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## SKF pioneers cloud-based solution for data collecting

**How can a complex operation keep track of thousands of pages of documents, including measurements, drawings, tables and photos? To address this demanding task, SKF has developed a cloud-based solution, SKF Data Collect, using iPads to record and manage data.**

Making the transition from volumes of paper to an entirely electronic, cloud-based data solution is no small undertaking when you're dealing with hundreds of thousands of quality measurements recorded each year. To solve this problem, SKF is pioneering an iPad system, SKF Data Collect, to help customers record and manage their data. While SKF is well known in the bearing business, developing this kind of technical solutions is an evolution for the company.

### **A growing trend**

"Although SKF's legacy is with bearing technology and other mechanical industrial solutions, the company has recognized that industrial businesses are becoming more and more computer dependent. This is the reason that SKF is evolving its product and service offerings to include cloud-based tools that make life easier for industrial customers", says Jerry Schick, key account manager at SKF Strategic Industries. "The model is software as a service so customers don't have to reinstall software or worry about keeping their system up to date. We take care of updates – it's all part of the service."

One of the SKF customers using SKF Data Collect is US-based EthosEnergy which recently partnered with SKF to shape the future of how massive amounts of inspection data will be recorded, stored and accessed. The company specialises in gas turbine refurbishment for the oil, gas and power generating industries.

"I saw the product at the SKF Asset Management Conference in Dallas in 2013," says Mike Fisher, president of EthosEnergy Light Turbines LLC, in Houston, Texas. "We're dealing with 240,000 precise dimensional measurements made and recorded traditionally on paper, over the year. Imagine all those documents – very weighty – and as it's on paper, all the information is instantly out of date the minute it's recorded. We need it to be digital and alive so that we can analyse it in real time."

### **A highly customisable and configurable product**

Fisher says he had seen other similar products but none provided the versatility that SKF promised: a highly customisable, configurable product that could display data, drawings and tables as well as store information and photos.

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EthosEnergy takes in a range of sub 12 MW gas turbines and driven equipment and overhauls them to extremely high quality standards – ISO 9001, 9004, 14001 and 18001. The task can be daunting, with more than 4,000 components per turbine. Technicians work methodically in the spotless facility, efficiently following the necessary steps, first assessing the condition of each part, then recording precise dimensions and assessing exacting repair procedures to return the component to “as new” condition. Finally, post-repair, re-recording all the data and assembling the complex machine for full-load testing. The entire process takes up to 16 weeks, cataloguing the state of the parts along the way with technical details and photos. All these measurements are stored for years, and they may need to be referenced for various reasons. To check on the status of any given engine or part would require walking to each station, looking up the work order and talking with the technician.

“Fisher had already assigned Nelson Muchacho, quality control manager, to develop an information database tool for use at the EthosEnergy facility when Fisher learned about SKF Data Collect.

### **Great benefit for the organisation**

“For me, this has been a blessing,” says Muchacho. “To put it into perspective, today we have 74 project work orders open. Each requires about 500 pages of documents, so the numbers gather quickly. We’ve converted to this iPad app to digitise and automatically access multiple projects at any given time – that’s 35,000 pages no longer in storage boxes. This is a great benefit for the organisation in terms of productivity and efficiency.”

“EthosEnergy needs to record this data so it can be used for analysis later on,” says Schick. “This data-based process has a dual function: It is an integrated system, so you can have work teams in different sections working with the information, and in SKF Data Collect you have a visual display at each stage of the disassembly and remanufacturing process. The whole team can be alerted as to where a work order is during the entire process. Photos are electronically attached to the inspection data, and the iPad supports a final signature from each technician as he completes his work. SKF Data Collect resynchronizes and shares that information securely every five to 10 minutes through the SKF cloud.

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### **Robust cases**

The iPads have heavy-duty cases for the shop. "They're delivered with an industrial waterproof case," Schick says. "They can be dropped on the floor or dipped in water; they're pretty robust."

The industrial-strength iPad cases help ensure the SKF Data Collect program can withstand the constant use in this shop, because there are no plans to return to paper. Fisher was an early adopter of this type of technology, and his input into some of the SKF Data Collect functions from a customer perspective was invaluable in fine-tuning the application for commercial use.

### **User-friendly and super-slick**

Fisher couldn't be more pleased. "It's a super-slick product," he says. "I can walk out to the shop floor, pick up an iPad, drill down to any component and examine the data for that component from any position in the shop, and it's very user-friendly – anyone with an iPad or iPhone quickly adapts to this system. People mistakenly think we're all about wrenches and hammers, but actually we use a very sophisticated component design system. We have to provide an extremely high-quality product or we won't be able to compete. That's what our quality drive is all about."

Fisher and Schick both expect the system to take off as a valuable addition to multiple industries. "It's applicable to many different applications requiring complex data," Fisher says. "We have a partner overseas that wishes to conduct overhauls. I can manage almost the entire QM [quality management] side from afar if they'll adopt SKF Data Collect. In the utility industry that we work with, it would be a great tool for outage management and tracking. It can provide tremendous advantages for field crews. I see a lot of opportunity."

### **FACT BOXES:**

#### **SKF Data Collect**

The SKF Data Collect system combines the intuitiveness of an app, the power of SKF's knowledge in data collection and machine inspections, and the safety of the SKF cloud.

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##### Benefits

- Improved data quality and consistency
- Fast access to actionable information
- Safe storage of information in the SKF cloud.

##### Typical applications

- Machine inspections
- Operator instructions
- Audits and quality assurance
- Work orders
- Check lists and much more.

#### **EthosEnergy**

**Industry:** Oil and gas, industrial combined heat and power

**Product:** Gas turbine overhauls, exchange engines, repairs, parts and field services, turbo machinery engineered solutions

**Founded:** In 2014 following a joint venture between Wood Group and Siemens, bringing together Wood Group's gas turbine services business with Siemens's TurboCare to create a single independent service provider of rotating equipment services and solutions to the power, oil and gas and industrial markets.

*SKF is a leading global supplier of bearings, seals, mechatronics, lubrication systems, and services which include technical support, maintenance and reliability services, engineering consulting and training. SKF is represented in more than 130 countries and has around 15,000 distributor locations worldwide. Annual sales in 2014 were SEK 70,975 million and the number of employees was 48,593. [www.skf.com](http://www.skf.com)*

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