



HOW OEM'S CAN HELP CUSTOMERS ACHIEVE LUBRICATION EXCELLENCE

The world of lubricants is always evolving. As machinery becomes more advanced, lubricants adapt to meet challenges and enable equipment to perform at its peak. Working with lubricants experts to keep abreast of these changes is just one of the tactics that will help OEM's develop their in-house expertise and cement their position as an invaluable customer resource.

These top tips are brought to you as part of our Spotlight on Shell Experts series. Here, seven specialists from across Shell's Lubricants division, Scott Kwas, Gary Roberts, Siva Kasturi, Greg Paluska, Praveen Nagpal, Robert Profilet and Raghavendran Madhavarao explain all you need to know help your customers achieve lubrication excellence.

TIP 1. BECOME AN INVALUABLE RESOURCE

65% of customers told Shell they didn't have enough training in general, or fluids training specifically, to be able to understand lubricant specifications. Injection molding, for example, will adopt different technologies and different pumps which, in turn, need different specifications of lubricant. In a complex buying market, becoming a resource for lubrication best practices will help bridge the end-customer knowledge gap and encourage repeated business with OEM's.

TIP 2. UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMER'S INTERNAL PROCESSES

Companies can be very siloed, with finance and procurement operating in isolation from engineering and innovation. As a result, there isn't much understanding of the bigger picture and how some purchasing decisions can affect the success of a project and bring down TCO. By understanding how your customers operate financially, you can begin to tailor and time your own actions to align your key touch-points with their purchasing cycle.

TIP 3. ENCOURAGE AUDITING

Having customers buy in to regular monitoring and assessments from external suppliers such as Shell and OEM's, brings industry expertise to the forefront. Ultimately, this can help identify issues that have been missed or have grown so incrementally as to not be noticed on a day-to-day basis. For example, predictive maintenance can help sort any issues before they surface, preventing machine downtime. This can reduce the likelihood of unplanned maintenance, helping customers by allowing for quick resolutions and additional education, while benefiting OEM's by preventing last-minute, stressful jobs and unaccounted for costs.

TIP 4. LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

Being able to analyze data shown from a range of monitoring and site assessments helps organizations identify patterns, particularly if data is collected from more than one site. Because data is essential as a preventative action tool for businesses, understanding how to leverage it can be key to improving overall asset reliability, which will help to boost customer retention over the long-term.

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TIP 5. BREAK HABITS

Having gone through a process of developing successful customer relations, it is easy to rest on your laurels. But equipment and lubricants continue to evolve and therefore, so will the needs of your customers. Adopt a process of constant review to make sure that your procedures and guidance are still relevant to your customers' demands.

TIP 6. UPDATE YOUR TOOLKIT

Utilizing dedicated tools such as Shell LubeAnalyst gives you a much more detailed view of what's going on inside equipment. Investigate the peripheral products and services available from partners like Shell to make sure you're suitably equipped with the knowledge and tools required to boost equipment reliability and help secure future business.

TIP 7. COLLABORATE WITH EXPERTS

Don't just rely on internal knowledge sharing. Shell invests heavily in understanding innovations and challenges in the lubricants space, helping manufacturers to make sure products and service solutions are compatible and moving forward at the same pace as machinery development. If there is potential to improve the performance of your equipment, involving sector experts will invariably help to identify these opportunities.

TIP 8. LEVERAGE YOUR SERVICE ENGINEERS

OEM service engineers are often the most valuable resource in the field due to their expert knowledge of industry products. Their role in the OEM-end customer process can therefore be vital, with they provide a reliable and trusted voice 'on the ground' that customers tend to listen to. Learn to leverage this relationship in order to help keep lubrication excellence top of mind during each customer touch-point.

TIP 9. ADOPT SENSOR TECHNOLOGY

It is impractical, and often physically impossible, to manually inspect some equipment regularly or in detail. Innovations in Internet of Things (IoT) technology allow the use of sensors to anticipate wear and tear, deposit build up and many other issues that will eventually hinder operational performance. Additionally, the improved reporting capabilities they open up, will enable your equipment to operate at peak performance.

TIP 10. KEEP LUBRICANTS TOP OF MIND

Ineffective lube charts, poor lubricant storage procedures and inefficient workflows are just some of the ways in which OEM's may damage their end-customer relationships. Integrating lubricant best practices throughout your customer relations will help them overcome many of the simplest but most frequent causes of machine downtime and lubricant under performance.

TIP 11. TAKE A HOLISTIC VIEW OF YOUR EQUIPMENT

In the past, lubricants have been viewed as disposable elements of the industrial process that are necessary but low interest, with a tendency to view equipment and processes as a collection of parts, rather than each being part of a whole. Though increasingly, their importance in the overall smooth running of machinery is being understood. OEM's need to have an end to end understanding of the impact of both machinery and lubricants to set customers up for optimal performance, strengthening their own reputation in the process.

TIP 12. TAKE A HOLISTIC VIEW OF FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Typically, lubricants make up about 3% of an operator's overall maintenance budget, but that 3% can have a huge knock-on effect down the line for both customers and OEM's. Economy oils may mean lower initial outlay, but a higher number of oil changes and unplanned stoppages can make them more expensive in the long-term. Premium oils meanwhile, are designed to extend equipment lifetime as well as minimize breakdowns, ultimately reducing total cost of ownership and increasing the likelihood of repeated business.

