

Timken Rail Services digitally transforms factory floor with Infor MES

Industry leading solution drives rigour, quality and intelligence for global OEM's UK shop floor operations



Overview

About Timken Rail Services

Timken Rail Services helps the industry keep performance on track, working with builders, owners and operators to maximise the reliability and efficiency of their locomotives and rail cars.

Engineered for increased loads and speeds, its patented [Timken® AP-2™ bearing](#) meets the growing demands of rail transportation, including longer wheel life. Its compact design incorporates fewer components, reduces bearing weight and offers improved safety and reliability.

Using its global footprint, Timken Rail Services also refurbishes and replaces worn and damaged parts, returning the like-new bearings to reliable service.



Challenge

To replace a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system with modern, intelligent manufacturing execution system (MES) capabilities. Timken Rail Services' remit was focused on meeting both short-term customer requirements and long-term best practice, traceability and quality assurance.



Infor solution

The organisation selected Infor™ MES for its robust capabilities and its ability to integrate seamlessly with production systems and equipment.



Outcome

Through integration with enterprise resource planning (ERP) and all of Timken Rail Services machines and equipment, Infor MES consolidated all factory data in one place. This enables intelligent decisions, leading to greater rigour and control across operations.



“Since migrating to Infor MES, customer complaints are now rare. Product specifications are clear, serial numbers are accurate, and we maintain full visibility of each bearing's composition and lifecycle, from cradle to grave.”

Challenge

Applying rigour to the customer experience

Timken Rail Services needed to replace its previous SCADA system with modern, intelligence-led MES capabilities.

Specific pain points included:



Manual processes
and inefficiencies



Serial number data entry
procedures that limited tracking
and traceability



Lack of transparency

In parallel, a major new customer expedited this requirement, mandating MES capabilities and enhanced product tracking against serial numbers.

“Because serial numbers on our products were entered manually, there was a large margin for inaccuracies,” comments John Tebbutt, Senior IT Engineer at Timken Rail Services. “These inconsistencies increased the risk of customer complaints and reinforced the need for stronger standardisation and rigour.”

Infor solution

Bringing intelligence and collaboration to the factory floor

In addressing this requirement, Timken Rail Services selected Infor MES. After reviewing the market, the platform was the best fit for its operations, as John explains:

“We valued the robustness of Infor MES and its ability to connect across a LAN. The intuitive interface and integrated intelligence support more connected, data-driven factory floor operations. This felt genuinely transformative and represented a step change in our processes and practices.”

“Infor was incredibly impressive, bringing consultancy, experience and guidance to the project. A testament to the dedication and expertise of the team was that we went live within our customers’ deadline of just nine months.”



Following the initial deployment and onboarding of the major customer, Infor MES was rolled out across wider operations.



Outcome

By adopting Infor MES, the rail industry original equipment manufacturer (OEM) now benefits from a modern manufacturing execution platform. Not only does it integrate production, inventory, quality and maintenance operations to create a single source of truth, but it also supports standardised frameworks from which to optimise processes across the factory floor.

Fully integrated with ERP, Infor MES facilitates full tracking and traceability of its products. It creates, stamps, records and tracks serial numbers to generate a comprehensive view of each and every bearing's composition and journey. It records what materials are used in its production, which operative was involved, specific measurements and where it was dispatched to.

As John adds:

“Preset, machine-to-machine handshakes create a defined workflow that prevents manual overrides and protects data integrity and accuracy.”



In addition, increased automation has also freed up resource to analyse data and drive innovation. Representing an integral platform for factory operations, Infor MES has helped Timken Rail Services realize the following benefits:



A standardised framework from which to consistently deliver quality assurance



Support for complex refurbishment operations which extend the lifespan of parts



Enhanced client satisfaction driven by full tracking and traceability



Support for continuous improvement programmes and scale for future growth

Fulfilling the lifecycle of parts with a refurbishment programme

One area where the capabilities of Infor MES deliver particularly strong value is within Timken Rail Services' refurbishment programme. End-of-service interval bearings often have up to 80% good components. When returned, Infor MES brings control to the incoming inspection processes, ensuring products are logged and checked against a comprehensive framework.

The system effectively loads the bill of materials (BOM) in reverse, stripping the product back according to serial numbers. It then logs an inspection of each component and supports the rebuild process, helping to extend their lifecycle and encourage sustainability.

A continuous improvement journey

“In supporting our continuous improvement programme, Infor MES brings transparency and consistency,” John concludes. “Our quality engineers can review historical performance in detail and trace issues to specific pallets, supporting more informed quality assurance discussions and reinforcing our reputation for quality and service.”

“Looking ahead, we are exploring ways to make better use of Infor MES data. Advanced analytics support smarter ways of working, improved OEE and ongoing operational enhancements, including the adoption of OCR-based labelling to meet upcoming regulatory requirements.”

“Infor’s structured approach, supported by accessible consultancy and guidance, helps us maximise the value of Infor MES. It supports an engineering culture that combines our ethos with the structure, rigour and methodology needed for standardisation.”



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About Infor

Infor is a global leader in business cloud software products for companies in industry-specific markets. Infor builds complete industry suites in the cloud and efficiently deploys technology that puts the user experience first, leverages data science, and integrates easily into existing systems. Over 67,000 organizations worldwide rely on Infor to help overcome market disruptions and achieve business-wide digital transformation.

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Smarter manufacturing powered by Infor MES

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