



CASE STUDY

Natural Gas Company Saves Hassle and Headaches Amidst Pandemic

Social distancing restrictions raised in the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic proved difficult for many industries, but especially so for operations that fell on both sides of the northern border.

A multi-billion-dollar Canadian energy company faced this problem when, in the summer of 2020, it had to figure out how to get a critical part from a U.S. manufacturer installed at one of its Canada-based facilities

Pandemic restrictions add complications for operations on both sides of the border

The facility in question was in need of a turbo expander – a device that rapidly cools and expands natural gas, manipulating both pressure and cryogenic temperatures to allow liquids to be separated from the gas. Under normal conditions, the installation of this piece of equipment would involve a vendor coming to the facility for a pre-delivery inspection, verification of the installation and a brief period of

monitoring as the part runs through its initial paces.

However, given that both the U.S. and Canada were being ravaged by a pandemic at the time, the situation became much more complicated. Throughout that particular summer, anyone coming into Canada from the U.S. or vice versa would be required to quarantine for 14 days before they could go to a work site – when factoring in the return trip, this meant 28 days total spent waiting because of a single project.

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Remote collaboration optimizes the process and connection for both sides of the border

These equipment installation jobs involve heavy travel even under normal conditions, but the additional delays nearly quadrupled the usual 10-day time investment for such a project. The energy firm needed help, and it turned to mCloud Technologies for guidance.

mCloud suggested using its AssetCare platform, a combination of AI, IoT and the cloud aimed at optimizing both assets and processes. AssetCare Mobile offers remote collaboration capabilities using headsets and cloud data sharing that would prove to be the perfect solution to this problem.

Given the remote location of the facility, neither cellular nor standard Wi-Fi were options for internet connectivity, so mCloud first worked with a local vendor to get satellite internet set up at the site. The company also shipped a headset fully compatible and equipped with the AssetCare platform.

mCloud similarly worked with the energy firm's equipment vendor – the manufacturer of the turbo expander – to make sure they were ready to receive the incoming data, a mix of recorded measurements and visual feeds from a “see-what-I-see” feature of the platform, coming from the facility. After a few quick and easy tutorials, both groups were fully connected and ready to work.

New solution saves time, and money while being safe and economically friendly

The result was a huge success that not only got the job done, but did so in a universally streamlined fashion, revealing a potential long-term process improvement. The whole task, normally a 10-day affair, was completed in only four days.

Aside from completely cutting out travel time, other benefits included improved communication between on-site workers and remote experts. There were also considerable pluses from both parties being able to see all the necessary data in one convenient spot, and even pulling up remote access to screens they would normally see on-site as needed.

There were many other boons to this approach beyond the logistical improvements. The elimination of travel time ultimately means a greatly reduced carbon footprint, particularly when dealing with remote sites

such as this one. The use of remote communications is also much safer than sending a person out to the facility, where every extra body carries the weight of greater risk.

Lastly, there were considerable financial savings from being able to handle the task remotely. Without flight costs, hotel stays and all the other considerations of an on-site visit – all of which would rest on the facility's budget – the energy firm estimates savings between \$60,000 and \$100,000 from trusting in mCloud's ingenuity.

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In the end, a solution devised as a workaround to a pandemic-specific issue resulted in a new approach that saves time, effort and money while also being both environmentally friendly and safety conscious. The energy firm was able to get its turbo expander replaced quickly and easily, and is considering adopting mCloud's new remote approach for future projects as well, given the process improvements displayed in this case.

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