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Bring Data, Not Donuts

One of the biggest mistakes a lubricant marketer can make when visiting a client, is not having anything useful to talk about. If a marketer simply walks into a client's office, extends a handshake and a box of pastries with a friendly, "How's everything goin'? How much lubricant are you going to need next month?" – not only has the marketer missed the boat, they've walked right off the pier, fell into the ocean and drowned.

The most effective marketers bring data – not doughnuts – to the sales table. They show up prepared to present solid information that supports money-saving solutions only they can provide.

Oil analysis is a great tool for generating that data – whether a customer is currently using it or not. Most who are, would welcome any help you can provide in interpreting the data and implementing the maintenance recommendations made by the laboratory. A reputable lab will be glad to answer your questions and help you identify any

issues the customer should address. And if a customer isn't using oil analysis, there are numerous reasons to sign them up.

All of the largest oil companies provide oil analysis programs as a value added service. Most of these programs are contracted through an independent laboratory under a private label. Unfortunately, most lubricant marketers are hesitant to bring oil analysis to the table because they know little about it. Educating yourselves about oil analysis and the money-saving solutions it can bring to your customers opens the door to numerous sales opportunities.

Use oil analysis data to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of a customer's lube program - is the customer buying the right type of oil for a particular application and/or



maintenance goal? Let's say a fleet manager at a surface coal mining operation is using a low or mid-quality diesel engine oil in a group of haul trucks that typically make multiple short runs with heavy loads. And he wants to extend his drain interval by 20%. But the oil analysis data indicates that it will take a better quality oil with a higher TBN and a better anti-wear package to safely extend the drain enough to achieve that goal.

The oil analysis data gives you the opportunity to point out some very important factors the

customer might not have taken into consideration. High levels of silicon (dirt) indicate extreme environmental contamination. Excessive dirt increases engine wear as indicated by the steady increases in iron values. Short trips with heavy loads at high operating temperatures promote oxidation or fluid degradation, which increases viscosity, prevents additives from working and speeds the formation of acids. TAN steadily increases while TBN decreases, which tells you the lube won't be able to neutralize acid formation for the desired drain interval. All things considered, using a higher quality lubricant is more than warranted.

Oil analysis also presents numerous opportunities for both conversion and consolidation. What better way to convince customers to switch from another supplier's products to yours than by using oil analysis to compare them. Monitoring wear, contamination and additive performance establishes product quality and adds credibility to your sale.

Consolidation is a savings solution in more ways than one. Using a single lube across multiple units strengthens customer buying power – purchasing in bulk earns the customer bigger discounts and reduces his storage and disposal costs. It also substantially decreases the possibility of lube mixing or topping off with the wrong lube – which can be staggeringly expensive to correct. In the end, you've used oil analysis to prove product quality, eliminate waste, improve efficiency

and save money. The customer will remember that the next time his lube program goes out for bid. When a marketer truly has the customer's best interests in mind, trust develops and relationships become cemented.

Some of the best lubricant marketers I've ever encountered call me on a regular basis and ask, "Can you help me out with this customer?" We show them how to utilize statistical analyses and problem summary reports to show their customers the issues at hand. They can then present the right solution for a particular situation, with the support of good, hard data. Instead of just selling oil, they're now showing the customer how to solve contamination problems, reduce lubricant degradation, extend drain intervals and ultimately, extend the life of their equipment.

I will make the statement that even in today's market, "oil is cheap." When all is said and done, lubricant and filtration costs amount to only about 3 – 5% of a typical operational maintenance budget. The remaining 95 – 97% goes straight to labor, repairs and replacement costs.

Convincing the customer to use a quality lubricant and monitor their equipment through oil analysis will ultimately result in more savings than the increased cost of a better lubricant and the cost of a good oil analysis program. Using oil analysis changes the maintenance manager's everyday practices. It allows the early detection of problems responsible for a large portion of maintenance expense. Reduce those expenses

once considered inherent to everyday operations and paying a little more to upgrade lubricants or maintain an effective oil analysis program becomes a lot less painful.

The best marketers in the world don't sell products, they sell themselves. I know from my experiences with marketers, if it's a person that is knowledgeable about their industry, my industry, their products and is able to offer solutions to my problems for a fair price, I will do business with them for a long time. Salesmen are a dime a dozen, good marketers are worth their weight in gold.

Mark Minges has been involved in oil analysis for over 27 years. His experience ranges from owning and operating a small fleet of Class-A trucks to repairing and maintaining off-shore drilling platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

Minges began his career with POLARIS as Vice-president of Sales and Marketing, moving to Chief Operating Officer three years ago to capitalize on his strengths as a data analyst and technical consultant. He's conducted laboratory testing, sold testing services and now works with OEM's and design engineers to continually improve POLARIS' auto-commenting, flagging and severity limits.

Minges is a member of the Society of Tribologists and Lubrication Engineers (STLE), the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), as well as the Technical Maintenance Council (TMC). More information is available at www.polarislabs.com or contact Mark directly at mminges@polarislabs.com.