

Mainsaver supports growing efficiencies at Huntapac

Company Profile

Location	Preston, Lancashire
Industry	Vegetable growing & packing
Founded	1942

Situation

- Not enough reliable maintenance data
- Incidence of plant breakdown too high
- Poor audit performance and ratings

Solution

Mainsaver® CMMS to support best practice in maintenance and inventory management

Benefits

- Plant downtime significantly reduced
- Asset maintenance costs under control
- New culture of ongoing improvement
- Huntapac now used as “best practice” example by auditors
- Production and engineering co-operating



“The benefits of using Mainsaver have been greater than we ever thought possible.”

*Warren Hunter, Managing Director,
Huntapac Produce Ltd*



Nestled in thousands of acres of beautiful Lancashire countryside is the headquarters of Huntapac Produce Ltd, one of the country's largest and most successful growers, packers and distributors of high-quality root vegetables.

The company was founded in 1942 in the village of Holmes (near Preston) and originally supplied local vegetable markets across Yorkshire and Lancashire. Over the last three decades however, the company has expanded significantly to cope with rising demand, and Huntapac is now a high-volume enterprise whose customers include major supermarket chains, wholesalers, caterers, food manufacturing and food-service operations.

At the processing and packing plant, trailers stacked with vegetables arrive all day long and unload at one end of the building. The produce is then washed, brushed, graded, sorted, packed and refrigerated, ready for collection and distribution to hundreds of onward destinations at the factory's opposite end. The output quantities are staggering - 50,000 tonnes of carrots, 10,000 tonnes of parsnips and 10,000 tonnes of other vegetables (cauliflower, cabbages, asparagus and Brussels sprouts among others) leave the factory every year.

By all reasonable standards, Huntapac could pride itself on its operational efficiency. However, an onsite audit from one of its largest customers (a well-known retail multiple) proved to be a pivotal moment in the company's history.

“We failed the audit, and we failed it badly,” recalls Will Hunter, CMMS Project Manager. “Our jobsheet-based preventative maintenance and spares inventory management were considered not good enough. The auditors didn't mince their words and, to be honest, they made us feel very small.”

Huntapac reacted immediately by hiring Paul Bond - himself a former produce grower - as Maintenance Manager to help address the situation. He freely admits that the task looked like “a massive challenge.”



“Mainsaver paid for itself **within six months”**

Colin Sigsworth, Health & Safety Manager, Huntapac Produce

Bond already believed that the most effective way to manage and execute a successful preventative maintenance programme was to introduce Computerised Maintenance Management Software (CMMS). After comparing a number of options, Huntapac selected Mainsaver.

“Most of the competing solutions we looked at would have required us to delegate one person to spend all their time just administering it. That seemed to us to defeat the object - we wanted engineers, managers and production personnel all involved.” Huntapac’s inclusive approach overcame many of the factory floor misgivings frequently associated with IT projects in manufacturing environments and the implementation met few obstacles.

Having created a database of the company’s plant assets, the implementation team created new preventative maintenance schedules against each one and then made the entire system available to engineers and production staff alike by loading Mainsaver onto touchscreen PCs housed in stainless steel kiosks in the engineering workshop and out in the production area.



The engineering stores that once failed a customer audit are now pictured on that same customer’s **Best Practice** website.

The effect was almost immediate, as Will Hunter explains. “Straight away, there was a substantial increase in the number of maintenance activities we were recording. Analysis of the data showed that we were now completing an even higher proportion of maintenance works, despite there appearing to be nearly three times as much of it. This was down to the presence of Mainsaver all around the plant - each job remains visible on the outstanding work queue until an engineer closes it. Nothing is overlooked or forgotten.”

Production Manager Richard Gallimore agrees; “Mainsaver enables me to log maintenance requests with far more detail against them than I was able to previously. The benefit is that engineers can now ensure that they have the correct tools and spares in hand before attending the job - there’s no need to come and ‘take a look’ first. As a result, the average repair time has greatly improved and non-productive time has been reduced.”

Another significant change engendered by Mainsaver’s presence on site has been a burgeoning culture of Continuous Improvement. Gallimore again: “Because Mainsaver makes it so easy to request work and we know that the engineers will respond quickly, we’ve asked for - and had done - a number of small but significant technical enhancements on the production machinery. We’re actually looking for improvements all the time now.”

Will Hunter describes one of the enhancements his colleague refers to. “The roller table on the production line needs to be cleaned down all the time, but owing to its position, doing so was awkward and time consuming. When this was reported in Mainsaver, we simply modified the casing by creating some extra access ports and now washing the unit down is far easier and quicker.”

It is this succession of small technical refinements that is contributing to a marked downward trend at Huntapac in the incidence of major breakdowns of the kind that stop production altogether.

“A few years ago we were suffering two or three total production stoppages every week” recalls Health & Safety Manager Colin Sigsworth. “Speaking today, we haven’t experienced one for months. It’s a massive step forward.”

The spectre of unplanned production downtime looms particularly large when the retail giants triple or even quadruple an order across a 24-hour period, as some of Huntapac’s customers do.

“We simply have to fulfil the supermarket’s order in the timeframe we are given. If we lose two hours’ production during the day owing to a breakdown, we have to make that time up at night at overtime rates - the knock-on costs of non-productive time are enormous. Reducing breakdowns as much as we have been able to has meant that Mainsaver paid for itself within six months of installation.”

Huntapac’s Managing Director Warren Hunter had maintained what might be described as “a healthy scepticism” at the beginning of the Mainsaver project, but the results achieved by his implementation project team have spoken for themselves.

“We are getting more information and more benefit from using Mainsaver than I ever thought possible” he says. “The most important factor for me is that we now have a sense of control. Previously we were inclined to rely on gut feeling if we needed make a decision on maintenance costs; for example, whether it would be more cost-effective to replace an item of plant rather than to keep repairing it. Now we have all the information we need for that type of discussion at hand.”

Clarity of information relating to a manufacturer’s maintenance activities is not only important for internal use; as Huntapac had previously experienced, this information also needs to be available for inspection by external auditors.

Warren Hunter: “The standards required to pass a maintenance audit from one of the UK’s big supermarkets are easily as stringent as those that lead to ISO accreditation. It wouldn’t surprise me at all if in future the supermarkets began to insist on implementation of CMMS systems as a pre-requisite by their suppliers.”

So the real acid test of Huntapac’s Mainsaver implementation came on the next site audit by the retail customer whose previous criticism had been so comprehensive. How did they get on?

“We passed with flying colours” says Paul Bond. “There was a lot of praise for our PM program and they subsequently published a photograph of our engineering stores on their Best Practice website. By any standards, this represents fantastic progress and Mainsaver has been central to that.”

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