

First-ever Implementation of Maximo® 5.2 Transportation Module Scoops Up Significant Gains for Blue Bell Creameries

The Challenge: Any company managing a fleet of more than 1500 (878 refrigerated trucks, 295 cars, 109 trucks, 82 tractors, 159 trailers and 11 miscellaneous vehicles), integrated with 45 distribution centers, 10 transfer stations and 4 production plants would have its challenges. Scooping up the best technology has to offer provided significant savings, focused manpower, and built a reliable fleet and all-round best practice operation for this nearly 100-year-old ice cream maker and distributor.

The Solution / Technology:

Implemented the first-ever Maximo 5.2 Transportation Module, employing TRM RulesManager™, TRM ScreenBuilder™, systems integration and various process improvement strategies for their Fleet and equipment maintenance.

The Results: Total Resource Management helped Blue Bell implement the Maximo 5.2 transportation module – yielding impressive results of many flavors, including:

- Improved business processes
- Improved maintenance activities planning and forecasting
- Increased warranty recoveries
- Increased man-hour utilization
- Increased network utilization and better information availability
- Extended asset life and increased asset availability
- Decreased inventory and decreased order time
- Improved response time more efficient changeovers
- Eliminated manual processes

Blue Bell Creameries, one of the top-three branded selling ice creams in the country, and Total Resource Management team up to ensure that Blue Bell's superior enterprise asset management (EAM) system delivers quality ice cream on time, every time.



"Our ice cream is so fresh, it was grass yesterday," said former Blue Bell Creameries President and CEO Howard Kruse. Similarly, Total Resource Management's (TRM) solutions are so fresh, they were simply data yesterday. That's why the pairing of this manufacturer and distributor of premium ice cream and this consulting and information technology solutions innovator is so effective.

In the Fall of 2003, when Blue Bell first turned to Total Resource Management for support, Blue Bell Creameries faced complex challenges managing its fleet of more than 878 refrigerated trucks and 10 transfer stations, integrated with 45 distribution centers. "Blue Bell looked to TRM as an advisor and partner for a successful implementation of an EAM system that would fully support their transportation assets and drive efficiencies throughout the entire process. Blue Bell's fleet management department had the vision of what they wanted to accomplish, and we listened, advised and made recommendations throughout the process," said Jennifer Stevenson, TRM project manager for Blue Bell.

The original goals involved:

- Evaluating established processes
- Determining the processes that provide the most value
- Deploying Maximo's Transportation Module
- Integrating continuous improvement techniques

Working with a team from Total Resource Management, Blue Bell Creameries optimized the features available through Maximo's Transportation 5.2 module. The TRM/Blue Bell project team immediately focused on business process improvement and visibility over their entire network, including fleet maintenance and distribution management system. Blue Bell learned how to use their enterprise asset management system to plan and forecast maintenance and repairs, as well as track and manage the current status of equipment. TRM helped Blue Bell plan a critical seasonal deadline while ensuring a quality delivery by using a phased, regional roll-out.

The results were significant. Blue Bell has improved overall business processes, and the allocation of assets associated with the distribution process has improved notably. They are now efficiently and accurately planning and forecasting maintenance activities, generating reports, and tracking and managing the overall status of the fleet with much greater efficiency. Costly mechanic time has been reduced, changeovers are more efficient and the overall leveraging of fleet assets has improved. When ice cream needs to arrive at a location, the fleet is ready.

Revisiting the Process

The first phase of the Blue Bell project involved the implementation of Maximo 5.2. "We initially conducted a value impact assessment to benchmark Blue Bell efforts," said Stevenson. "We started talking about process improvement and built a performance baseline. We helped them migrate to one centralized system, phasing out older software and systematically upgrading to Maximo 5.2. This assured one central repository for data."

"Total Resource Management helped us identify the many job functions that would benefit from using Maximo and there were many more than we initially thought. TRM recommended several steps to realign our business processes," said Tom Herrmann, Blue Bell purchasing agent. "The changes truly empower our remote users. Positive results were almost immediate with the elimination of many manual processes."

With increased visibility for all the branches, reduced redundancies in order placement and order tracking – the whole part process has been streamlined. Efficiency has increased. Branches have access to their own information and no longer need to rely on the Corporate office.

Warranties are no longer tracked by one corporate employee inputting data on a separate system. Anyone can access the information and faulty equipment is more easily addressed within the warranty period.

Blue Bell's Great Divide Bar



Vehicles can be evaluated at any stage of their useful life – improving decisions such as whether it's more cost effective to repair or replace older vehicles. Manual preventive maintenance (PM) order handling is another example of process improvement. PMs were usually scheduled and disseminated manually by corporate employees. In most cases untimely manual data input often led to a backlog for parts scheduling and availability. Now, branches are able to run their own reports and queries – invoices and other costs are in the hands of the branch manager for better decision making.

Time savings and efficiencies have dramatically reduced calls to the corporate office. Now, the information is all right there on one easily accessible system. TRM RulesManager played an integral part in improving information availability by allowing information access based on group, level or individual passwords. TRM RulesManager can build in calculating tools that can track various taxes. In addition, TRM RulesManager allows the system to alert the user of data or activities for which they might normally spend time hunting. For example, a message will pop up if a user tries to enter a duplicate part number.

"We provide our customers with options, information and advice and hope they will run with it," Stevenson said. "Blue Bell did just that. Process efficiency has improved all around, emphasizing Blue Bell's theme: 'Change is Good.'"

It's in the Numbers

Blue Bell has 668 delivery routes. The fleet and machinery includes some 1534 vehicles and equipment – bobtails, tractors, trailers, cars and light and medium duty trucks, refrigeration units, construction equipment, heavy duty equipment and more.

With the new EAM system in place, Blue Bell can generate data that reflects the Vehicle Maintenance Reporting Standards (VMRS) codes – enabling the calculation of cost per mile reports, gas prices per mile, vehicle maintenance cost per year and depreciation data. Maximo is accessible to branch employees who are now able to run specific queries on inventory in their own location and compare it with other locations. Purchase orders, receipts and transfers are no longer handled manually.

MRO Software provided a custom installation of its Fuel System Interface (FSI) with existing fuel card purchasing systems Voyager and TRAK. This enabled Blue Bell to automatically capture data that updates meters, checks odometer readings for mileage and preventive maintenance, and updates costs and information for equipment. Now that Blue Bell drivers use a company gas card, information as detailed as date, vehicle ID, gallons, fuel type and location will be tracked.

Training is Important

All of these amazing results could not have been accomplished without user training on the system features. TRM provided manuals, a comprehensive training program and “train the trainers” sessions. Blue Bell employees were trained for eight hours each day for nearly two weeks. “Power Users” were identified and the TRM team created a training partner site for continued improvement and training sessions.

What’s Next?

At Blue Bell, “They always think outside of the box and plan for the future,” Stevenson said.

Since the project’s beginning in December 2003, process reengineering and process improvement have been TRM’s continued focus and commitment.

“Blue Bell has been unbelievably flexible and very willing to embrace change. As we moved through the process, we were able to address and overcome challenges together,” Stevenson said. “For greater collaboration and efficiency, we have set up a private network with Blue Bell and can work on their great new ideas remotely, and very effectively.”

Although Maximo 5.2 was critical for the initial phase, some elements of 5.2.2 already are being added. For example, one improvement is a more efficient labor utilization process for Blue Bell. Using a tool called Mechanics’ Clipboard, the maintenance team has a stop and start button assigned to every service technician. Blue Bell can review a daily labor usage report and accurately plan for mechanics time. “We calculate that we have saved 15,000 man hours in a year,” Herrmann said.

Blue Bell now has complete maintenance information visibility – in the truck, trailer and paint shops, as well as branches. This is important for tracking mileage, hours, and ultimately, scheduling.

Another upgrade example is the lifecycle component that enables Blue Bell to track depreciation and forecast the useful life of their fixed transportation assets over their expected life time. It can also calculate net present value.

Blue Bell, with TRM’s assistance, hopes to continue its business process improvement path by increasing transparency and accessibility to other enterprise applications – such as adding an Oracle financials interface and a human resources database interface.

Driver PDA handheld solutions are also in Blue Bell’s future plans. Handhelds can be used for:

- Collecting data and issuing work orders
- Tracking and inventory control for storerooms and remote service technicians
- Automatic collection of invoice data from outside repair centers, parts, service and preventive maintenance
- Workflow improvement and automating tools
- Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIR) with the TRAK system

“Quality” is a Favorite Flavor

“Quality is the number one concern,” Stevenson said, “Not only in ice cream but in the products they purchase and consulting services they demand. Quality product. Quality people. Quality results. They could tell that we at TRM cared as much about quality as they do.”

“We work diligently to become a trusted advisor for our customers,” Stevenson said. “Blue Bell listens to our proposed solutions and even offers their own. They are always coming to us for something new and want to take additional steps. It’s an ongoing relationship that truly benefits their bottom line.”

“Blue Bell’s and TRM’s businesses are very aligned,” Herrmann said. “They make an excellent partner.”

Find Out More

For more information about Total Resource Management solutions or this story, please call 877-548-5100.

About Total Resource Management

Total Resource Management, Inc. (TRM) delivers consulting and information technology solutions that help organizations improve the management and performance of their enterprise assets (facilities, infrastructure, logistics, production and IT). Over the past decade, the company has supported over 200 clients with enterprise asset management expertise, professional services and productivity enhancement products that result in significant improvements to their business operations. Its headquarters are located in Alexandria, Virginia and supporting offices are located across the U.S. Total Resource Management's Advanced Technology Centers are located in Virginia, California, Washington, Pennsylvania and Hawaii. More information is found at www.trmnet.com

About Blue Bell Creameries

Blue Bell Creameries is a regional ice cream manufacturer headquartered in the small, rural town of Brenham, Texas. It operates in 45 distribution facilities and provides service to 16 Southern states including: Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, parts of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina and Arizona. More information is found at www.bluebell.com