

LeTourneau Technologies

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Sean Hopkins

"We were struggling to keep track of our information flow," says Sean Hopkins, director of product support and training for LeTourneau Technologies. "We needed a better way to communicate with our dealers all over the world."

The LeTourneau Technologies, Inc.™ (LTI) companies include some of the world's leading innovators in manufacturing, design and implementation of systems and equipment for mining, oil and gas drilling, offshore, power control and distribution, forestry and steel. With business offices and dealers around the globe, streamlining communication had become critical.

"We wanted issues submitted by dealers to have broader coverage; to be seen by more than one person," says Hopkins. "We wanted the ability to log in and see the issues that have been open the longest, and to create a to-do list based on that priority."

The Most Flexible, Customizable Package

Hopkins says they considered building a system to address their requirements, and then decided to search the Web to see what the market had to offer.

"I found so many options," he says. "We narrowed our selection down to five tools to look at more closely, one of which was IssueTrak."

"One thing we really liked was IssueTrak's flexibility. Most of what we had seen was very oriented toward an IT helpdesk – my mouse doesn't work, my monitor is broken, etc.," says Hopkins. "Those solutions didn't give us the ability to change lexicon, from 'hard drive' to 'pump,' for example. IssueTrak gave us the ability to personalize what the end-users would see so it didn't look like the system was just a hodge-podge."

Pricing: Too Good To Be True?

According to Hopkins, his group was initially somewhat skeptical about IssueTrak's pricing. Not that it was too high, but that it seemed too low.

"After everything we had looked at, and considering how flexible IssueTrak was, we just couldn't figure out how they could price it so low," admits Hopkins. "But after talking with the people at IssueTrak, we established confidence in them very quickly. The decision was a no-brainer."

The Big Bang

"Implementing IssueTrak went even better than we thought it would," admits Hopkins. "Once IssueTrak got into the hands of users, it exploded! Since we started from scratch, we were quickly overwhelmed by the amount of requests we were receiving."

In response, the company completely

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restructured its support organization to better manage data flow, beginning with dividing the globe into three regions. When the Australian dealership submits an issue, for example, the issue is automatically assigned to the support person responsible for that region, with the appropriate regional and sales managers also receiving e-mail notification.

“IssueTrak allowed us to structure the organizational tier the way we wanted. Now we can automatically decide who an issue is assigned to and who else is included in the distribution,” Hopkins explains. “We can also list issues by type – mechanical, hydraulic, etc. – so engineers in that particular discipline can proactively participate in e-mail discussions and offer suggestions for resolving the issue.”

Global Visibility

In addition to using IssueTrak – or the internally coined name, “LeTrak” – for the product support and communication channel with dealers and end-users, Hopkins says they’re also using it to identify where they have problems on a global scale.

“With IssueTrak, we can see how many times a particular kind of pump has failed, for example. Having the ability to sort information that way helps us quickly identify any problem areas,” he explains. “We can sit down with our engineering department on a monthly basis and show them the problems on a global scale, so a part’s design or application can be evaluated.”

Greater Reliability

The company tracks the availability of its machinery as a key performance indicator

(KPI). The cost of machining equipment is significant, so customers naturally demand that their equipment meet rigorous standards for performance.

“Since implementing IssueTrak, we’re able to more aggressively meet our reliability standards and sustain customer retention,” says Hopkins. “We pride ourselves very heavily on reliability. IssueTrak makes it obvious where we need to direct our efforts.”

“The company president, CEO, and management also use IssueTrak as a resource to know how performance has been in an area they’ll be traveling to,” says Hopkins. “It’s helpful for them to be informed about what’s going on so they can better communicate with customers or dealers when they arrive.”

Easier Warranty Claims

To further aid the warranty process, LeTourneau has also created “WarrantyTrak,” a single-page view for dealers to view warranty claims in a single system.

“When a warranty claim is submitted, our suppliers often want details,” says Hopkins. “Things like pictures, a description of the problem, and also the LeTrak number. Having all of that detail in WarrantyTrak, and having our suppliers linked into a similar system, “RMA Trak” has made things much easier on our warranty manager.”

Sharing Knowledge Saves Time

Abandoning file cabinets and maintaining an online knowledgebase has helped the company share resources, and saved a lot

of headaches.

“Before, we were being asked the same questions over and over,” Hopkins grouses. “Then we had to try and remember which filing cabinet the answers were stored in.”

“With IssueTrak our corporation has a 24-7 communication portal and access to our valuable knowledgebase. Now we categorize information like welding procedures, schematics, and service information letters. Breaking data down into those categories has made it so much easier to search. Any time we update the knowledgebase, the system automatically generates an e-mail to let people know. It’s really great!”

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Bringing Departments Together

Hopkins is looking forward to incorporating another communication stream into the LeTrak suite, this time between the corporation’s assembly area and engineering department.

“Our Manufacturing Reporting System (MRS) will be set up so our assembly personnel can tell the engineering department when something doesn’t fit,” Hopkins says. “Having that kind of information available in one place will be invaluable.”

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