

Tracking Compressor Performance

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The upstream natural gas sector encompasses many participants; some of whom do not necessarily share the same basic business goals and horizons. Two of these participants many times include natural gas producers and natural gas compressor leasing companies. In a time of lower natural gas prices, and subsequent budget reductions, these differences become more prominent.

Generally speaking, the natural gas producer desires to consistently move the maximum amount of natural gas possible with the least amount of installed horsepower possible. While this is an understandable goal in theory, the reality of it is challenged by various factors in the world of everyday operations.

Generally speaking also, the natural gas compressor leasing company desires to operate their owned assets in a manner that will ensure long life and minimal maintenance and personnel expenses. This, too, is an understandable goal, but it also is challenged, not only by the logistic difficulties of service over a tremendous geographic expanse, but also by the fact that this operational practice implies that producers will have to pay for more horsepower than is able to be utilized.

The inherent obstacles in the producer/supplier (leaser) relationship include:

- Personnel – body count and knowledge level
- Geographic expanse – servicing multiple assets over a large area
- Data transfer – putting the right data in the right hands
- Performance measurement – using data to infer and understand performance levels

While not every difference in the operating goals of natural gas producers and leasing companies can be overcome, there are ways to meet many of the challenges that are faced in the relationship. Technology has been the key factor in solving some of these differences: we can now transfer massive quantities of data from remote locations to anywhere in the world, plus there are available optimization services that can quickly interpret this critical data and provide direction. When correct and precise data is interpreted accurately, operations and maintenance activities can be streamlined and asset performance can be improved to a level that is acceptable to both parties.

The result is, at a minimum, a partial merging of what have historically been two very different visions of successful practices.