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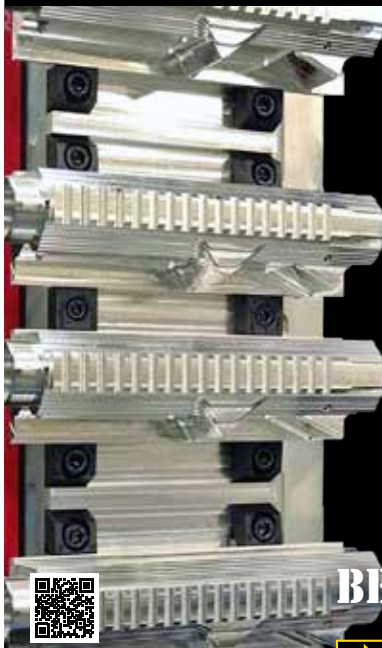
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FORGING GREATER PRODUCTIVITY WITH NEXT GEN PM

Proper maintenance of forging equipment is crucial to prevent costly downtime and repairs. New customizable preventative maintenance program options in partnership with the OEM now enable forgers to minimize downtime while maximizing production, quality, and safety



▲ *ACE PM hot stretch straightener machine*
A variety of machines like stretch straighteners can benefit from a customizable Preventative Maintenance program from the OEM.

In the realm of metalwork and manufacturing, forging equipment is an invaluable asset that can remain in production for decades. However, the key to ensuring optimal equipment performance and longevity is implementing a systematic preventative maintenance (PM) program. In this way, forging operations can boost production, reduce downtime, and guarantee a superior return on investment (ROI).

Regular preventive maintenance (PM) on forging equipment offers additional benefits. Ensuring the machinery operates without unforeseen failures or malfunctions reduces maintenance needs and lowers repair costs. Furthermore, it decreases the likelihood of producing defective or substandard products. Safety is also improved by minimizing potential hazards and reducing the risk of injuries.

Although many forgers follow routine maintenance guidelines, most continue production until the equipment breaks down. Given the longevity of certain forging machines in operation since the 1950s and 60s, technicians may lack the knowledge required to troubleshoot problems or recognize worn or failing components, which increases the risk of a major breakdown. Studies have shown that the cost of unplanned maintenance can be three times higher than planned maintenance.

“The purpose of a systematic preventative maintenance program is to identify and address potential issues before they escalate. PM is designed to optimize machine reliability and performance while saving costs over time by avoiding serious breakdowns,” says Bill Goodwin, Vice President of Sales and Engineering Ajax/CECO/Erie Press (ACE), the largest forging equipment supplier in North America.

Traditionally, PM is performed by facility personnel who conduct routine inspections, maintenance, and repairs on assets to ensure that they are functioning properly. However, a growing number of forgers are discovering the value of partnering with equipment OEMs for customizable PM programs that incorporate the industry’s best proactive maintenance practices.

“In essence, the OEM becomes an extension of the forger’s maintenance team through best practice PM, proactive training, and even spare parts programs. The goal is to customize the program to fit within the budget and provide as much, or as little, support as needed,” says Goodwin. ACE, with 145 years of experience in equipment manufacturing and more than 300 years of combined forging knowledge, is the longest-running, most experienced forging company in the world. The OEM provides a comprehensive array of forging equipment including upsetters, presses, programmable hammers, forging rolls, and automation solutions for various forging materials such as carbon steels, aluminum, titanium, and super alloys.

The Importance of Forging Equipment PM

Today, ACE is offering the most comprehensive preventative maintenance program in the forming and forging industry. The customized program not only includes training activities and scheduled replacement of consumables, but also develops repeatable maintenance tasks and follows PM best practices for forging and forming equipment.

In this program, the OEM first conducts a preliminary review of any existing PM program documentation of what is currently performed. This includes the life cycle of frequently replaced parts.

Next, the OEM conducts a “health check” to determine the equipment’s current condition, running clearance, electrical system, and pump performance. Based on the results of the health check, the OEM recommends corrective actions to restore the equipment to its original specifications.

ACE is in a unique position to utilize the full documentation of equipment in its broad portfolio of brands, along with extensive maintenance and repair experience accumulated over many decades. With its core brands founded in the 1800s, the company offers a full line of products, including standard mechanical forging presses, upset forging machines, forging rolls, hydraulic forging, forming, compression molding, cold extrusion, compaction, and roll ring preform presses along with stretch forming and straightening machines, solid die forgers, trim presses, programmable die forgers, and custom-engineered hydraulic presses.



▲ *The goal of a Preventative Maintenance program is to customize the program to fit within the budget and provide as much, or as little, support as needed.*

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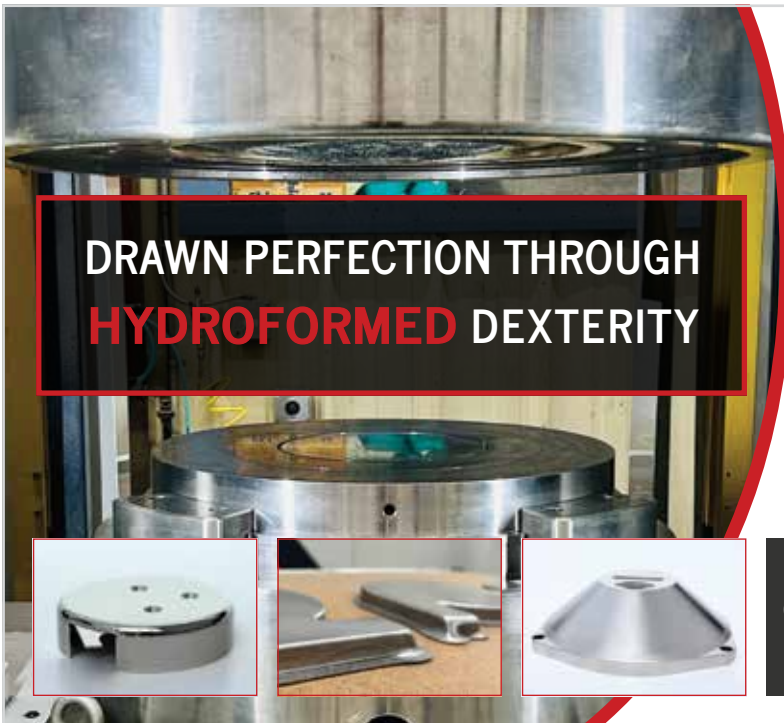


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In the next step, a customized preventive maintenance program is created. This can vary, but typically involves following best practices for lubrication; daily visual inspections for signs of wear, leaks, or damage; listening for abnormal vibrations/noises when equipment is running that can indicate underlying issues; monitoring the presence of dirt or other foreign particles that can deteriorate the machinery's efficiency; regular calibration to avoid misalignment or imbalanced equipment; and documenting all checks, observations, and maintenance tasks performed.

Goodwin stresses that the extent of the PM program is based on factors such as the type of equipment, production, onsite support, and desired PM intervals. "It can be scaled up or down to take into account the maintenance team's experience, availability, and turnover," he says.

Although PM is typically performed on-site, some actions can be completed remotely. ACE utilizes advanced collaboration tools and real-time video communications to connect with technicians so each can see, discuss, annotate, and resolve many situations at hand.

Spare Parts Programs to Minimize Downtime

Ensuring smooth operations goes beyond just the maintenance of forging equipment. It also entails having essential spare parts available at a moment's notice to minimize production downtime.

Consequently, the PM program can also include a separate spare parts stocking program that anticipates expected maintenance requirements. By utilizing measurable production rates, ACE can proactively schedule service and replacement of critical parts through an online portal. Potential critical failures can be identified and addressed before occurring.

To ensure the highest production uptime of forging equipment and prevent lengthy unexpected downtime, the stocking program typically not only includes consumables but also essential parts that can traditionally have very long lead times.

ACE PM 12500 ton isothermal forging press for online
Based on the results of a health check, the OEM
recommends corrective actions to restore the equipment
to its original specifications.



Even though the high impact nature of forging
will eventually take its toll, the equipment can be
kept productive for many decades with a regular
Preventative Maintenance program from an OEM
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“Common consumables include friction plates and driving plates for presses and upsetters, or piston heads, rods, rings, and packings for hammers. However, it is even more important to stock main gears, eccentric shafts, and rams to avoid long lead times for replacement,” says Goodwin.

According to Goodwin, with the parts stocking program the forger only pays a percentage of the cost up front and the balance when they take possession of the part – up to 2 years later. With minimal up-front investment, the custom stocking program can eliminate many months of downtime waiting on long lead time parts. Express shipping costs are also eliminated since parts are readily available.

Even though the high impact nature of forging will eventually take its toll, with proper PM the equipment can be kept productive for many decades, and potentially for the better part of a century.

“Ensuring proper PM is not merely a task, but an investment in the longevity of your forging equipment, the quality of your products, and the productivity and safety of your workforce. By implementing a proactive PM program, manufacturers can position themselves to reap the maximum benefits from their equipment for decades to come,” concludes Goodwin.

Please visit the Ajax-CECO-Erie Press website at www.AjaxErie.com or e-mail them at info-sales@AjaxErie.com. Or, if you prefer, call 814-455-3941.

By Del Williams

Del Williams is a technical writer based in Torrance, California.



▲ *A systematic Preventative Maintenance program for forging operations can boost production, reduce downtime, and guarantee a superior return on*

Photo of PM Forging: Aumm graphixphoto/Shutterstock.com

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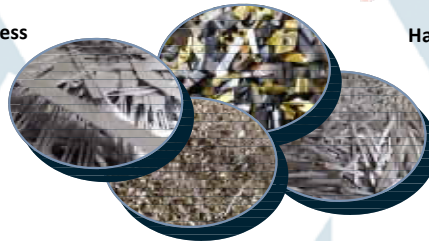
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2025 HIGHLIGHT: INAUGURAL NEW ENGLAND LEAN SUMMIT KEEPS LEAN MANUFACTURING CONVERSATION MOVING



This past summer marked the first inaugural New England Lean Summit, and it was a smashing success! Held on Sept. 12 and 13 in Cromwell, CT, 75 people were in attendance to learn more about Lean, Leadership and to network with like-minded individuals from the New England area.

Paul Critchley, President of New England Lean Consulting, put the event together for a few specific reasons.

“First, there used to be more conferences in our area that people could choose from”, Critchley said. “But not so much anymore. There used to be one at the University of New Hampshire, but they closed their Lean office, so I don’t think that one’s ever going to come back. Likewise, there used to be one in Portland every August, but that’s been on again, off again since 2020. So, we had a decision to make. We could accept that situation, or do something about it. We chose the latter”

So Critchley and the New England Lean team started putting their heads together to plan what they hoped would be a top-tier Lean event.

“Right out of the gate, we wanted to make our conference fun, in addition to delivering lots of value for our attendees. We’ve been to lots of conferences, and they’re all pretty much the same. You move from presentation

to presentation all day, barely having any time to do anything else like visit vendors, talk with other attendees, or to get to know the presenters themselves. So, we decided that our conference would address each of those problems in a new and inventive way.”

And that’s just what they did. The New England Lean Summit featured 16 speakers and presenters, representing some of the best minds in Lean: renowned thought leaders, award-winning authors, top podcasters, and Lean practitioners who delivered 7 World-Class Workshops and 9 Sessions covering a wide array of Lean topics over the 2-day event.

Lots of Lean topics were covered, and there were multiple opportunities to learn from presenters. The first day featured 2-to-4-hour in-depth workshop opportunities – enough time to really dig into topics, as well as to engage in simulations so attendees could really get a feel for the practitioner side of things. Topics included Value Stream Mapping, Toyota Kata, Leadership Sustainability and Strategy Deployment, among others.

After a hearty lunch and a riveting keynote by Dr. Alan Robinson from UMASS/Amherst Isenberg School of Management, attendees enjoyed an afternoon of more in-depth workshops. Once the clock struck 5PM, it was time to relax a little bit at Lean Happy Hour – a 2-hour

catered networking event, where presenters, attendees, exhibitors and sponsors could hang out, talk and get to know each other on a personal level.

Day 2 picked up right where Day 1 left off with an amazing keynote entitled “The Praise Paradox” from award-winning author Elisabeth Swan. Elisabeth showed us that we all have incredible power to influence how people feel—which then affects how they perform. The vision we have of ourselves often fails to match the image held by those who work for or with us. Research shows that our work lives are much more gratifying when we have the kind of influence we want, and we all have the power to drive positive behavior in others. Praise, as Elisabeth showed us, is where it all starts. It was a moving and powerful presentation!

Day 2 featured nine 1 hour “Sessions”, where attendees could learn a little more about a variety of Lean topics. Attendees learned how to lead Lean initiatives in their organizations, structured problem solving, and how to embrace change in a positive, “moving forward” method.

Lunch on Day 2 was especially meaningful, as New England Lean staff and volunteers put together a fun game that was a loose cross between Shark Tank and Crimes Against Humanity. Summit attendees were grouped by table, and together had to apply Lean tools and principles to pitch a solution to a given problem to our expert panel of walrus’. It was a great team-building event, and we all had a lot of laughs!

After one more round of Sessions in the afternoon, it was time to wrap things up a little early on a beautiful late summer Friday afternoon in New England. Paul

Critchley told a moving story about one of their clients’ Lean transformations, and how a 30+ year machinist at that company was able to enjoy more time with his family via instituting Lean thinking, all while producing more parts and making more money than he or the company ever had previously. It was proof-positive that when Lean is implemented correctly, it really is a powerful tool for everyone involved.

The day wrapped with several giveaways – autographed books, free online courses and the grand prize – a free registration to the 2025 New England Lean Summit! Final date is TBD as of this story, but it will be in the August-September timeframe. Be sure to check www.newenglandlean.com for up-to-date details!

Conference spearheaded by Gateway quarterly columnist, Paul Critchley

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