



# Service priorities for customer growth

MechChem Africa talks to Atlas Copco's Ian Ainsworth, the new business line manager for Compressor Technique Service (CTS) about positioning the service offering to better suit the needs of its compressor users.

**F**rom a service perspective, we at Atlas Copco want to be seen as on our customers' side, making their processes more efficient, more effective and more productive," begins the company's new service line manager, Ian Ainsworth. "Our global vision is to be 'first in mind, first in choice', and our internal interpretation of that is that our staff should have our customers first in mind so that they choose us as their preferred partner for compressed air," he adds.

"Corporates tend to become inward focused, relying on internal procedures and machine specifications in their dealings with customers, who can be left feeling let down because nobody is responding directly to their specific needs and concerns. We believe in forming partnerships with clients, personal relationships that involve mutual trust and a thorough understanding of each customer's needs and priorities," he says.

"At CTS, we see our role as going beyond servicing, repairing or overhauling a machine.

It's more about finding ways of supporting customers so that their business and ours can succeed and grow," Ainsworth tells *MechChem Africa*.

Describing a new initiative in the service planning department, he says: "We have always had an excellent planning team who are strong when it comes to administration, planning and using the CRM (customer relationship management) systems. But these administration specialists are not always technically trained and some have never visited a compressor on site. When a customer phones, it always helps when the person talking to them can see their environment and fully understand the issues involved," he points out.

"When standing in a compressor room at a Platinum mine 300 km away reporting a fault and asking for immediate assistance, background information such as whether power cables are connected and/or accessible; how high the ceiling is and whether lifting gear is available onsite might be very relevant. But from a planning/call-out perspective these



*Above: While planning the service visit, the technical service coordinator can identify exactly what the Atlas Copco technician will need to perform the service.*

*Left: CTS Service Plans are Atlas Copco's preferred way of establishing lasting long-term relationships with the users of its compressor technology.*

gests, but he cautions that he is not suggesting that customers should neglect their systems – they still need to ensure that the filters are not clogged, coolers blocked, the ventilation is adequate and, most importantly, that the machines are well lubricated.

CTS Service Plans are Atlas Copco's preferred way of establishing lasting long-term relationships with the users of its compressor technology. "We see the protection of these machines as a partnership. Users need to be alert to the things that indicate problems, while we keep track of the routine maintenance requirements. That way, the best life and performance can be extracted from the investment and the costs of ownership kept to a minimum," he says.

In addition, almost all new Atlas Copco compressors are now delivered with advanced monitoring and communication systems built in. Through SmartLink, machines are able to monitor and self diagnose their condition, with data being automatically uploaded via a GSM connection to Atlas Copco servers in the cloud. This enables advanced predictive maintenance to further protect customers' assets.

Information that makes the compressor room more accessible and transparent to the customer can be analysed and displayed on dashboards by the customer or by Atlas Copco technicians. Every machine's performance can be tracked so that reliability issues can be detected early and energy use efficiently managed.

"With our SmartLink Uptime licence, sensor and alarm data from the compressor is uploaded every 40 seconds and, should any

fall outside of normal operation, users and Atlas Copco technicians will be immediately alerted.

"If coupled with our Total Responsibility premium offering service plan, an Atlas Copco technician will be dispatched to attend to any fault before the operator is even aware of an issue," he tells *MechChem Africa*.

From a sustainability perspective, Atlas Copco has long been at the forefront of developing and supplying the most efficient compressor systems available, driven by advanced VSDs and permanent magnet motor technology. "In Europe, it is common for plants to invest millions in order to save 2.0% on their energy costs," Ainsworth reveals.

"As a rule of thumb, if a plan can reduce the pressure requirement from its compressor system by 1.0 bar, the electricity consumption and cost for compressed air will reduce by 7.0% – and from a service perspective, there are many ways that this can be done: reducing pressure drops across the filters; fixing all of the air leaks; and paying close attention to the lubrication and cooling of the compressor, to name but a few.

"During a recent service, we noted that the lubricating oil was running at 85 °C. Following servicing and by switching to the recommended lubricant, we were able to reduce that temperature by 15 °C, which massively improves the machine's efficiency," he relates.

Atlas Copco's SmartLink Energy is the monitoring tool that strives to optimise energy use for compressor users. Through customised reports on the energy efficiency of the compressor room, in compliance with ISO 50001, it becomes possible to identify energy saving opportunities across the plant so as to minimise operational costs. In addition, better-optimised systems are more reliable, so compressor operational costs can be further reduced.

"As a cost-effective starting point for taking back control of compressor rooms, we recommend the Atlas Copco Preventative Maintenance Agreement with a SmartLink Uptime licence. This covers scheduled services but has the added protection of advanced monitoring to minimise the risk of unplanned breakdowns," Ainsworth suggests.

"From our side, we are also implementing a new local strategy to better utilise the data available from our machines in the field. We are fortunate to have several experienced technical specialists that can drill down, interpret and summarise machine data coming in from connected machines so that we can more regularly pre-empt onsite problems," he adds.

"Through all of CTS's new service initiatives, we aim to put customers first and get back to relationships where customers know that we have their interests in mind," he concludes. □

questions seldom occur to a CRM-system specialist.

"What we have now done is add technically experienced people to the spares and service planning division so that customers can be better supported by people who understand the servicing needs. When that call comes in, the technical service coordinator knows to ask the relevant questions and, while planning the service visit, he or she can imagine and discuss exactly what the customer's concerns are and what the Atlas Copco technician will need to bring in order to resolve the issue to the customer's total satisfaction," he says.

"The immediate result of this approach is that delays are avoided, customer downtime is reduced and our onsite technicians' time is used more efficiently," explains Ainsworth, adding that this benefits both the customer and Atlas Copco.

"It is about making it easier for customers to do business with us. Through more responsive and better service, we are committed to making customers feel better supported," he adds.

A second innovation, according to Ainsworth, involves "beefing up our internal planning systems: Our existing system, MAM, has been used for work scheduling for several years. This is a centrally located online system with a calendar view that enables us to go paperless with respect to service schedules and work allocation.



Atlas Copco Compressor Technique's South African service team.