Apps ease maintenance woes

While CMMS (computerised maintenance management system) software helps maintenance managers to track the status and performance of equipment across entire process facilities, it is often viewed as an unwanted chore by the field service technicians who have to input data into these systems.

According to CARL Source of Lyons, France, field service technicians see CMMS software as too administrative, complex and time-consuming. As a result, it said, work reports entered in the CMMS are mostly of poor quality and of little use to maintenance managers.

In a recent survey, CARL Software found that most maintenance reports lacked essential information such as time spent, parts commissioned or relative comments that could provide added value for the maintenance department.

"Managers often see CMMS reports as interesting feedback but the information involved, for example on costs, is not familiar to operators," said Laurent Truscello, products and service manager at CARL Source. "Operators, therefore, pay little attention to this work,

resulting in lower quality data, little analysis and little improvement overall.

The French company has, therefore, launched a mobile application, called CARL Touch, which can be installed on an Android Smartphone or a digital tablet. The app is said to enable the technician to consult his maintenance task at any time, geo-locate installations, ask for assistance from his back office to receive documents and photos that can be useful for work repairs.

"Technicians thus have their own easy-to-use mobile terminal ... that takes away their fear of using a CMMS," said Truscello. "They are in constant contact with their back office, they can receive alerts, send multimedia reports, geo locate equipment and enter real-time information in CARL Source database."

The growing use of smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices in process maintenance departments has also been highlighted by a new condition monitoring application from Parker Filtration.

The Parker Hannifin company claims its ConMon app is the industry's first condition monitoring app to be available as a free

download from the iTunes app store. It has two programs to enable users to measure the degree of filtration required for their systems, and the frequency at which fluids should be tested, via their iPhone, iPad or iTouch

The ISO Code Generator program enables users to enter details about their machinery via an interactive questionnaire, the results of which offer a recommendation of how clean their system needs to be. Users can then measure the current level of contamination in their system to see if it is within this recommended limit.

The user is then able to gain more feedback about their own specific needs using the Frequency Analysis program, which balances issues such as machine sensitivity and likely downtime costs, and reports back with guidelines on how often to sample in order to achieve maximum efficiency.

These statistics, claims Parker, can provide vital guidance to users who may be unwittingly running their systems with inefficient or damaging levels of contamination and enables them to judge the best option when purchasing condition monitoring equipment.

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