

10 QUESTIONS

FOR LUBRICANTS PROFESSIONALS



Why professional industrial lubrication should be prioritized

Inspired by increasing demand for professional lubrication services in Kenya, **CRISPIN MBOGO** – a Mechanical Engineer – shifted his base from the United States of America, where he had had various professional stints, to set about providing professional lubrication services and solutions here in Kenya. His effort culminated in the setting up of a pioneer company specializing in, among other attendant services, industrial lubrication. But as the Lubezine Team established in a recent interview with him, various initiatives need to be put in place by relevant industry parties to boost the adoption of professional lubrication services.

1. Which was your first involvement in lubrication services?

Shortly after college in 1996, I joined Kobil as a Technical Sales Representative. Later in 1997, I moved to Total Kenya as a Territory Manager and later on the Total Nairobi Joint Depot Manager. In September 2000, I left for

the US to pursue a Masters in Engineering Technology. On graduation in 2001, I was hired by General Electric as the GE Technical Director at Kansas City Southern Railroad providing technical service support to their GE locomotives. In 2007, I became the GE Lead Lean Manufacturing and New Product Introduction Engineer for GE Remanufacturing Services for locomotive traction motors.

2. You worked in the US for many years. What motivated you to come back to Kenya to provide professional services in the local industry?

I was inspired by the demand for industrial lubrication services. While in the US, I used to receive numerous invitations from clients here in need of industrial lubrication solutions. I would come back, attend to them and return to the US.

But with the need for regular monitoring of industrial machinery for most of my clients, it became necessary to return to the country again and again. This prompted me to consider returning to the country.

3. When you came back to the country you set up a company. Tell us about it.

Yes, upon my return I started a company focused on providing Total Lubrication Solutions. Droplex Industrial opened its doors here in Kenya in 2010, becoming the first company providing such services in the region.

The services we provide include installation and maintenance of automated lube systems; general lubrication equipment; contamination control solutions; maintenance contract services; plant lubrication audits; and fluid transfer systems.

4. In your practice as a lubrication expert you have had the privilege of having both the local and global perspectives as far as professional lubrication solutions are concerned. What are your observations on the industry in Kenya?

Lubrication has not been accorded the importance it deserves here within the industry, in my view. There is still an entrenched mindset that lubrication is just but adding oil or grease. In reality, however, it is more than that, and it should in fact be rated number one among the priorities to be given serious consideration in indus-

trial maintenance practices. Lubrication is everything as far as the smooth running of a plant is concerned. With proper lubrication, plants are more efficient, produce more and save on energy and repair costs.

On the other hand, when due attention is not paid to lubrication, machinery is bound to break down often, occasioning hefty maintenance costs and resulting in huge losses on account of stalled production.

In global leading manufacturing organizations, the top maintenance technicians are the lubrication champions entrusted to guide the plant lubrication processes because they understand that it is the most important element in plant maintenance activities.

5. What measures can be put in place to ensure end users appreciate the importance of engaging professional lubrication services?

The biggest problem I think is lack of knowledge, which unfortunately also contributes to slowing the growth of the lubricants industry in general. Consumers need to appreciate the fact that lubrication is a professional service that should be undertaken by trained personnel.

Ideally, every plant should have professional lubrication section to ensure industrial efficiency and limit both downtime losses and avoidable maintenance expenses.

6. Why should plants engage professional lubrication services?

A lubricant is just not a lubricant. Various designs of machinery and equipment require unique lubricant specifications. It takes skilled personnel to understand these critical considerations in lubrication. In addition, the lubricants call for regular analysis to establish when it is advisable to replace them so as to ward off machinery breakdowns.

7. Are there sufficient service personnel in the country to provide these services, or do we require additional investment towards training lubrication professionals on the local front?

Currently, most of the training opportunities and efforts come through established oil multinationals. We still need more towards promoting professional training in lubrication. But even then, I have observed that a critical disconnect between training and the industry's realities. There is need for training to be informed by the experience of the experts on the ground.

8. Do players in the industry have a role in bolstering the industry's growth?

Absolutely. They should organize regular

forums such as open days, at which industrial experts can meet to exchange ideas drawn from their experiences in instead of seeking their help one at a time.

These platforms can provide fabulous opportunities for service providers to showcase new solutions to industry problems and new products as well. More of such interactions would go a long way in creating a greater mutual impact.

9. What about learning institutions, what path should they take in developing lubrication curricula that resonate with industry needs?

I think the most important consideration should be seeking the input of experienced industry experts so as to understand the dynamics within the industry and the emerging skill demands. That would be instructive in filling the skill gaps.

10. What do you say to aspiring lubrication professionals?

I encourage them to come on board. With the country's plan to industrialize, there would be numerous opportunities for them.

They should also be aware that the availability of lubrication professionals will increase the demand for them in the industry. ■



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