

The Ryt-Way To Control 2,500 SKUs

As a leading contract packager of dry food products for hundreds of well-known brands, Ryt-way offers customers a wide variety of “market-smart” packaging options. But as it continued to expand its breadth of capabilities, Ryt-way’s Des Plaines, IL facility had a spare parts inventory system for its 900-plus pieces of equipment that was proving woefully inadequate.

“The system would show we had replacement parts in stock that weren’t there,” said Brian Gorski, maintenance planner at Ryt-way’s operations in Des Plaines. “There was a tendency to reorder the same parts already stocked in several locations.”

In 2011, the Ryt-way Des Plaines facility tackled this issue head-on and brought in a CMMS (computerized maintenance management software) called Bigfoot CMMS. The maintenance department bought Bigfoot CMMS to not only facilitate scheduling routine asset maintenance (e.g. preventive maintenance calendars and work orders), but to gain control of spare parts inventory. The first step was to capture all information on equipment and components in the CMMS.

Gaining Control

With five sites and eight production facilities, Ryt-way offers a comprehensive approach to contract packaging from concept to commercialization for major brands and new product start-ups. It has equipment for high speed vertical form film sealing, case packing, blending, volume metric cartoning for end-of-aisle displays, and other packaging formats for ready-to-eat cereals, prepared meals, side dishes, beverages, candy, and sweeteners.

Before implementing the CMMS, packaging spare parts inventory at Ryt-way Des Plaines, which included more than 2,500 SKUs, had emergency parts scattered in 15-20 “satellite” stock rooms and cabinets that for all practical purposes were “off the grid.”

“There was no easy way to grab spare parts,” Gorski said. “Reports calculated inventory at \$120,000 to \$150,000. But after taking over maintenance planning duties and using Bigfoot CMMS to track replacement parts I uncovered duplicates in multiple locations adding up to \$900,000 worth of inventory.”

Dropping Inventory to Safe Levels

Ryt-way Des Plaines has made great progress toward its first-year goal of getting a clear view of its spare parts, and the CMMS is helping centralize them under two locations where Gorski can monitor usage, ensure proper stocking levels, and even prevent theft.

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“And if a machine goes down, we know we’ll have the right replacement part for repairs. For example, in January we lost four hours of production time looking for parts we thought we had, which cost us several thousand dollars in labor and lost revenue.

“Overstocking is one of the biggest challenges I now face after getting everything out in the open,” Gorski said. “The nice thing about Bigfoot CMMS is I can set a par or safe level and a re-order point so when I go below my reorder point, I get an automatic e-mail telling me I’m below my reorder point. Then what I do is order enough parts to achieve my par or safe level.”

Preventing Machine Downtime, Tracking Parts On the Go

As 2012 comes to an end, Gorski is slowly transitioning to the planning side of his job and using CMMS makes it a lot easier, he says.

“As a former line mechanic, one of the most frustrating aspects was having a machine breakdown and not being able to find whatever parts were needed to do the work. Now we are starting to use work orders where the parts needed are listed on the work order.”

When a mechanic completes the work order, he fills out the time it took to do the work, any additional parts, signs, and dates. Gorski enters labor and additional parts and marks it off as completed in Bigfoot. Bigfoot documents the complete cost and a piece of history for that particular machine.

“I get a complete history on the amount of time, money, and parts used on that particular machine,” Gorski said. “That data could be useful when it comes time to decide whether to replace a machine or keep putting money in it.”

As a maintenance planner, Gorski added asset tags with scannable bar code labels and uses Bigfoot on the Go mobile platform to scan a piece of equipment, fill out and assign a work order, view past work orders, or issue a maintenance request.

Recently, Gorski became the company’s global administrator for CMMS which involved setting up the 50 users who submit requests through Bigfoot, approving and assigning requests from production, and scheduling the team’s 25 technicians to do the repairs. He relies on Bigfoot CMMS to plan and manage work orders for routine and unscheduled maintenance tasks.

“To date, I have over 50 people using Bigfoot. We have production submitting work requests for machinery before it breaks down or to correct repetitive issues, quality control for correcting food safety issues, our safety department for requesting safety items maintenance. Even our vice president of operations in Des Plaines can see what equipment is available and look at what it costs to run a maintenance department.”

While most maintenance teams that purchase CMMS use it to cover the basics: preventive maintenance and work orders, increasing machine uptime, efficiency,

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longevity, and safety; it doesn't stop there. CMMS for organizing spare parts inventory could also eliminate thousands of dollars in unnecessary costs.

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