

bpost – SOLYSTIC: a long-lasting partnership

Interview with Jean-Michel Legros, National Maintenance Manager, bpost



From left to right: Steve Collie and Paul Dens, new and former directors of SOLYSTIC Belgium Branch and Jean-Michel Legros, national maintenance manager, bpost.

SOLYSTIC: Could you tell us what are bpost's main current challenges regarding maintenance?

Jean-Michel Legros: bpost's operations strategic plan (Vision 2020) involves considerable changes in its machine stock:

- an increase in mail preparation mechanisation,
- the development of new functionalities in such machines as Postabo* addressing,
- expanding machine stock,
- increased working time for some equipment (MSM).

As part of this strategic plan, the project which aims at centralising package sorting at the new Brussels X facility also represents a key challenge to overcome regarding the availability and reliability of the equipment. In a bid to ensure reliability throughout the machine stock, we focused our concerns on setting up an optimal maintenance policy. It is our intent to apply this policy through smaller engineering teams at bpost (one manager and one expert for every sorting facility), whose primary assignment is to monitor sorting equipment performance for letters and packages, working closely with SOLYSTIC.

S.: What do you expect from the new SLA?

J-M.L.: The new SLA will help us to achieve full availability of all equipment, performing at top level at all times and for the best cost.

Given how crucial the machines are in the sorting process, bpost has no alternative but to conduct a "customer-supplier" relationship with its maintenance subcontractor.

- On the one hand, as a result of his increased understanding of the equipment's capacities and limitations, the maintenance provider can help bpost to be more efficient by taking part in training and coaching operators in how to make better use of the machines.
- On the other hand, through their observations while working, machine operators can provide vital information in spotting the causes of malfunctions and poor quality.

In its recent call for tenders, bpost has included a determination to build a solid partnership with a maintenance provider.

S.: In what way is it different from the previous one?

J-M.L.: First, higher expectations in performance levels. These are expressed through the most

suitable KPIs** for handling operational realities inside sorting facilities. Expectations in equipment availability levels are higher, especially during periods that are known as critical. Moreover, the duration and frequency of downtime is taken into account: a succession of short downtime periods is more harmful than a single downtime period that lasts longer. Equipment performance will also be checked periodically, and at first this will be done by bpost agents, with help from SOLYSTIC if required. The purpose of the tests is to:

- verify, at any time and with no special conditions, that the equipment is functioning correctly,
- only call on SOLYSTIC in the event that some tests are inconclusive, thus letting our partner mainly focus on maintenance.

Secondly, increased and improved reporting.

The amount of reports expected from the maintenance partner has changed significantly in order to be in a position to monitor:

- the daily performance and availability of all the equipment,
- the rate of satisfactory, on-time completion of maintenance plans,
- the comparative performance of sorting facilities (availability - costs),
- the comparative performance of machines (availability - costs),
- the use of spare parts,
- etc.

Those reports have different, complementary purposes.

For the ordering party:

- monitoring the correct maintenance of the equipment,
- ensuring that the maintenance provider is doing his utmost to achieve the expected objectives,

For the maintenance provider:

- enjoying an overall, accurate perspective on the work of his teams and on the results achieved.

For both partners:

having a shared documentary database so as to better understand one another and to seek avenues of improvement together that will benefit both parties. The process also brings about greater transparency through the availability of a computer-aided maintenance management tool, owned by bpost and fuelled by the maintenance provider. Then, a flexible pricing principle.

Unlike the previous SLA, where the price of maintenance was an annual flat rate, the new SLA applies a variable price according to processed volume. For every type of equipment, a cost is determined for spare parts, consumables and labour on the basis of a set budget. This could be compared to a price per thousand letters. Accordingly, the cost of maintenance will be in keeping with the volume that is actually processed.

"THE NEW SLA APPLIES A VARIABLE PRICE ACCORDING TO PROCESSED VOLUME."

In addition, the offer includes the possibility of adding or removing equipment at pre-set rates.

As a result, the cost of equipment maintenance has no negative impact on the processing cost according to volume.

S.: Why did bpost choose SOLYSTIC for this project?

J-M.L.: SOLYSTIC answered the call for tenders and was competing with other providers. There were three points underlying the final decision:

- the overall price of the contract,
- the issues of quality and methodology,
- the agreement regarding bpost legal demands.

Following the negotiation process, SOLYSTIC was positioned with the best overall ratings.

Since the contract was signed, SOLYSTIC has initiated a preparation phase which appears promising with regards to providing maintenance and achieving the expected results.

This is demonstrated by the setting up and deployment of professional computer-aided maintenance management. ■

from Vincent Moulin and Corinne Saulnier-Eude

* Destination addresses printed by the sorting equipment

** Key Performance Indicators



BETWEEN US

BELGIQUE

Service Level Agreement: SOLYSTIC will continue to provide full maintenance service (SLA) for bpost

After a 9 months RFP process, the national postal operator of Belgium, bpost, has renewed the service contract (SLA, "Service Level Agreement") with SOLYSTIC. SOLYSTIC will continue to ensure, every single day, availability and performances of the national network for mail, press and parcel; a network of 7 sorting centers, handling more than 9 millions of objects per day, and including more than 150 pieces of industrial equipment and various IT applications. The service contract relies on the proven competences of SOLYSTIC Belgium Branch as well as on innovative tools and approaches. For example, monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in real-time, a new Computer-aided Maintenance Management System, adaptability to volumes variations. A continuous improvement story that continues to be written each and every day.

