

# Wondering about getting a CMMS?

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## What's stopping you?

Up-to-the-minute systems are easier to use than ever, will arm you to transform

maintenance, engineering and corporate performance, can revolutionise your quality of life and can be as cheap as chips.

## Proven best practice

Despite CMMS use being an internationally recognised maintenance best practice, a recent research report on World Class Manufacturing by global consultancy Deloitte & Touche lamented that 'only 3 out of 10 UK manufacturers run a CMMS'. Why? Apathy, unclear understanding, fear of failure or resistance to change? Whatever the reason, it's not good for you and definitely damaging to your organisation and UK PLC.

You're probably aware that the most successful manufacturers use CMMS – you may even know that the person that sought out and procured it in each case was an Engineering Manager. CMMS is the undisputed tool of choice for the well-organised professional. Unlike ERP, it's not imposed from on-high.

The common sense question is not 'Should I use CMMS?' but 'Which one?' So, try to avoid mind block and inertia and don't dither.

## Plan – what plan?

You don't need any great plan. The intention to do better and some belief in the dream is all you need to get going. It's nice to have a plan, but surprisingly, not many

purchasers of CMMS are ever that organised. If you're not exactly sure how CMMS will help you in your special circumstances, you're in good company. After all, few individuals, if any, really understand CMMS until they've used it in earnest.

Suppliers will help you get your ducks in a row. Outline your concerns and aspirations to any supplier and you'll get free advice and guidance. The supplier will be attentive when you call and give you as much time as you need, but he won't bother you. Good suppliers know that 'pushiness' just alienates, so they respond strictly to your lead.

Oddly, it's like healthcare and the doctor-patient relationship. Your doctor doesn't hound you for 'business', but is concerned about your good health. After taking your pulse and questioning you about lifestyle, he'll shower you with pragmatic advice.

A good supplier will listen attentively and ask searching questions. Answering will clear your mind and, before you know it, bingo! You'll have the bones of a workable specification.

Haul that around and get input from other suppliers. In the process, you'll put flesh on the bones and increase in conviction about what you really need – keep everything in your head if you want. After you've formed an impression about the capability of each

supplier, pick the one you most trust and work with him to finalise your spec.

The supplier can help you get set on the right road and draw up a route map to take you where you want to get to. It's not complicated – and all can be done without the need to commit or spend one penny!

## Try before you buy

Be aware that for the most straightforward, easy-to-use systems, up to 75% of the software development effort will have gone into usability, not functionality. How a CMMS handles is king. It follows that different CMMS cannot be compared against each other simply by ticking off features and functions on a list.

You're drawn to a car by its style, performance and handling – a lot of emotion is involved. It's the same with CMMS. Things can look good, but you need to climb into the driving seat and go for a spin before you commit. The best suppliers always provide a free, fully-functional system for you to try.

## Innovation, not administration

Today, continuous equipment reliability, uptime and process improvement determine a firm's competitive advantage. In manufacturing, the Engineering Manager is a prime deliverer of innovation and added value - but it's so easy to get diverted. The

sheer numbers of equipment and maintainable components in a typical facility make it immensely difficult to keep an eye on everything - you can end up chasing failure, rather than getting on top of it. Precious time and energy is then soaked up in mindless paper shuffling and chaos administration as you lurch from one breakdown and non-compliance to the next.

You won't be able to pull things together and get out of the totally demoralising 'all repairing, no engineering' dilemma without the aid of CMMS. And, the only person with the power to resolve your predicament is you, so take the initiative and act.

## What's wrong with paper?

Maintenance effectiveness and efficiency is dependent on good information management. Unfortunately, detailed situation analysis, forward planning and control of work using paper systems is a nightmare.

You may record critical asset data but, because you can't easily retrieve it for detailed analysis and problem solving, collecting it is just about futile. In an agile manufacturing environment, thumbing through files and poring over spreadsheets is a waste of very scarce time. Paper puts a big brake on performance.

Besides the failure, work and materials usage history, cost and supplier information, a huge amount of technical

documentation must also be constantly referred to – design details, material specifications, O&M manuals, contracts and warranty information. With a CMMS, all information is in a central database – just a few clicks away. And, it can be shared easily with others.

## Value for money

Tens of thousands of development manhours go into the design, building and testing of a best-of-breed CMMS. The benefits delivered are colossal. It's ludicrous to compare such powerful technology with a paper-based, spreadsheet or home-grown database system.

The most successful maintenance practices across asset-intensive organisations in many industries are embedded in a standard CMMS. While the system won't constrain you, it will guide you to a more disciplined approach to maintenance activities and asset management. Out-of-the-box CMMS can be configured to your individual requirements without the need to customise.

The development cost of a CMMS is spread over thousands of users – so the initial and on-going costs of ownership are very small; miniscule for some systems.

## Everyone wins

A CMMS is the Engineering Manager's essential information tool for discharging the onerous responsibilities of the job. It facilitates success with much less stress. Besides the huge reduction in paperwork and administration, the prime benefits accrue from better systems and instant availability of decision-making information.



CMMS enables senior management to exercise corporate governance in respect of the strategic risks associated with assets. Strategic objectives can be deployed as operational goals in the workplace and on-going performance and compliance monitored and controlled. It's straightforward to deploy a chosen maintenance strategy that directly aligns with business objectives.

CMMS is embraced by the maintenance organisation's customers because it ensures transparency, responsiveness and the overall quality of service. Auditors are impressed with CMMS's clarity, comprehensiveness, security, presentation and easy retrieval of asset care and regulatory compliance information. Maintenance operatives like it because of the reduced frustration - all the information needed to get the job done is right at their fingertips.

## In a nutshell

CMMS use is prerequisite to the delivery of increased equipment uptime, lowest costs, customer satisfaction, regulatory compliance, public safety, corporate image and highest profits. That's not because of the system per se, but because it transforms your capability to do your job properly!

Engineer, you can't go wrong. ■