



Allied Mills builds a smarter asset maintenance solution with IBM Maximo and Vetasi

The Challenge

To increase the efficiency of production at its three manufacturing sites, Allied Mills wanted to implement a smarter asset management solution to support proactive maintenance of its buildings and equipment.

The Solution

Working with Vetasi (www.vetasi.com), an IBM Premier Business Partner, Allied Mills upgraded to the latest version of the IBM Maximo Asset Management solution, and created workflows that manage the asset lifecycle from end to end. Engineers can interact with the solution while working on-site, using mobile devices and real-time dashboards provide at-a-glance insight into operations across the business.

The Benefits

- With a real-time view of asset data across the organisation, Allied Mills is better able to diagnose root causes and resolve potential problems before they affect production
- Corrective and emergency maintenance, which previously comprised 39 percent of total maintenance workload, has been reduced to just nine percent
- Insight into complete asset lifecycle costs supports improved financial planning and control of operational costs.

Allied Mills is one of the UK's leading producers of flour and semolina, and part of the Associated British Foods (ABF) group. The company employs 200 people, and its three mills, located in Tilbury, Manchester and Belfast, supply the ABF bakeries throughout the UK, supporting major household bread brands such as Kingsmill and Sunblest.

In common with all companies in the food and beverage sector, the success of Allied Mills' business depends on its ability to manufacture high-quality products as cost-effectively as possible. To this end, the production lines at its three mills must be fed continually with high-grade wheat and semolina, and must keep grinding uninterrupted throughout the working day. Any failure in production-line equipment can be extremely costly, so it is vital to plan maintenance effectively and keep faults to a minimum.

Making it work

The Allied Mills team was impressed with the capabilities of the latest version of IBM Maximo, and decided to perform an upgrade.

"Since our original implementation, IBM had rebuilt Maximo as a Web-based system that was much more mature and flexible; a lot of the functionalities that we would previously have had to build from scratch were now available out of the box," says Duncan Lawson. "If we could find the right partner, we were hopeful that we could achieve a rapid vanilla implementation of the software and achieve most of our objectives through simple configuration, rather than expensive development work."

Finding the right partner

Allied Mills decided to engage with Vetasi, a specialist IBM Business Partner with broad experience of IBM Maximo implementations in a wide range of industry sectors. Vetasi has more IBM Maximo certified professionals than any other UK Business Partner – so Allied Mills was confident that it had chosen the best team for the job.

"I can't speak highly enough of Vetasi's contribution to the project," says Duncan Lawson. "They instantly understood the main point – that asset management implementations are more about people than about the technology itself. They advised us to let the workflows be designed by the people who would be using them, and worked closely with our engineers to build a solution that is easy to use, while also providing the deep insight into asset data that the business requires."

A rapid implementation

Within six weeks, Vetasi had helped Allied Mills complete the implementation and train the end-users. A seven-level parent-child relationship between different classes of asset was established, and every significant asset – from the mill buildings themselves through the production-line equipment to the inventory of spare parts – was listed in the central repository.

The team also integrated a solution that enables engineers to interact with the IBM Maximo system directly from their mobile devices while they are working on-site, giving them convenient access to information and allowing them to submit reports without returning to their desks.



VETASI CASE STUDY

Predictive and proactive

"The solution is a huge step-change for the business," says Duncan Lawson. "Whenever someone notices a problem – even a slight niggle – the facility is available to report directly into the Maximo system and a work order is raised. Every work order is tracked through its entire lifecycle and by querying the data and understanding the dependencies, we can recognise patterns, identify root causes, and often take preventative action.

"For example, if we find that a certain piece of equipment is prone to developing a certain type of problem, we can investigate ways to avoid that problem – whether by training the production line staff how to identify and fix the problem, or by rethinking the type and frequency of maintenance that is carried out, or even by finding a replacement that doesn't have the same failure mode and re-engineering the solution.

"The result is that small problems get solved before they become big problems, which keeps our production lines running smoothly. In the two years since the new version of Maximo went live, we've seen significant reductions in the proportion of unplanned maintenance that our engineers need to carry out. Previously, 39 percent of all workload was corrective or emergency maintenance, which had the potential to interrupt production. Now, this has fallen to just nine percent. The implementation of the system has provided enhanced visibility of our assets' performance at both individual site and group levels. The result is improved reliability, increased production line efficiency, and better asset utilisation."

Improved financial control

A further advantage is increased financial control. With a complete record of the maintenance history of each asset, Allied Mills can generate reports on true lifecycle costs – helping to plan future purchases more effectively and make more efficient use of capital. This also applies to the management of spare parts inventory: the company has a much more accurate idea of the types and quantities of spares it needs to stock at any given time – which helps to reduce overstocking while also decreasing the risk of running out of critical parts.

Real-time insight

Finally, the solution has helped Allied Mills move from static periodic reporting to a model where enterprise-wide information is available in real-time. IBM Maximo provides personalised Web-based dashboards for each user, delivering simple graphical representations of selected key performance indicators that are designed to allow both engineers and managers to find the information they need at a glance.

"We can break down the figures in different ways to suit different users – for example, an engineer might be interested only in the Tilbury site, while a senior manager might want an overview of all three mills," explains Duncan Lawson. "We can flag up work orders that may have a bearing on safety, or prioritise them according to their potential severity and impact on production. Next year we're also planning to introduce the Visual Planner add-on from CiM Maintenance, which should help us organise operational workloads with greater accuracy, scheduling planned shutdowns to suit the needs of the business and ensuring we get the maximum benefit from available downtime."

Steve Barton, Managing Director of Allied Mills, concludes: "By working closely together, Vetasi and our in-house team have built a solution that is fundamentally changing the way we manage our assets. IBM Maximo gives us the tools we need to gain real-time insight into our maintenance processes and work proactively to address potential problems before they arise, helping our production lines run seamlessly and efficiently – and ultimately delivering greater operational control."

About Vetasi

Created in 2005, Vetasi has grown to become the largest IBM Maximo EAM business partner in the UK. This phenomenal success is due to the quality of our team, our processes and our focus on creating continual business improvement for our clients. Vetasi are the only IBM AAA Accredited Partner within the UKI for Maximo which demonstrates our acquired certification across our consultancy business and continued dedication to the delivery of first rate Maximo implementations to our clients.

We bring to our clients a comprehensive knowledge and industry expertise in areas of Enterprise Asset Management, business and regulatory requirements, software and hardware platform integration, software implementation, project management and ongoing support.

All our consultants are direct employees of Vetasi, thus enabling us to retain the knowledge gained from assignments as well as ensuring constancy and understanding of our client needs through the use of the latest tools and business methodologies.

All consultants are Maximo product experts with in-depth, hands-on experience and years of industrial and application software skills kept leading edge by continual skills development. This ensures the highest levels of delivery and service is maintained. Team members are at the forefront of both product technology and business practice - they are experts in their field, able to provide our clients with innovative, practical and low risk solutions.