

IFS FSM Allows NEE to Increase Agility, Reduce Cost and Prepare for What's Next



Making the commitment to never say no to your customers requires real-time information and logistical acumen. With IFS Field Service Management, NEE is delivering on its bold promise, supporting petroleum equipment for fleet operators, gas station and convenience store retailers across Canada. A strong service infrastructure provided by IFS Field Service Management enables NEE to turn this challenge into profitable business opportunities, enter new business areas and expand its offerings.

Need For Seamless Data Flow in Distributed Organization

NEE employs more than 500 people across 15 locations. Each location is empowered to deliver a specific mix of products to its local market, serving a local market as it sees fit. The energy equipment business is complex and continuously changing, and equipment and service requirements are driven by market trends, advancing technology and regulation. Therefore, NEE needed service software that would enable business data to flow seamlessly in and out of their underlying enterprise resource planning (ERP) software system. Kevin Bresson, Director of Supply Chain Management at NEE, explains, "Our need to constantly change has to be matched with a service solution that can keep up with the challenge of change, and we've felt that IFS has risen to the challenge many, many times. We needed a service system that would link back to our core ERP system."

IFS Field Service Management at The Heart of The Business

IFS Field Service Management is used to run NEE's field operation, which delivers projects and services to a broad spectrum of petroleum customers ranging from bulk plants, terminals, airport fuel facilities, retailers, fleet operators—with these services accounting for 20 percent of NEE's revenue. Although the main rationale for the software selection and implementation was more agile service to external customers, IFS Field Service Management also delivered measurable improvements in services for internal customers along with cost savings. In terms of the time lag between service provision and

About National Energy Equipment (NEE)

National Energy Equipment, Inc. is the largest distributor of energy related equipment in Canada, providing service from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland. The combined resources of 15 branches across Canada and a culture of operational excellence combine to create a \$200 million Industrial Distribution and Service Company with a full range of world class product lines. With over 500 employees, NEE's objective is to provide the best sales and service support in its industries, while synergizing product offerings for optimum benefit to its customers. www.nee.ca/en



billing, NEE has gone from about a six week turn to about one week. “And the one week is only because we use subcontractors,” Bresson says. “If it was entirely our work force, then I think we could bring that down to about three days.” Measurable savings have resulted from the clear visibility from service provision to billing. Previously, inventory stored in service vans was often used against a project or service call, but the consumption of that part or material was never captured and billed. Since implementing IFS Field Service Management, inventory variances have dropped from 20 percent to a fraction of one percent. NEE has on average about 100–130 technicians out in the field at a given time, with each service van carrying \$70,000–90,000 worth of inventory. As Bresson puts it, “We were losing about 20 percent; now it’s down to 0.6 percent.”

Never Say No to The Customer—Agility Is Key

Adding mobile solutions from IFS has helped NEE live up to its promise never to say no to its customers by delivering enhanced agility. While return on investment (ROI) is still important, NEE prefers to measure success in terms of how well service can be delivered. For NEE, the person who can react the fastest to a situation in the field by definition delivers the best service. “That’s basically agility,” Bresson says, “And agility is one of the main reasons we love working with IFS.”

“IFS has allowed us to focus on agility, and that is the one way that we’ve felt that they’ve added the most value to our company. They help us not to say no to our customers. We’re a complex business, and therefore not saying no requires us to pass on the challenge to willing suppliers—and IFS have stood up all the time. It’s been great working with IFS.”

Kevin Bresson, Director of Supply Chain Management, NEE

Extended Business Offering

IFS has allowed NEE to configure the system to meet its existing processes, but also brought in some useful best practices to help NEE simplify and improve its operations. A lot of the savings are hard to quantify, but NEE has noticed that having a strong infrastructure based on IFS Field Service Management has enabled it to go into new businesses. Previously for instance, it was simply a service provider –but now has expanded into new disciplines like project management. “A large part of our

Benefits seen using IFS

- 97 percent reduction in inventory loss
- Seamless data flows across a distributed organization
- Greater agility with mobile solutions
- More accurate and efficient scheduling
- Considerably enhanced customer service
- Ability to diversify operations to add business value
- Reduced time to invoice from the field by four weeks; improving cash flow

business is predicated on keeping our customers happy, and project management was something we evolved into, having such strong processes and systems behind our service business,” Bresson says. Ryan McClure, service technician at NEE, has been using IFS Field Service Management for five years. “I found it improved my day-to-day work greatly, and found it less cumbersome or time-consuming to find information,” McClure says. “Once you’re into the system, it flows wonderfully and saves an awful lot of time from the technician’s and the dispatcher’s point of view.” Rob Coulter, dispatcher, agrees. Scheduling about 17 technicians servicing Ontario, he uses IFS Field Service Management to get the right person to the right job at the right time. He can see when a task has been closed and can move the next task into that slot and dispatch technicians accordingly. “In my role here as a dispatcher, time management is the key,” Coulter says. “And the IFS system really speeds up the process. It’s a great system, works flawlessly, is intuitive, and makes my day a lot easier.”

Looking ahead

Customer expectations of how technology should facilitate service are changing, and NEE’s customers are no exception. They want things done faster, and mobile solutions from IFS enable NEE not only to deliver services faster, but also to adopt new technologies such as remote diagnostics. NEE is planning to leverage the industrial internet of things (IIoT) to gain these real-time remote insights into customer equipment health, for example. They are already experimenting with the IFS IoT Business Connector to see what role IIoT will play in future service delivery to its customers. “We know all of this is dovetailing together,” says Bresson, “So knowing that we have a mobility system that can enable remote diagnostics in the future is very important for us. The biggest challenge for businesses like ours is that, because we are people-intensive, inventory-intensive, location-intensive, we always need to be ready for what’s next. We always need to be agile so that we can react to changing requirements from our customers.”



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Further information, e-mail info@ifs.com, contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com

