

# Filling the Gap

Advanced Technology Services adds remote support, pivots to produce face shields for health-care workers in Peoria.

BY JEFF KOSIOREK

**A**S PRODUCTION NEEDS HAVE CHANGED DRASTICALLY FOR manufacturers in recent months, so too have their maintenance needs. Companies are expanding their capabilities and utilizing their machines in new and unfamiliar ways. Others find themselves with minimal plant staff due to workforce shortages and social distancing requirements. By losing readily available on-site access to their maintenance team, some manufacturers are struggling to keep their production equipment up and running without failures.

To help manufacturing plants during these challenging times, Advanced Technology Services (ATS) expanded its on-site services to include remote maintenance support in order to better serve the current needs of process and discrete manufacturers.

Another recent pivoting initiative involves the creation of durable personal protection equipment (PPE). Drawing on its own experience, engineering and supply chain expertise, ATS joined forces with OSF HealthCare in Peoria, Illinois, to produce protective face shields for their employees on the frontlines.

To do so, ATS started up a new production line. The face shield's proprietary design was sourced and then built within a week and half by an ATS team of 13 people, producing eight to 10 face shields per minute using a jig for assembly consistency.

Made with bleach-resistant materials, the new shields can be sanitized and reused.

Healthcare workers found this newer, lightweight model to be much more comfortable than the face shields they've used in the past. In a matter of weeks, ATS produced 15,000 shields for distribution across 14 hospitals in Illinois and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. ATS also made an additional 5,000 shields for other facilities, such as nursing homes.

The Vice President of the Illinois Dental Association also requested ATS produce face shields specifically designed for dental professionals, so ATS sourced and produced a quantity of 250.

### Filling the Technical Support Gap

**W**hile many manufacturers typically perform regular machine maintenance, these days they are in a more reactive, limited state. New mechanical issues causing downtime become much more critical when their full maintenance



ATS technicians conducting remote maintenance operations from a control room.

staff cannot be on-site and there is a lack of resources to fix the problem. This is where ATS' new remote assistance service comes in.

Tate Pearson, the Director of Engineering and Technical Support Services at ATS, says that manufacturers needs right now are highly urgent: "They struggle with immediate technical support and ATS can fill that gap. While we may not be their current maintenance provider, we can certainly be their current helpline for technical expertise."

An ongoing challenge for manufacturers is capturing valuable knowledge from a retiring workforce. As part of its new remote maintenance initiative, ATS utilizes a Subject Matter Expert Network to virtually assist manufacturers in their factories. The network includes more than 70 technicians specializing in hydraulic, CNC, PLC or OEM expertise. In addition

to their decades-worth of field experience, these technicians are interviewed by ATS to ensure they possess the necessary soft skills to interact with clients and provide professional, customer-focused service.

### A Proprietary Database

**R**unning parallel to the SME Network is the ATS Technician Hub. This proprietary database contains manuals, root cause analysis documents, and technical videos to streamline

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**Due to the pandemic, many manufacturers are in a more reactive, limited state.**



COMPANY PROFILE:  
**ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY SERVICES, INC.**  
Location: Peoria, Ill.  
Sector/Products: Industrial Maintenance, IIoT, Reliability Engineering, MRO Asset Management  
CEO: Jeff Owens  
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remote troubleshooting. When a current or potential client calls to discuss a mechanical issue, ATS reliability experts utilize the knowledge within the hub to provide the fastest, most efficient solution possible. ATS also maintains a network of strategic channel partners to acquire critical parts or repair them quickly to get manufacturers up and running.

Together with the SME Network, the Technician Hub is used to help manufacturers minimize downtime and lower their maintenance costs. To demonstrate the use of both tools, Pearson compares conventional problem solving with accelerated problem solving:

“Typically, factories solve tough problems



### **A network of strategic channel partners can help manufacturers acquire critical parts quickly.**

every day and it might take them 10 steps to get to a solution,” Pearson says. “The ATS Technician Hub and SME Network is intended to get to steps five, six, seven, or eight faster so the problem is solved in less time, and probably with a much higher confidence that it’s going to be the right solution for the long term.”

In addition to virtual assistance, ATS also provides technical training videos for plant personnel.

Called SkillPoint Shorts, these web and video-based training courses can be viewed remotely in lieu of traveling onsite which is particularly challenging in times such as these due to the pandemic. Factories can utilize the five- to 10-minute videos to keep their technicians up to speed and transfer valuable information from seasoned industry experts. **M**