

G. Bruss benefits from Lotus initiative

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Sligo based company Lotus Automation recently established a new division with the focus of assisting customers improve in all areas of their maintenance functions and ultimately reduce operating costs.

In this article we describe how Bruss, the German owned precision seals manufacturing company based in Sligo have benefited from one of the services offered by Lotus Automation's new division.

THE CHALLENGE

Increased global competition continues to force manufacturers to find new ways to cut cost while not compromising on quality. One area where such savings can still be attained is in the optimisation of the asset maintenance function. Bruss decided to concentrate part of their improvement efforts in this area in 2004. At the same time Lotus Automation was setting up a new division which focused on asset management improvement called Lotus AMC (Asset Management Consulting). Bruss are an international supplier of precision seals and gaskets to the automotive industry and have manufacturing facilities in 5 different countries. Their Irish manufacturing plant opened in Sligo in 1982 and has become part and parcel of the town's business environment. Operating in the tough automotive industry, it is testament to the company and its employees of their hard work and dedication that they are still in business when faced with serious competition from eastern European countries with a lower cost base.

Supplying directly to OEM's such as Volkswagen and Ford it is critical that their manufacturing assets are available when required and that their operating costs are low. To this end and to remain competitive, 2004 became an important year for Bruss, they decided that some improvements were needed in the company's maintenance function.

THE SITUATION

Bruss used an off the shelf Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) but did not have the internal resources needed to leverage the benefits from such a system. Unplanned breakdowns were high and little or no feedback and analysis was done in order to identify root causes. Job planning and control and cost analysis per production asset were far from being a reality. In an attempt to improve the situation Bruss decided to develop an in-house system. During this period Lotus AMC

were marketing their unique outsourced maintenance management service called Buro.

John James, Bruss Engineering Manager Comments, "Our existing preventive maintenance system was offering little benefit in reducing our unplanned breakdowns, we started a major revamp and it was at the later stages before implementation that we came across the Lotus AMC Buro system. This had all the ingredients that were missing: a gap analysis against best in class from which goals

could be set, external data entry of 'job cards' with root cause analysis of breakdowns, monthly reports to analyse all maintenance activity, scheduling of PM tasks and workshops to drive forward improvement".

THE SOLUTION

A combination of Lotus AMC services provided an ideal solution to Bruss. An assessment of the asset management function across fourteen key operational areas determined where Bruss were in relation to industry best practices. As a result, key areas for improvement were identified and a high level improvement plan was put in place. A project to implement the Buro service was then initiated. This involved performing activities such as implementation workshops, holding training interventions, formalising standards, work processes and procedures, configuring an asset performance database, developing a computerised register of all equipment in Bruss, customising management reports and developing computerised maintenance schedules. Once operational all data from maintenance job cards was captured by Lotus AMC including root cause analysis and monthly maintenance

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