Real-time Software Helps Provide the Competitive Edge

One airline engineering maintenance company is improving efficiency and cutting costs with a fully integrated time and attendance and shop floor data capture system.

KLM UK Engineering Limited, a subsidiary of KLM UK Holdings Limited, has been continually investing in new computer systems and in particular shop floor data capture and time and attendance systems to improve efficiency and cut costs. This is at a time when many airlines are facing further air-fare reductions in order to remain competitive.

From two hangars and a workshop facility at its Norwich Airport site, one hangar and line support at Stansted Airport together with hangar and line support at Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam, KLM UK Engineering is responsible for the maintenance and technical support of various European airline fleets in addition to that of KLM UK.

"The easy choice would have been to opt for a basic accounts package, but because we wanted to grow rapidly we decided to implement an ERP system on an SQL platform." said Richard Owen.

At a glance

Company

KLM UK Engineering

Industry sector

Maintenance
- Aircraft maintenance

SIC Code

52230
- Service activities incidental to air transportation

Number of employees

360 +

The challenge

- Lack of integration between systems
- Highly competitive industry so better ways of working need to be established

Solution & services

- K3 Syspro Human Resource Management

The benefits

- Provides an accurate view of job costs
- Customers are able to view this information to monitor progress and authorise work
- Transparency of information is keeping customers happy and helping to win repeat business and new clients
- Helps to keep a tight rein on job records, plans and costs.
- No surprises for customers on costs as customers get a clear view of what is happening
- Staff are able to access their rostered shift days/ times, holiday entitlement and holiday bookings, etc
- Quotations are extremely accurate because work profiles have been developed for each type of job.

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Several years ago, KLM UK Engineering, which employs over 500 people, bought the SYSPRO system in order to control the allocation of labour hours to specific aircraft maintenance work. “With a number of work orders containing hundreds of different operations (jobcards) going on any one time, effective human resource management became pretty fundamental to the entire running of the company, especially as the cost of employing skilled technicians is a high proportion of our total expenditure”, explains Ian Harvey, Systems Accountant. He added: “Many customers were also asking for detailed job card data, which we could not provide quickly or easily”.

The company was to make a major leap from the manual reconciliation of time paid to hours booked on jobs, to an integrated T&A and SFDC system that would process data from job cards, input via bar-code swipe cards, scanners, or keyboard, to any one of 18 intelligent data-collection terminals.

In fact, every employee in the company now carries a bar-coded identity card. “At the beginning and end of every task, the operator swipes his card, then uses a scanner to read the bar code on the job card. A key on the terminal allows the operator to sign on/off against several jobs that might be undertaken in succession on the same aircraft, thus avoiding the need to climb down off an aircraft to walk to the nearest terminal,” notes Ian Harvey.

Improving resource planning and programming

The system is able to generate detailed reports on time allocation, all of which has helped KLM UK Engineering’s maintenance management improve resource planning and programming. However, different aircraft types to be serviced, changes to shift patterns and the need to operate as a profit centre has involved the company taking a further leap forward to real-time T&A and SFDC, enabling information be collected and collated as jobs progress.

“The real-time SYSPRO system is capable of updating every ten seconds: We now have desk-top control over work in progress information telling us who is working on any job at any given time,” says Mr Harvey.

Explains Mr Harvey: “We now service aircraft in the fleet of the group’s low cost airline, Buzz, plus we look after freighter aircraft for a world-wide express parcels company, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.”

The real-time SYSPRO system is capable of updating every ten seconds: “We now have desk-top control over work in progress information telling us who is working on any job at any given time,” says Mr Harvey, adding: “Most significantly, it means we can monitor employee attendance with regard to resource allocation and absenteeism.” There is even the flexibility to pre-set precise percentage figures against estimates.

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Says Ian Harvey; “This has helped us enormously to work within budget and to monitor potential job overruns, especially with third party operators. The alerts tell us exactly where we are up to, and if it looks as though we are going to go over budget on a certain job – maybe the task is more complicated than we first thought – then we can discuss its implications with the customer.”

He concludes: “There is very little doubt in my mind that competition is set to intensify as new players enter the airline industry, which means that we have to keep on investing in computer systems that will provide further efficiency gains.”

“We know we made the right decision to choose SYSPRO. Not only has K3 provided fantastic software I have to say that its biggest success is its support. K3’s helpdesk is tremendous. I am not an IT person but I know that it only takes a phone call and any issues are rectified quickly and efficiently” he concludes.