Written by Susan Dahlberg, Managing Editor Monday, 01 July 2002 13:00

## EAM/CMMS software for maintenance and reliability organizations that require powerful and responsive information systems.

The information requirements of large plants have traditionally been satisfied by large software programs running on midrange and mainframe computers with terminals distributed throughout the plant. Today, many larger maintenance information systems run on multi-platforms using client/server, thin client, or browser-based applications. These systems help organizations implement their strategy to decrease downtime and increase the utilization of their resources, and can be viewed as a communication tool to help make better decisions.

Using these approaches, maintenance personnel can access information and work orders using personal computers (PC), Palm-type personal digital assistants (PDAs), or through a handheld computer running Windows CE served through a network by powerful computers running robust operating systems and databases. Other wireless and radio frequency devices to access information are also at hand.

In addition, some companies are acting as application service providers (ASP). Users pay a monthly per-seat fee to access the software through an Internet-enabled workstation. The ASP stores the program and the data on its server. Users always have access to the most current version of the program. This delivery method eliminates the need for on-site hardware infrastructure, system administration, and associated costs at the user's end.

To meet the needs of the increasing number of companies that recognize the benefits of electronic transactions, some software suppliers provide web-enabled systems that support e-procurement within their own program or allow users to integrate their equipment asset management (EAM)/computerized maintenance management (CMMS) system with other vendor software.

Another growing area is EAM connectivity with programs having the ability to integrate with other plant ERP business applications and production automation systems.

The relational database manager used by a program is an important selection factor for organizations with other business or back office software. If the database managers are the same, it is likely that the EAM/CMMS can work with these other applications.

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The database manager is a significant contributor to the performance of an EAM/CMMS. It handles procedures that otherwise would have to be written into the application software, adding to its complexity. Many EAM/ CMMS programs are written to run with a variety of databases. Other programs are written for a single database, which allows them to make better use of the features and development tools provided by the database. ODBC indicates compliance with Open Database Connectivity, an SQL-based interface from Microsoft designed for consistent ac-cess to a variety of databases. **MT** 

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