

MIMOSA: A Bit More Substance Than Elvis Sightings

Written by John Mitchell

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Now that fears of the Y2K millennial bug are safely behind us and have proved to have about as much substance as Elvis sightings, let's turn to reality and spend a few moments discussing the Machinery Information Management Open Systems Alliance (MIMOSA). MIMOSA is very real and has a great deal of substance, opportunity, and promise.

Most maintenance managers will agree that information systems are imperative for effective maintenance and improved reliability.

There is also broad agreement on the necessity to combine information from sources as diverse as predictive, maintenance management, control, and financial systems as well as to distribute information to these same systems. The real question is, How is that task to be accomplished?

There are essentially three methods: purchase a complete enterprise system, including maintenance management, from a single supplier; install a site-specific integration; or demand open exchange. I am heavily biased toward open exchange. I hope to convince you, too.

I have yet to hear a positive comment from anyone in the maintenance and reliability community regarding purchasing a complete enterprise information system from a single supplier. Comments such as "We would never have considered the maintenance management module if it weren't part of a mandated enterprise system" are common.

For example, a detailed analysis performed by the maintenance department may conclude that the maintenance management portion of an enterprise solution is inadequate for requirements, but it is installed by a management edict.

Then the maintenance manager complains that information necessary to assess effectiveness, concentrated in a 3-page printout with the "old" system, is now spread, one or two lines to a page, through a 1 in. thick print-out produced by the "new" system. This is progress?

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Next comes the site or enterprise custom integration. On the surface, this alternative is very appealing. You can use whatever you believe best for your application.

It is encouraged by many suppliers as well as most Information Technology managers, who want control over all information and see the opportunity to solidify job security with a tangled ball of yarn only they understand. Few users recognize the many difficulties and huge cost to construct, and endlessly support and maintain, all the links in a custom application.

In terms of measurements, a comprehensive production asset information system must be able to accommodate the detail necessary to predict future capacity. The need to gain maximum warning time between the time a change is recognized and the time action is required eliminates overall measurements and simple trending from consideration as prime predictive indicators.

The person responsible for asset management also must be provided with complete diagnostic and prognostic information as soon as possible for the purposes of developing effective remedial action and improving overall reliability.

This scenario brings us to an opportunity for the maintenance and reliability community. MIMOSA is a unifying force for those who recognize the value and requirements of detailed predictive information as well as the compelling benefits of exchange under a single open architecture. The organization and standard are in place; relationships have been painstakingly established and nurtured over 6 years. Apathy is the only remaining barrier to full success. Until users wake up to the benefits of distributed information and demand the only solution that makes sense, open access, our community is in real danger of losing valuable capability to systems whose implementation of the real requirements for effective reliability management is superficial at best.

A great deal has been accomplished to assure maintenance and reliability departments will be full participants in the ongoing information revolution. User demand drives the process. Are you a driver, or are you being driven by someone who won't ask for directions? **MT**