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Symptom:

"Dear Dr. Lube, we are looking to implement a lubrication-management program, and our engineering group has recommended the purchase of a specialized lubrication route/work-order software package. As we already have a CMMS work-order system, is there any value in purchasing another software package?"

Diagnosis:

There are a number of specialized lubrication-management software packages available today. These programs are similar to a regular Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) package in that they require an asset (equipment) register to be built for all the equipment to be lubricated. The user will then usually need to complete a lubrication mapping matrix that identifies and defines each lubrication point, type of lubricant used and delivery method employed, as well as filter and sampling points/data—*for each asset in the register.*

Another attribute of this type of software is its ability to "link" or "daisy-chain" assets together to build different lubrication routes based on time to complete the route, lubrication schedule, lubricant type to be used, etc. This allows work to be scheduled for technicians in line with their normal daily or weekly routines.

Prescription:

If no work-order system exists, the purchase of specialized software to manage a lube program can be a wise decision. On the other hand, while the CMMS you already own may not be as discrete as a lubrication-specific package, it might be easily configured to deliver the basics: use the existing asset register in scheduling and tracking all lubrication work. The likely shortcoming would be the inability to let you build a lubrication map matrix for each asset. As the collected CMMS information is primarily library data, however, this deficiency can be managed through photos, schematic drawings, even a matrix built in Excel and attached to the asset file in the register for viewing or printing with the work order as needed.

Keep in mind that having two work-management systems—*each a powerful tool in its own right*—in the same maintenance department will call for two sets of reporting processes and/or entry duplication. Thus, justifying the purchase of a specialized lubrication software package that may, in many ways, be similar to your existing CMMS will require a detailed value analysis. Good luck with whatever option you choose.
MT

Lube questions? Ask Dr. Lube, aka Ken Bannister, author of the book Lubrication for Industry *and the Lubrication section of the 28th edition*
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