

Solenis Expands Its Service Capabilities

From a startup base in North America, the new offering will go global, providing mills with comprehensive protection.

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Equipment services technicians have cargo vans stocked with tools and equipment—“It’s a portable workshop,” says Kear.

As pulp and paper mills concentrate increasingly on their core business of making product, the onus for maintaining chemical reliability is often shifted onto the suppliers.

It is not a responsibility that suppliers have shirked and often it has become an integral part of their offerings to the industry. This applies not only to the pulp and paper industry, but other process industries as well.

For example, Solenis’ Equipment Services program kicked off in October 2015. As a chemical producer that supplies product to virtually every facet of pulp and paper making processes, the company started the program “because we

wanted to upgrade the customer experience with our equipment and applications,” says David Kear, North American equipment field services manager.

It is important that chemicals have the right feed systems for each application. According to Kear, the program was developed as a result of feedback from customers as well as the need for Solenis-supplied and owned equipment to be installed and serviced by “true professionals.” A program expanding the service to customer-owned equipment is in development.

In the past, sales representatives were too often the equipment professionals as well. “This

was too much,” Kear adds. “Particularly in pulp and paper, it’s become a common expectation that, as a supplier, we need to supply chemicals, equipment, and monitoring. This is the way the industry has evolved.”

Speaking about that evolution—which started with big ticket items and has since gone downstream to include small ticket equipment as well—Kear says that the Equipment Services program is not only a better way of doing things for the customer, it also supports an important company objective: to have its people be true professional technicians who work exclusively on equipment and service it themselves after



The company's goal was to provide true professional technicians to work exclusively on equipment and service it after startup.

startup. "Mills want to do more with less," Kear says, "so they are happy to turn over equipment service to the supplier."

Another goal is to keep the key sales representatives focused on customer needs, such as new product offerings and process improvements. There is also an important safety element: Rather than having the salesperson work with equipment, as was often the case in the past, it is now left in the hands of the professional.

A CLOSER CALL

A pulp mill could have dozens of applications, from chip penetration aids to defoamers to anti-scaling agents, as well as water and effluent treatment. Kear manages 30 people and, although pulp and paper makes up the majority of the business, the services personnel work cross-industry—this includes power plants, refineries, chemical plants, mining, and food and beverage.

Organized regionally, Kear explains that the equipment services personnel do not "belong" to any one site. They appear at the request of the sales representative. "They can go cross-industry," he adds, "but for the most part, industries tend to be situated in clusters."

Therefore, most technicians are located close to the sites where Solenis has a large presence. This has helped improve response time, particularly in emergencies. No longer is it necessary for technicians to fly across the continent in response to a call. "They have their own cargo vans with personal protective equipment, tools and the supplies that are most often used,"

Kear says. "It's a portable workshop. We want the customers to know that the sales reps have called in a service expert. We try to plan so as not to need to respond to an emergency—but plan so that there are fewer emergencies. We are trying to help our clients be better at preventive maintenance so as not to 'run to fail.'"

All of Solenis' feed equipment is skid-based. "We can rebuild onsite if upgrades are developed or wait until the skid life is over and replace with newer technology," Kear adds. "We are doing software upgrades all the time."

For a new installation, the Solenis technician will help mill personnel place the skid properly, talk with the mill E/I manager for all the electrical and control hook-ups, and make the tie-ins. The technician will also hook up the piping from storage tank to the skid to the

application points. Solenis is responsible for start-up and commissioning. The technician will also provide basic information to the sales rep and in some case to mill operators.

For the largest customers, an equipment service technician may be on site as often as three times weekly. If the technician is there for a specific service request, he or she will also do the rounds and check other feed systems to see if they need repair/maintenance.

Sales reps generate work orders electronically. "We use them to track what service was performed and why," Kear explains. "This gives us a mine of data for future use."

For annual shutdowns, Kear notes that Solenis has the ability to "flex" the team by bringing in additional equipment service techs. "This gives us greater capabilities. We can replace multiple pieces of equipment at this time. We can hit it powerfully."

He adds that some customers prefer this rather than doing things piecemeal during ongoing operations. To help with larger-scale operations, Solenis has started to qualify mechanical and electrical contractors working on customer sites to help with larger scope projects if necessary.

The concept was launched in North America. It has been successful, says Kear, so Solenis is looking to launch it in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. "We're excited at what we have accomplished so far," concludes Kear, "but we still have a long way to go. The technicians are still familiarizing themselves with the equipment and various operations." 

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Another Industry's Perspective

It's not all pulp and paper for Solenis' Equipment Services program.

At Marathon Oil's Canton, OH, operations, Solenis is responsible for water treatment. As a 24/7 operation making numerous value-added refined petroleum products, reliability is critical. Solenis offered its new program to Marathon and the oil giant took full advantage.

Operations supervisor Kris Harris says Solenis plays a key role in ensuring the reliability of its treatment and additive systems. "They are very proactive in maintenance and ongoing service."

For example, the refinery had corrosion issues with carbon steel piping from biocide tanks; the corrosion was leading to clogging problems. Solenis replaced the piping with schedule 80 CPVC pipe. Marathon personnel later noted that they could not have done such a professional job in the same amount of time.