



How to justify a CMMS system purchase

BY PETER PHILLIPS

Answer these 10 questions and you'll know for certain if you should invest in computerized maintenance management software.

Recently, we have worked with some companies that have been trying to decide if it's time to purchase a computerized maintenance management software system. I'm sure there are many other companies and facilities out there that are contemplating the same question. How do you know when it's time the purchase and implement CMMS?

For many maintenance departments, the shift from a file cabinet full of equipment folders, purchase orders and preventive maintenance inspection lists, to a CMMS, is a big step.

Determining whether it's a step in the right direction is often a very difficult decision.

So let's look at some of the key warning signs that can help you make a strong case to move into electronic record-keeping ... or not, as the case may be.

How do you know when you're ready?
1. First of all, answer this question: how full is that filing cabinet?

Do you have 100 or more individual equipment files that you maintain with written service records? Do you keep a written file of equipment spare parts that you continually maintain and up-

date? Along with that, do you have another file folder for each machine that includes the preventive maintenance (PM) schedule and check sheets?

I'm not saying that you can't have an impeccable paper file system. What I want to emphasize is the time it takes to maintain a paper system. Updating equipment service records, writing down spare parts and modifying inspection sheets takes time. As the file folders get thicker, it becomes harder to find the information you're looking for. Even with a well-organized filing system, you have to admit that the bigger the file, the longer it takes to sort through the records to find that one piece of information you need.

By contrast, a CMMS can retain all your equipment records and return specific information in a fraction of the time it takes to look in the paper file. A CMMS can retrieve the data you're looking for before you can even open the file cabinet drawer.

Updating parts list and preventive maintenance procedures in a CMMS takes

only seconds — and often, equipment parts lists are automatically updated from the service records you create in the software.

2. Do you have a parts storeroom?

A threshold of about 500 parts usually means that you're spending a fair amount of time ordering parts and maintaining an inventory of commonly used items.

The shortcomings of a paper system for inventory and purchasing relates to finding the right vendor when you need to order a part. Shops that use a paper system tell me this is where they spend the majority of their time.

Do you want to know how many parts you have and where they are in the stockroom?

It's advantageous to know where the parts are on the shelf, as well as the number in stock. With an electronic system, parts are easily located and reordering is very simple.

3. Would you like to consolidate your purchasing?

From a purchase savings perspective, it is nice to know how many units of the same item you're buying. With this frequency of purchase data, you can talk to your vendors about some bulk purchases and discounts. This is difficult to do with multiple purchase order books.

4. Do you know when equipment is due for servicing?

When it comes to preventive maintenance, and when you're trying to manually schedule inspections on the 100-plus pieces of equipment we described earlier, then it's time to consider a CMMS.

Planning by keeping a manual PM schedule and the related inspection sheet takes too much time. I know some people that use their e-mail calendar to schedule PMs on their equipment. This does work as a reminder, but you still need to find and print the inspection sheets.

5. Is your to-do-list for equipment repairs growing longer?

Many people use a large desk calendar to plan their daily maintenance. When the calendar gets full, then a notepad is used to record the overflow. As the pad gets fuller, planning the work to be done just becomes unmanageable.

I know places that use this method and they have a desk calendar full of maintenance jobs, along with the parts that need to be ordered. One notepad has a list of repairs to do later and another pad has a list of parts to order. A lot of us have been in this position. I re-

member the time it took to review and maintain these pads.

Creating and scheduling work orders in a CMMS saves time. Even if you're not doing the job until later or until the parts come in, a work order can be created and be ready to go. Software companies have made updating and closing work orders so easy that these records can be completed in seconds. You won't miss your pads!

6. Do you want safety information on the equipment accessible to crafts people?

Because of government safety regulations, trades people need to know the critical safety issues on equipment before they begin work. This information includes such things as lockout procedures.

In a CMMS, safety information is written directly on the work order automatically. This protects the employee and shows due diligence on the part of the employer.

7. Do you want to start tracking equipment costs?

I can imagine it would scare most people to death to think of trying to calculate the cost of maintaining equipment in a paper system.

Maintaining equipment history and costs have moved to the forefront of almost every organization, big or small.

Justifying equipment purchases and keeping within maintenance budgets are now a normal process of doing business.

8. Do your customers want reports?

We work with agriculture companies that have different growing operations. Usually there is one maintenance facility that services them all. Many of their customers would like to see reports on the repairs to their equipment. They'd also like to have a schedule of when to bring their equipment in for servicing or annual overhauls. This very hard to do quickly in a manual system.

9. Are you going to start a certification process like ISO or HACCP?

There are requirements in some accreditations that stipulate the use of maintenance software and electronic records. The people who audit these certification programs will want detailed data on the equipment and the planned preventive maintenance.

10. Finally, do all of your maintenance information and planned activities reside in the heads of one or two people?

This is very common in many small-to medium-sized companies. It's also risky business. When people are on vacation, taking sick time, or leave a company for good, it causes a major hiccup in the maintenance department. Some information is lost forever.

So if you are experiencing one or more of these signs, it might be time to research a CMMS that will fit your current and future needs.

People worry that maintaining and updating a CMMS will take too much time. If you're one of them, you need to step back and have a closer look at the actual time you're spending looking after your paper filing system.

What we have concluded after working with companies that have made the jump to a CMMS is that it actually saves time. Yes, it takes time to implement and learn the program, and this does cost money. However, after a short time, you'll wonder how you got along without it. **MRO**

Peter Phillips of Trailwalk Holdings, a CMMS consulting and training company, can be reached at 902-798-3601 or by e-mail at peter@trailwalk.ca.

Reader Service Card No. 416

Renew Now!

Don't let your free subscription lapse. More than ever, we think you're going to need us in the months ahead.

Machinery & Equipment MRO is a trusted resource for over **18,000** readers serving a wide range of industries across Canada.

Because of your role at your company, it's available to you at **no cost**. But as our circulation list is audited twice a year, we you need to confirm your subscription information.

Now it's easier than ever!

Please take a moment to visit www.mromagazine.com. Simply click on Subscriber Services near the top of the left-hand column of our home page.

Maintaining your no-cost magazine subscription right now is easy and takes about a minute.

Thank you for your support.

