

Power, Usability Refines Fine Tuning

Expertune's flagship product, PlantTriage, is a way to visualize the performance of a process plant. The product provides multiple views of the data that the plant control system is collecting, and permits operators and engineers to pinpoint problem areas and correct bottlenecks and maintenance issues before they cause upsets or shutdowns.

Why do you need tools like these? It used to be that all we had to do was install a control system in a plant to improve productivity, but now we need to optimize the performance of the process by tuning the control system for the highest possible profitability. Powerful software tools like PlantTriage give operators, engineers and managers the insight into their process and control systems, so they can properly tune their processes. Sometimes, however, the most powerful software tools aren't the easiest tools to use.

New Features

PlantTriage 6.0 is a major step forward in usability as well as power. You can begin by using existing historical data to jumpstart the project, and you can learn the system by investigating previous incidents from your own plant, using PlantTriage's full toolset.

You can configure your reports with filter and sort capability. The software provides context-sensitive drill-down for data mining, allowing you to get directly to the root cause of problems or bottlenecks, and the new Zoom capability in PlantTriage 6.0 lets the user go from the corporate data level all the way down to individual loops.

FIGURE 1.

KPIS ON THE DASH




PlantTriage 6.0's Loop Performance Dashboard shows all aspects of loop performance in one, customized page.

A Loop Performance Dashboard gives you customized, one-page detail of all aspects of loop performance. You can get a summary of overall plant performance with just a glance at the Plant Performance Dashboard. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are prominently displayed, which helps you keep your plant focused on the most important measures. This new version has Six Sigma support, including Pp and Ppk.

Solvers and Assessments

Problem-Solvers are new, pre-configured analysis tools for the most common performance problems, such as process constraints, valve failures, and loops needing tuning. Problem-Solvers for maintenance, operations, and engineering are included in the package. Some pre-configured assessment tools also are provided, including assessments of operational results, like unit cost, throughput, reliability, quality and energy costs. An Opportunity Gap assessment tool is also pre-configured, and tells the operator where to make setpoint adjustments to improve profits. According to George Buckbee of Expertune, "This is one of the fastest, easiest ways to increase profitability, similar to shifting moisture and basis weight targets on a paper machine, for example." Other operational assessments that come pre-configured with PlantTriage 6.0 include setpoint changes, mode changes, and output changes, among others. You may also define your own assessments of performance using any math they want. You can even use existing PlantTriage assessment results to calculate new user-defined assessments. You might want to define an assessment for positioner feedback, alarm information, or loop-by-loop material costs. You might want to assess operator tracking, or diagnostic information from HART, Profibus or Foundation fieldbus instruments.

Trending and Tracking

Reports can be viewed on the web, shared with co-workers, or delivered routinely via e-mail. New user-customizable report formats are supplied with PlantTriage 6.0. These include table views, trend views, and multi-trend views. The new software now integrates event information with web-based trending, so you can look at a trend, and see the operational, process, or tuning events that happened in the same time frame. Buckbee notes, "This can help you to make sense of the data, develop better process understanding, and get to root cause faster." PlantTriage 6.0 also includes some new, enhanced trending tools. You now can rescale trend on both x and y axis, scroll backward and forward in time, zoom in on a time window, and get a readout of the actual values at the hairline cursor. 

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