.”

*... Maintenance Team Coordinator, New England*

***Q: How do you rate your experience as a CMMS user? How about that of your co-workers?***

“I believe I have an above-average ability for it [my company’s CMMS]. But my team leader is only recently getting to know it, and my co-workers range from muddling to getting by.”

*... Maintenance Team Coordinator, New England*

“I and our other team leaders are very experienced. When the system was introduced [several years ago] we were trained. When we have new employees, they are trained. There are also information packets on each kiosk where a computer is located.”

*... Maintenance Team Leader, Midwest*

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“I am extremely proficient and self-taught. Our team leader is also an expert, but resists sharing knowledge. My co-workers are functional.”

*... Mechanical Maintenance Supervisor, Upper Midwest*

“I have used all types of CMMS systems for the last 25 years from Excel worksheets and hand-written work orders through SAP [with several companies].”

*... Plant Engineer, South*

“I developed my CMMS skills over several years with different systems. My team leader has a great deal of experience, but my co-workers are a mixed bag.”

*... Reliability/Maintenance Engineer, South*

“My level of experience is very high, but this is the only CMMS I have ever worked with. I also am on the team that looks at the changes needed to improve our CMMS. But not everyone on this team is as familiar with the CMMS as they should be. Some were in management roles when the CMMS was introduced and never fully understood its capabilities. They also never kept up with the changes so, in my opinion, the system left them behind and they don't see the need to take the time and understand what it has to offer.”

*... Production Support Manager, Midwest*

### Striving for effectiveness□

Most Panelists are passionate about their CMMS systems—and *just as passionate about the obstacles that prevent them from reaching maximum system effectiveness.*

One, for example, says he's still waiting for the day "when the software industry stops trying to convert some accounting software" for use in the maintenance area.

Another Panelist who is implementing a new CMMS at his plant faces a different hurdle: a team that fears their putting information into the system will allow the company to "bring in contract people" to replace them. According to one consultant, unfounded concerns like this have led some maintenance workers to believe that feeding or operating a CMMS isn't part of their job. "Of course," he adds, "this is plain wrong." **MT**