How a Leading Pet Food Manufacturer **Transformed OEE & Fault Tracking** with **Blue Ridge Automation**

The Challenge: Disconnected Data & Delayed Decisions

For a major pet food manufacturer, tracking Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) was a frustratingly slow process.

Each machine operated as an isolated data source, with plant-wide reports requiring manual compilation in Excel — a time-consuming task that delayed decision-making and hindered continuous improvement efforts.

Fault tracking was also inefficient. While the MES platform captured basic machine faults, such as tripped safety curtains or opened doors, it failed to document underlying causes. Area team leads manually recorded additional issues on whiteboards at the end of each shift, while management consolidated these notes onto a supervisor board for broader visibility.

This process resulted in inconsistent data, and an inability to track trends effectively. Historical data recall required sorting through daily photographs of the boards, making long-term fault analysis slow and prone to inaccuracies.

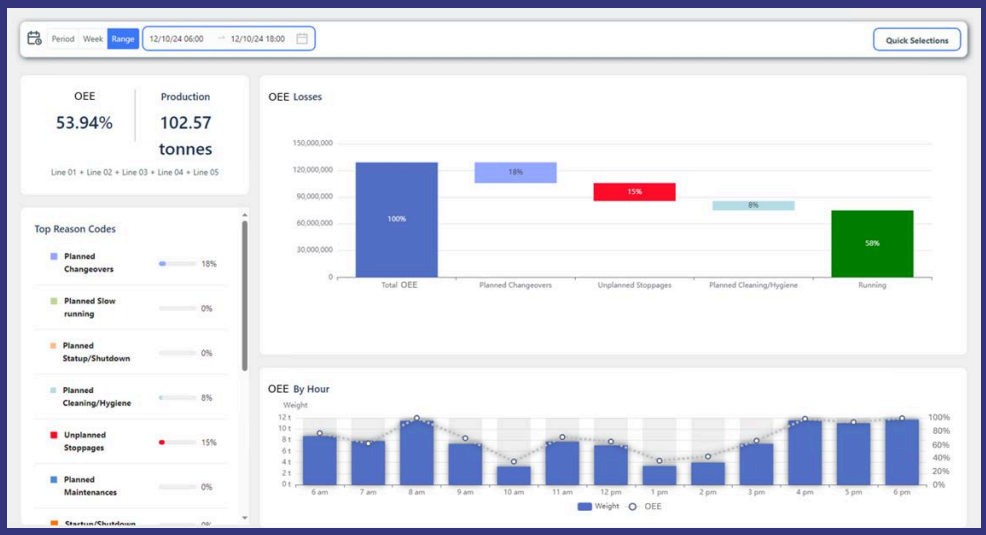
Compounding these challenges, the company's MES was built in Ignition's Vision module, which was being which is not viewable from an internet browser for a wide audience and ease of implementation and future expansion. Internal development resources had basic Ignition training but were continuously reassigned to higher-priority projects, leaving the MES system underdeveloped and unable to meet evolving operational needs.

The internal team lacked exposure to more advanced solutions available in other plants, limiting their ability to optimize OEE tracking and fault reporting.

The Apex Advantage: Custom, Low-Code Software Integration

Recognizing the need for a scalable, automated solution, the manufacturer partnered with Blue Ridge Automation (BRA), a firm known for its expertise in both software and manufacturing processes.

BRA approached the project holistically, starting with an in-depth onsite assessment of the facility's MES architecture, infrastructure, and workflow challenges.



Site Dashboard

The solution?

Apex—BRA's powerful, low-code software platform designed to modernize industrial data collection.

Unlike most boxed or pre-built OEE solutions, Apex provides a core platform that allows for extensive customization.

This flexibility ensures that the system can adapt to unique operational needs rather than forcing teams into a rigid, one-size-fits-all structure.

By replacing the existing MES application with Apex, BRA delivered a streamlined system that allowed for:

Automated OEE Calculations

Instead of requiring manual data compilation, Apex enabled real-time OEE reporting at the machine, area, line, and plant levels, allowing for instant performance insights.

Advanced Fault Tracking

Apex automatically captured and categorized relevant fault events based on the company's in-house classi-fications, eliminating the need for manual shift board recordings. This structured data approach allowed teams to analyze fault trends and justify resource allocations to upper management more effectively.

Infrastructure Cost Savings

Apex seamlessly integrated with the existing database infrastructure, eliminating the need for costly server hardware upgrades and reducing ongoing maintenance expenses.

Future-Proof Technology

With Ignition Vision being phased out, BRA provided a modern, web-based user interface that required no additional IT hardware. The low-code system allowed the internal team to make adjustments without needing a dedicated developer.

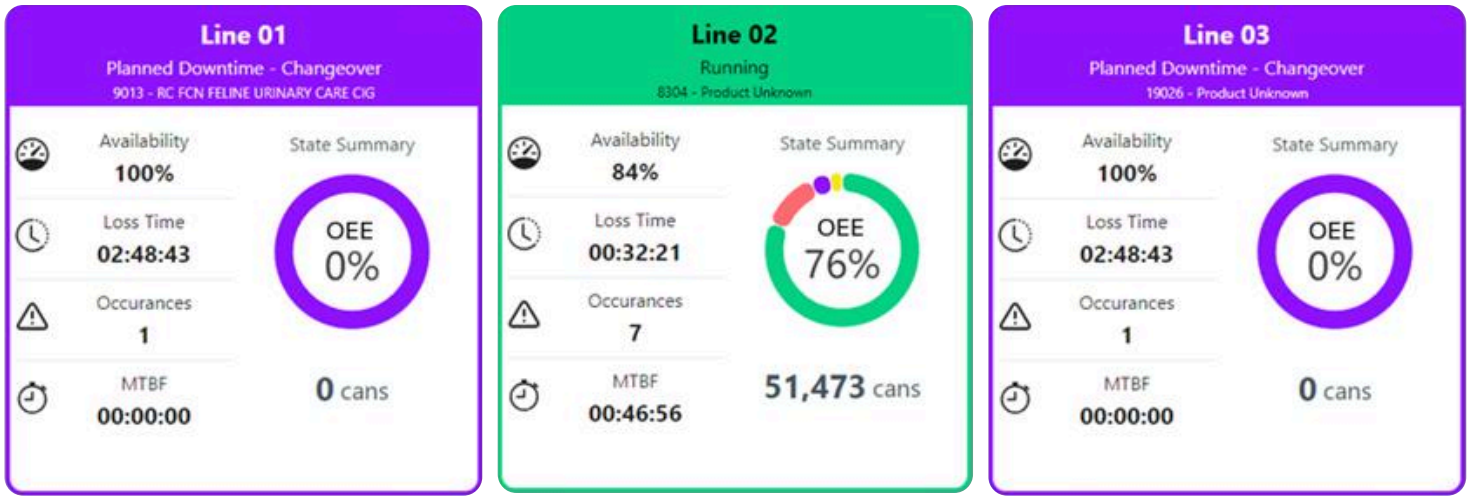
One customer noted,

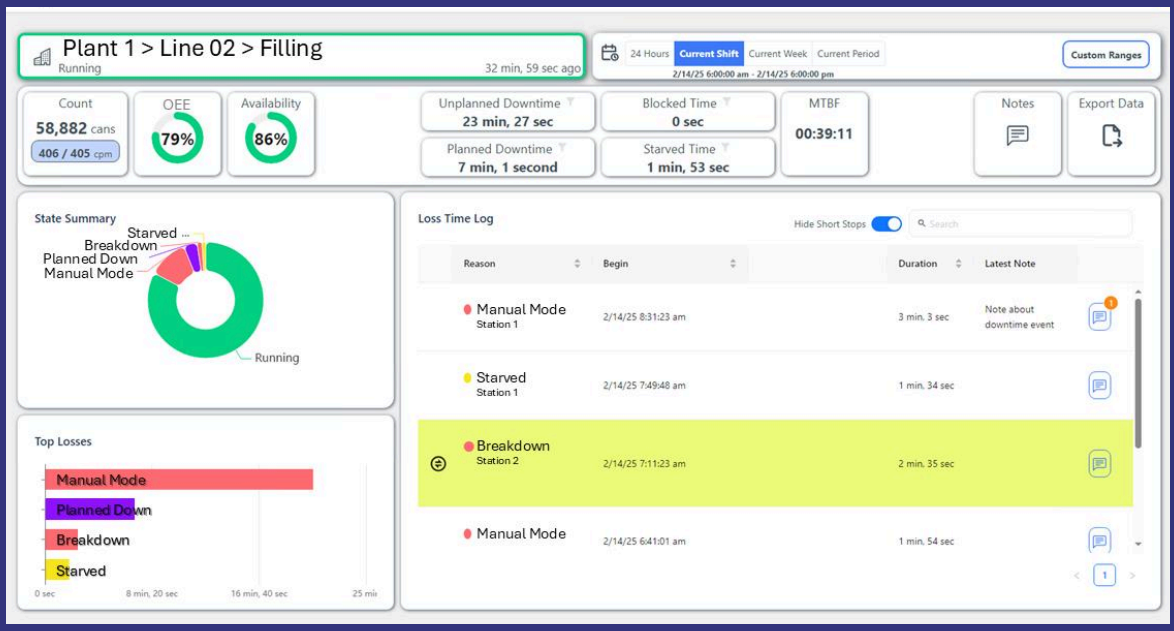
There are numerous systems and integrators out there that promise to meet business needs, but Blue Ridge truly delivers. The Blue Ridge Production Analysis system has not only met all my expectations but is also fully capable of achieving everything I envision for the future. With the combination of a dedicated team and this innovative software, we are poised to create a truly unique platform that will revolutionize the manufacturing market.

To ensure a smooth transition, BRA implemented Apex in parallel with the legacy system on production lines 1-3.

By comparing results from both systems, plant operators disco-vered that the legacy system contained previously undetected errors—further validating Apex's accuracy and reliability, and securing buy-in from all operators.

Encouraged by these findings, the manufacturer fully implemented Apex on entire facility, with plans to phase out the legacy system entirely in the near future.





OEE
Operator Dashboard

The Results: Instant Insights, Data-Driven Decisions, Scalable Systems

The shift to Apex delivered measurable benefits almost immediately:

Instant OEE Visibility

Management now has access to real-time OEE reports, eliminating delays caused by manual data aggregation.

Smarter Fault Analysis

Fault data is fully searchable and reportable, enabling teams to track long-term trends and address recurring bottlenecks with precision.

Stakeholder Confidence

By running Apex alongside the legacy system, BRA ensured buy-in from operators, engineers, and leadership. The superior accuracy of Apex's data further solidified trust in the platform.

Long-Term Scalability

With two new production lines planned for expansion, Apex's ability to handle large-scale data inputs ensures the manufacturer is well-positioned for future growth.

The Takeaway

By implementing Apex, this manufacturer was able to enter Industry 4.0, integrating and elevating critical levels of their operations.

With seamless OEE tracking, proactive fault analysis, and real-time insights, plant managers are now empowered to capture every opportunity for continuous improvement.

With an intuitive and cost-effective system driving operations, the manufacturer has eliminated inefficiencies that once slowed production and limited growth.

Once Apex adoption spreads across the entire facility, the company will be equipped to meet and exceed productivity goals, and redefine their profit potential.

Facing similar OEE or fault tracking challenges?

Contact Blue Ridge Automation today to discover how you could elevate your manufacturing.

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