

MEL Chemicals, part of the Luxfer Group, who are based in Manchester in the UK, are the world's largest producer of zirconium chemicals. MEL produces zirconium as a granular powder, which is used in over 60 different industrial applications. Examples include the packaging and photography industry where zirconium is used as a fixing agent and the paint industry where their products are used as a replacement for lead.

MEL operates in a highly competitive export market and several years ago they decided to reorganise their maintenance strategy in order to maximise production. Historically most maintenance activities



The windows based IMPACTxp system distributed by Matrix Resource Management in the UK was chosen after careful consideration and user visits to two of Matrix's existing users.

at MEL were performed during the annual summer shutdown period during which all production ceased. As well as suffering from the loss of production, MEL also found it difficult to actually plan the large number of maintenance tasks involved in the shutdown and thus co-ordinate labour and resources during this intense period of maintenance.

The functionality and flexibility of IMPACTxp impressed MEL as well as the support Matrix as a team, could offer. The fact that IMPACTxp is distinctly user friendly however, finally convinced MEL that IMPACTxp was the right choice. "It was the only system I could get around without the help of the sales people," says the engineer in charge of the system selection.

The new strategy involved the removal of the annual 2-week shutdown and the associated loss of production and a switch from largely breakdown work towards planned maintenance. Making this change was further complicated by the fact that MEL operates a 24-hour, 7-day production line with 4 maintenance teams integrated into the 12-hour production shifts.

A dedicated team was formed to oversee the implementation process, which began in February 1997. Initially a trial database was used to iron out any problems that may have arisen prior to going live. Training also commenced at the same time and for five months plant information relating to each area of MEL was entered onto the trial system.

Following the elimination of the annual July shutdown period and its replacement by planned "mini" maintenance periods, it became obvious that a Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) was essential in order to plan the necessary activities. A CMMS would allow for maintenance to be carried out on all assets and instruments in selected plant areas, without major disruption to the production plan. The reporting facilities within a CMMS would also allow maintenance history to be built up including a comprehensive fault analysis.

Training for key personnel was initially carried out at Matrix's training school. These staff then trained the end users in each area of the plant to coincide with a phased implementation. Five months later the trial system was transferred to the live database. Implementation of any system can be a painstaking task but the process employed by MEL proved invaluable as the inevitable teething problems of any implementation were all eradicated by the time of going live.

Now 10 months into the live project the users are actively driving the way they want IMPACTxp to

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be used. The flexibility and customisation features of IMPACTxp that initially impressed MEL are now being used to the full. Although it is too soon to fully appreciate the benefits being accrued a number of improvements have already been made to the maintenance operation as a whole.

MEL has now built up asset history and a co-ordinated list of all outstanding work. Prior to IMPACTxp four different teams performed all maintenance work, each with different skills, making it very hard if not impossible to pool information on the overall performance of assets and associated problems.

Since the implementation of IMPACTxp the reporting capabilities have meant that information on all assets, work, employees and budgets are available at any time of the day by a click of a button. With fault codes and defects being entered into the system the reporting facility is greatly improved with some custom reports already being produced for use by TPM teams.

MEL is confident of the future and plan to introduce further modules of IMPACTxp including Inventory Management, CAD & Imaging and Run Time Control to further enhance their system. The enthusiasm at MEL is obvious. After a highly successful implementation and an excellent start to the project MEL is looking forward to watching the benefits unfold.

Key Facts

10 Concurrent Users

Modules Licensed

Base Module

Check List Word Processing

Calibration Control

Costing and Budgeting

Server

Unisys System 5 Unix