

Productivity gains through real-time feedback



OFS is an Australian company specialising in the development of productivity improvement software for the manufacturing industry. The company's MD Shoni Even-Chaim spoke with **Hartley Henderson**.

What was the vision behind the development of OFS-Go and how is it different to OFS-X?

Our vision with OFS-Go was to bring an economical, robust OEE solution to the table, and to be able to have an installation up, running and getting results – in as little as one day.

With OFS-Go, we wanted to be able to quickly deliver an OEE solution to any kind of industry without having the time and cost associated with needing to 'wire' everything up.

This is the main difference between OFS-X and OFS-Go. We typically install OFS-X onto a mainline industrial machine, such as a printing press, or a filling line, where there are inputs readily available for us to collect automatically. We might count units in and units out, allowing us to calculate real-time wastage, as well as monitor the up-time of inline components, such as tray-packers, wrappers and robots.

OFS-Go does the same thing, but we've designed an easy to use, intuitive, touch display where the operators 'tap in' this sort of information, rather than automatically harvesting it from the process, as we do with OFS-X.

The major advantage of OFS-Go is, because we don't have the need to do any wiring and electrical integration work, it can be up and running extremely quickly and for less cost than OFS-X. This also means that OFS-Go can be hosted internally or clients can choose to take advantage of an OFS-Go Cloud solution.

How is OFS different to SCADA?

Well, our audience is different and as a result our functionality is also different. The users of OFS are operations and management, focusing on productivity and efficiency. The users of SCADA are typically more engineering

based, focusing on parameters and diagnostics. Put another way, OFS engages both people and process, placing a high importance on input and feedback from workers, which is different to SCADA's data, tags and symbols approach.

Because of this difference, we find that the take-up of SCADA by operations and management is usually quite poor, as these systems



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are designed for engineering users and can be very intimidating for less sophisticated users. On the other hand, we have invested significant resource into making sure that OFS software is extremely easy to use for both our operations and management audience. Consequently, we have found the take-up and use of OFS software to be fast and extensive.

How broad and successful are your OFS industry applications?

OFS is 'generic', which means that it will operate equally well on all machines and processes. This is really useful when a business wants to use a common benchmark and reporting methodology across different types of manufacturing machines. From a best practice and continuous improvement perspective, software like OFS is really the only way to compare and contrast plants and divisions.

Today, over 2,500 operators are using OFS technologies, OFS-X and OFS-Go, in a range of industries including printing, packaging, labeling, cereals, confectionary, beverage, chemical, and blow moulding.

By measuring productivity in real-time, these installations are really out-performing, and we've seen some outstanding results with OEE gains of 30 percent or more. Examples include blue-chip companies like Visy Industries, Heinz/Golden Circle and Brickwood Holdings.

Smaller businesses are also benefitting from OFS products. Our solutions are quite scalable, meaning that OFS works just as well on a single machine shop as it does in a company with multiple sites and hundreds of production lines.

What are your projections for the future development and uptake of OFS?

We forecast a huge future for OFS-Go as testing only started in July 2013 and it is now rapidly gaining traction with some outstanding results being delivered. In particular, it is evident that this technology can be successfully applied to a wide range of industry types beyond manufacturing industry. For example, OFS-Go will soon be used to monitor teams of workers in real-time laying broadband cable in the ground for the NBN Co.

We have a strong focus on continuing product development with the aim of producing four software releases per year. Potential opportunities are being identified to utilise OFS to improve the efficiency of supply chains in the future.

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Operations Feedback Systems (OFS) recently launched OFS-Go – a web based overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) solution designed to enable manufacturers to make rapid, responsive decisions. *Manufacturers' Monthly* spoke with Shoni Even-Chaim who established OFS in 2006.

What was the prime motivation for establishing OFS?

The original goal of our software was to improve DIFOT (delivery in full, on time) for the manufacturing industry by providing real-time feedback about production orders to planners and their scheduling systems. DIFOT certainly began to improve, but in particular we noticed that productivity was soaring – the first plant increased its capacity by an outstanding 30 percent within a few months.

Now, our focus is on software that helps operators, supervisors and managers to maximise the speed of production by eliminating unplanned stops and wastage through the application of OFS-X and OFS-Go.

A key element of this is to give voice to people on the factory floor to identify and put a stop to inefficiencies and unplanned downtime by providing feedback in real-time. Most manufacturing businesses don't have an instant scoreboard - the score only goes up the next day, or even later. By engaging and empowering operators, pressure is put on middle and upper management to address inefficient areas.

With most industries averaging an OEE measure of 30-40 percent, there are clearly significant gains to be achieved.