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Is it time to change your lubricant supplier? A reality check could help you decide if the honeymoon really is over. lubrication system in the world today. Unlike the rest of us, they never forget.

Automating your preventive maintenance routines? Increasing the efficiency of your inventory management? Reducing your on-site inventory costs? It's all geared towards improving productivity. In the process, your company, like many others, may be working to consolidate its lubricant purchases into a single, integrated program.

If this is the situation in which you find yourself, how do you know that you're receiving the best service possible? This simple guide covers some issues you'll want to consider.

#1 Does my supplier provide me with a comprehensive range of products?
The suppliers best equipped to meet requirements for diverse lubricating solutions offer a complete line of industrial lubricants–not just a "wide range" of products.

- Fluids for high-volume applications include hydraulic, compressor and vacuum pump, gearbox and chain and multipurpose oils.
- Specialized industrial compounds such as greases, pastes, anti-friction coatings and

dispersions must be added to the mix. In addition, a complete line of base stocks is essential.

- Synthetics provide excellent resistance to emulsification and last longer to extend maintenance intervals.
- Ultra-high purity mineral oils also resist emulsification and promote improved additive performance, resulting in longer life than can be derived from conventional mineral oils.
- The full-line supplier also must be able to draw on functional additive technologies, including anti-oxidant, anti-wear and extreme-temperature additives.

#2 How do I know if my supplier is changing lubricants (or recommending changes) too frequently or infrequently?

Knowing *when* to change your industrial lubricants is one of the most difficult aspects of maintaining an efficient, costeffective and safe plant. If you're unsure of when to change a lubricant, you may be wasting money by doing it too frequently, or risking damage to equipment because of infrequent changes.

The best lubricant suppliers will ensure that you and your staff are prepared to make well-informed decisions about when to change a lubricant. You should expect your supplier to offer a thorough analysis program that tracks multiple critical wearrelated characteristics of oil in service by comparing the results with previous reports, and noting the trends. It is also important to know how to take representative samples and how to interpret the results that come back. Such programs help identify contamination, lubricant degradation and abnormal machine wear.

#3 Is my supplier recommending the right lubricant?

When evaluating lubricant suppliers, plant managers should look for a "package" offering–a complete product line that meets the requirements of every need in their plant. These offerings should be supported by local product supply and expert technical assistance that can help maintenance professionals avoid the types of mistakes in lubricant selection and application that can shorten equipment life and stop production.

For example, high temperatures in air compressors accelerate reactions between compressed oxygen and impurities, resulting in rapid oxidation and a sudden increase in viscosity and lubricant failure. Mineral oils in air compressors generally last only 1,000 hours. By comparison, a synthetic compressor oil, specially formulated for air compressors, can last approximately 12 times as long. A knowledgeable consolidated lubricant supplier understands such applications.

Make sure your supplier evaluates the material application and not just the currently used product, as it may no longer be the optimum type or family of lubricants for your exact requirements.

Keeping the bottom line in mind

Because lubrication management plays an important role in reducing costs and improving productivity, success almost always depends on finding the right single source of lubrication products and services to meet a variety of complex needs. When evaluating lubrication suppliers, it is important to look for those that offer complete product lines, knowledge of equipment and applications and oil analysis programs. **LMT**

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