

They walk the line

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Aberdeen diagram

Best-in-class companies are leveraging Internet, mobile field service, and M2M technologies to automate and better synchronize the four key pillars of service: process, people, parts, and data.

provider and equipment in the field. Rockwell also uses the vendor's Web-based performance-tracking tools.

Most In.Site clients want to improve uptime for equipment, says Lapcewich, but they also want to improve metrics such as overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) and return-on-net assets (RONA) at the plant or line levels. Remote monitoring can improve OEE and RONA by avoiding downtime events through predictive analysis, or when problems do occur, solving them more quickly than is typically possible through conventional support and field service.

"With In.Site, we can very quickly understand what caused a problem, get

on the phone with a customer, and tell them exactly where to go and what to do to get things running again," Lapcewich says. "In some plants, if you don't have this capability, it can take several hours or more to pinpoint what is causing a problem."

When an In.Site contract is first set up, Rockwell engineers visit the site to study the lines and establish the parameters that need to be monitored. In many cases, In.Site contracts have grown out of more conventional service contracts, so the systems in the plants are already familiar to Rockwell. Connecting ei3's remote service platform to a plant's industrial automation network typically takes a couple of weeks, and for complex lines, might

result in as many as 3,000 control points that Rockwell engineers are able to monitor.

At the center, says Lapcewich, Rockwell engineers have all the data they need "to essentially simulate a line to see what is happening at any given point in time," as well as to analyze trends.

The ei3 technology is an enabler for pulling data remotely from customer sites in a secure fashion back to our command center," says Lapcewich. "But the overall solution is about reducing downtime, and improving the mean time to repair, and that comes from the knowledge of the engineers."

Remote monitoring fits the mindset of customers looking not just for a more efficient means of maintenance, but measurably improving productivity metrics, says Teerlinck. "We are taking contracts not just to report OEE plant by plant, but also applying our expertise to help clients improve OEE plant by plant," he says. "A small incremental improvement in OEE can have a huge benefit on the bottom line."

While services can bring a manufacturer into much closer partnership with its customers, the onus falls on the manufacturer to hit service-level targets if it hopes to retain its contracts. "If we do more for them, they'll do more for us," Teerlinck says. "It's a quid pro quo arrangement." ■

Documenting a history of service

For **Daktronics**, a Brookings, S.D.-based manufacturer of scoreboards and other electronic displays, a service management module from ERP vendor **Glovia International** melds service and financial transactions within a single system, and supports a consistent approach to item and customer data. "Because service is transacted in the same system that is part of the general ledger system, it's reduced the effort we once had to go through to update the general ledger," says Carla Gatzke, Daktronics' enterprise information systems manager.

Common nomenclature and system look-and-feel mean Daktronics engineers who rotate between engineering, field installation, and service duties don't have to relearn applications. "We felt it was strategic that our engineers could efficiently deal

with customer concerns, so we didn't want any system barriers to that," says Gatzke.

Glovia's service module is used to schedule work at Daktronics' repair depot, handle service billing, and keep an updated as-serviced history for each installed product, which typically is customized for a particular stadium. As products are serviced, the service department keeps this history updated with any repair or replacement-part information.

"That history is very important to us, first, because the next time the customer calls, we know all about their latest interactions with us," says Gatzke. "Additionally, through access to the history data, our product managers are able to analyze which assemblies are generating the most service calls." ■