

# OEE on the spot

*The acquisition and effective use of real-time information has completely transformed many industries such as banking and online retailing. However, manufacturing has been slow to adopt real-time information technologies, despite the obvious competitive advantages in doing so.*

Live information and productivity analytics capabilities are the life-blood of sustainable low-cost production. Yet the manufacturing industry's take-up of enabling technologies that monitor productivity KPIs such as overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) is only just beginning. Today, the most common production feedback system in use remains a pen, paper and log-book, resulting in a major cause of lost opportunity.

"So many transactional processes now live online", says James Magee of Operations Feedback (OFS). "But on the factory floor, typically feedback on every order is written down by the operator in a log-book, or perhaps entered into a spreadsheet: the time it starts, the time it finishes, comments about how it runs, how many were made, and so on. This is all great information, but the problem is that it's completely inaccessible and quite useless until someone reads the log."

The log-book eventually finds its way to the office and gets reworked into other formats and systems, at best the next day or often later. Until then, this information cannot be used by key people in the organisation, such as scheduling, customer service and maintenance. The opportunity to proactively prevent or address operational problems proactively has already been lost.

OFS calls this opportunity 'Reflexivity', whereby the best responses can only be as good as the timeliness and accessibility of the information that would trigger these responses. Unfortunately, production monitoring solutions targeting Reflexivity have traditionally been perceived as complicated, lengthy projects, requiring significant organisational buy-in along with internal IT and engineering expertise. Frequently, such complexity prevents these projects from ever getting started.

To address this, OFS has developed a product called OFS-Go, designed to offer an immediately effective solution for businesses wanting to get started with OEE and Reflexivity, in almost any production process. To prove the OFS-Go concept, the company ran an extensive, live beta test across a number of high- and low-volume sites at industries ranging from CNC workshops and fastener-joiner manufacturers, to more automated production-line processes such as plastics and carton makers.

"Our vision was to be able to walk into a business, and by the end of the day have that manufacturer up and running, with the old manual, paper-based systems eliminated on the spot", says Magee. "To be able to do this, and at the same time to supply a real OEE measure is something that manufacturing industries are absolutely demanding. But the real prize is the Reflexivity – empowering manufacturers with the ability to make really rapid, responsive decisions."

ITW Buildex, a leading manufacturer and supplier of self-drilling screws and fasteners, jumped at the chance to join the OFS-Go beta program.

"Having instant performance feedback rather than waiting 24 hours drives cultural change in operators, supervisors and managers," explains Chris Madden of ITW Buildex. "It benefits everyone across the business, from operations, technical, quality and finance departments. We have been looking for a cost-effective electronic solution for a long time and we see OFS-Go as that solution."

Another early adopter, Donhad implemented OFS-Go on several CNC machines in its Perth factory, where it manufactures grinding balls and forgings for mining and mineral processors.

"I need real time data that I can directly relate to cost and delivery, enabling me to make decisions without waiting on traditional lag indicators", says Gareth O'Neil of Donhad. "I now expect a greater understanding in our employees about exactly how they can influence cost, delivery and productivity on a daily basis, enabling them to act rather than waiting on instructions from superiors. OFS-Go is one step towards an interdependent team model, allowing the people in control of the factory floor to make suggestions and decisions on how we succeed."

To mark the launch of OFS-Go, OFS is offering a limited number of free trials.

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