

Global Mining Company Minimizes Costly Plant Hazards with Customized Remote Support

TechConnectSM Application Support agreement saves global mining company \$1.1 million annually in reduced downtime with customized, global support.

Challenge

Acquire consistent and highly knowledgeable technical expertise to address skill gaps at all sites, including emerging markets

Solution

Rockwell Automation TechConnect Application Support agreement

Results

Through the implementation of a customized Application Support agreement, this global mining company was able to:

- Reduce downtime by more than 50 hours per year
- Save \$1.1 million per year
- Fill skill gaps to improve processes
- Document valuable system information and establish a development tool through the Knowledge Management option
- Complete a global disaster recovery solution using FactoryTalk[®] AssetCentre
- Minimize risk of hazardous disasters



Background

A U.S.-based mining company of raw materials for the consumer household products industry faced significant industry challenges during its expansion into Asia. The mining company, along with many others in the industry, faced increasingly complex technology that requires highly trained support assistance to avoid costly down time and programming errors. With limited engineering resources throughout 15 sites, all of whom were based at their U.S. headquarters, the company lacked sufficient personnel to support all sites globally, around the clock.

LISTEN.
THINK.
SOLVE.™

Challenge

Many companies who expand in emerging markets experience inconsistencies in workforce competency. This mining company operates heavy and hazardous equipment and skill gaps among the employees present potentially high workplace safety risks.

At one site, the lack of engineering expertise led to a dangerous baghouse fire when an inexperienced employee made a programming change to the furnace exhaust fans. The manufacturer was forced to shut down its plant to investigate the cause and repair the damages. Unable to determine the source of the program changes, the global mining company consulted with Rockwell Automation engineers to improve the accountability and safety of their automation system.

Solution

With a TechConnect Application Support agreement, the global mining company acquired consistent and highly knowledgeable technical expertise to address skill gaps at all sites. Application Support engineers conducted site visits, gathered blueprints and became very familiar with the equipment, staff and operations to support the system effectively and implement engineering enhancements that improve workplace safety.

As a result of the baghouse fire incident, the customer elected the custom Administration option that not only provides them with emergency back-up of data and programs, but also includes FactoryTalk AssetCentre. Application Support engineers remotely configured AssetCentre on the controllers as a global disaster recovery solution that records an audit trail of all programming modifications for accountability.

To improve safety, the global mining company sought to tailor their RSView[®]32 application to view a detailed status of the entire plant. The ability to view customized visual reporting of line speeds, currents, voltages and blower fan operations enables employees to monitor equipment conditions continuously. In addition, alarm notifications were added to the Application Support agreement to help minimize downtime and prevent costly equipment failures.

All Rockwell Automation engineering projects are documented in the mining company's personalized Knowledgebase under the Application Support Knowledgebase Management option. The mining company can refer to these site-specific documents on an on-going basis as a learning aid and troubleshooting guide to augment their staff's knowledge.

Results

With their Application Support agreement, the mining company was able to fill skill gaps with a cost-effective, 24x7, front-line engineering resource. Through this partnership, the Application Support engineers became a virtual extension of the company's staff, handling basic system troubleshooting to enhance the process line. Because they are familiar with the customer's process line and equipment, resolution times to support downtime events are reduced. Application Support engineering efforts save the global mining company more than 50 hours of downtime per year, which is equivalent to greater than USD \$1.1 million annually.

Before implementing their Application Support agreement, the lack of engineering expertise posed a risk for highly dangerous and costly events that can result in plant-wide shut downs. Successful implementation of various engineering projects has created a safer working environment and minimized the risk for disaster. Now, the mining company can monitor critical data points and audit any changes made to the system to avoid potential hazards.

With the peace of mind knowing their Application Support agreement provides a consistent global support infrastructure, the mining company can remain focused on penetrating emerging markets and improving up time.

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