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They certainly rolled out the red carpet in Dallas recently. You thought I meant Super Bowl XLV? Hardly.

Professional football is not the only bunch that knows how to throw a great shindig. I was referring to the Snap-on Industrial Media Tour held last month in conjunction with one of the company's information-packed distributor events.

Snap-on being Snap-on, red carpet wasn't the only thing being rolled out (or about) for lucky editors who came to town. We were there to get a first-hand introduction to this iconic company's new Level 5™ ATC Tool Control System. What a groundbreaker! If you're involved in aerospace or power-gen operations where Foreign Object Detection (FOD) and Foreign Material Exclusion (FME) are, respectively, of the utmost concern, or any other type of industry where (check all that apply) reliability, availability, efficiency, productivity, safety, security, etc., are crucial, you should get acquainted with this system yourself. Using advanced digital imaging technology and proprietary software, it automatically tracks tool inventory by user, records which tools are removed and replaced and when the transactions occurred—*no pesky or potentially dangerous RFID tags, sensors or bar codes required.*

Each drawer of the very-secure-access unit is organized based on a user-supplied tool list, with each item assigned its own space in the custom, laser-cut foam drawer liner. Those details are then programmed into the system's scanning hardware fitted to the top of the box. As a drawer is opened and closed, it's digitally scanned and the image instantly compared with the baseline image of the drawer contents. Any tool that's been removed or returned is identified, and the computer audibly announces the fact. Errors, too, are clearly enunciated and displayed. Quite clearly.

The system's computer also tracks each removed and replaced tool by part number and user, and creates a powerful database of all tools going in and out, along with digital images of drawer contents at given points. This, in turn, provides an audit trail of the last 15,000 transactions. Not only can managers obtain data for all activities, they can access actual pictures of drawer contents for verification. Translation: There's no need for physical inspections.

According to Snap-on, the Level 5 ATC works at the speed of work (the speed you work). Other automated tool systems evidently require extra steps to scan or log activity. Not this one: It does everything seamlessly, with no wasted time and no dependence on other steps to ensure accuracy. System boxes come network-ready (through Ethernet or wireless connection), meaning managers can view and review all activity—*including numbers of tools issued, active users and histories* —from each box on a network via a central computer. E-mail and text-message system alerts can be customized for lost or broken tools or calibration requirements. Custom reports can be created on a tool's frequency of use, inspection and calibration dates and more.

Imagine the KPIs you can develop based on the types of technologies and capabilities incorporated into this bona fide capacity assurance solution—*and how those innovations can help your organization maximize effective wrench time as it, like Snap-on, rolls into the future.* ..I can.
MT

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