Granite Falls Energy Eliminates Manual Maintenance Tasks and Enhances Asset Tracking with LLumin CMMS+

Business Challenges

- An outdated, complex CMMS that required extensive manual input

- No ability to configure or customize to match business processes

LLumin CMMS+ Key Features

- Configurable, yet and easy-to-use

- Automated workflow that triggers actions and notifications

- Integrated safety & compliance functionality

The Results

- Improved interdepartmental communication with streamlined data recording and sharing

- Preventive maintenance tracking that eliminates manual recordkeeping and asset management

- User-friendly interface that requires minimal training

About the Customer

Granite Falls Energy, LLC (GFE) is a biofuel manufacturer located 125 miles west of Minneapolis in Granite Falls, Minnesota. The renewable energy company buys bushels of corn from US farmers and processes the corn to produce ethanol for fuel. They also produce distillers corn oil and distillers dried grains with solubles, both derivatives of corn-based ethanol manufacturing.

GFE comprises more than 900 investors and oversees nearly 5,600 assets at their impressively sized plant.

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Challenge: Outdated Technology Hampers Productivity

Systems Administrator Brian Hanson and Plant Manager Cory Heinrich are the team members behind GFE's efficiency protocols, continuously tracking even the smallest metrics to maximize the company's yields and lower their overall cost per gallon of ethanol for biofuel.

"Our maintenance technicians manage an average of 300 preventive maintenance work orders (PMs), alone, every month," says Heinrich.

This tremendous workload presents an intimidating array of challenges to the GFE team. Unfortunately, the company's old, outdated CMMS software created more problems than it solved.

Challenge: Inefficient Asset Tracking

Previously, Granite Falls Energy was forced to use spreadsheets for most asset tracking, resulting in costly inefficiencies.

"We manage nearly 5,600 assets at GFE," Heinrich explains. "Up until 2018, we manually assigned tracking numbers to asset tags on every part and piece of equipment."

"Our maintenance techs were using paper for work orders," Hanson reveals, "filling them out by hand, then giving them to me or another tech who would sit down and input all the data. But nothing was integrated in our old CMMS. You could look at a work order but couldn't filter or sort the data for a given period. And Finding purchase orders was almost impossible. We had to do almost everything by hand."

Challenge: Unmanageable Maintenance Reporting

Proactive maintenance is critical at a massive plant like Granite Falls Energy. But maintenance techs struggled to track critical equipment data with the company's former CMMS.
Heinrich says, "A tech would record the temperature of a bearing, for example, and it might seem on the high side. But there was no way for that tech to easily look back at previous months to verify whether the bearing temperature had increased over time. Data was so difficult to track that techs would eventually just give up and move on, leading to much bigger repercussions later on."

Challenge: Zero Flexibility

The inability to customize their old CMMS posed major usability problems for the GFE team. "The way the other program worked was that, once you bought in, you were all in," Heinrich asserts. It was complicated and too cumbersome for our team to navigate. We used a fraction of the software's capabilities, because we couldn't configure it to do what we needed." Heinrich laughs, "I never even attempted to use the old reporting system. I would've rather tried to track down information on a clipboard somewhere!"

Solution: LLumin's CMMS+ Configurability is a Game-Changer

In 2018, Heinrich and Hanson were introduced to LLumin's CMMS+ software for the first time. The team immediately recognized it as the solution GFE needed.

"We couldn't make our old CMMS truly ours," says Heinrich. "But LLumin? Fold it and mold it to what you want. LLumin is really customizable."

First and foremost, Hanson was impressed by LLumin's usability. He knew LLumin would be leaps and bounds simpler for the team to learn and use.

LLumin allowed us to integrate our entire system," Hanson says. "Work order tracking, purchasing, project tracking, procurement, the whole works: now it's all integrated into one easy-to-use platform

Heinrich particularly values LLumin's configurable modules, which can be edited, added, and even hidden if needed. "Purchasing, issuing, and reporting are our primary modules," he shares. "We added a project management module for project tracking. And within each module, we've built templates, created tags, and added our assets." Thanks to LLumin's personalization and user-friendliness, the entire GFE team can leverage the CMMS+ software's power.

Heinrich says. "LLumin was willing to put in the work to make their CMMS work for GFE. And we didn't get that with our old CMMS provider.
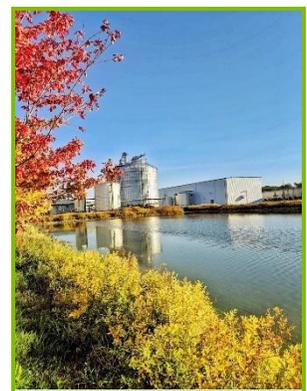
Solution: Accurate Tracking And Visual Reporting

"We instantly liked the ease of tracking work orders and processing our purchase orders electronically," Heinrich says. "Now, we can search for a vendor and see all asset expenses linked to that vendor. And when we create a report within LLumin, the software generates useful graphs."

GFE's maintenance techs frequently use LLumin to convert data points into trends. Take, for example, the bearing temperature tracking that gave GFE so much trouble pre-LLumin.

Heinrich explains that today, GFE's techs find it easy to review previous data and track critical information over time. Accurate, accessible reporting helps Granite Falls Energy boost efficiency, increase yield, and reduce ethanol production costs.

"We use LLumin's parts reorder utility to help manage our inventory," says Hanson. "When any item is reduced to its minimum, LLumin triggers our purchasing department to place an order."

Solution: Reliable Safety Solutions

Safety is always a top concern in manufacturing, and Granite Falls Energy takes safety seriously.

Before a tech begins work on a piece of equipment," explains Hanson, "they can click into the asset in LLumin and see all of that asset's safety documentation—right at their fingertips.

Results: Top Three Benefits

With over 900 investors keeping a close watch over GFE's operations, the value LLumin brings is immeasurable. Since Granite Falls Energy implemented and integrated with LLumin's CMMS+, the ethanol plant has benefited most from:

- Enhanced interdepartmental communication. LLumin enables streamlined data recording and sharing so that all of GFE's team members have full access to the information they need at any time, from anywhere. And, LLumin's user-friendly interface requires minimal training to boost efficiency.

- Powerful preventive maintenance tracking. LLumin's tracking solutions eliminate time-consuming manual recordkeeping, empowering GFE to manage assets with searchable records and automated work order triggers.

- Increased compliance and record keeping, including enhanced MOC processes.

We get asked, 'Where are your assets? What do you think is failing?'" Heinrich says. "And when I can sit down in front of my general manager or our board, and I can't come up with a single failing asset to report, well, that's a good spot to be in.

LLumin

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