

Inferior lubricants could be increasing your fleet maintenance costs

By [Patrick Bergman](#)

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Fleet management is all about controlling the costs that you can manage and about mitigating those that you can't. With maintenance typically representing around 20% of total cost to run your fleet (the other 80% being made up of fuel, driver salaries, insurance, tyres, cost of finance etc.), this is an area you will naturally want to focus on when you're looking to reduce the total cost of ownership (TCO).



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In comparison, lubricants and coolants only amount to between 1.5% and 2% of your overall costs to run your fleet. Whether you are running yellow metal equipment, off-road or on-highway tractor-trailer units, this sliver of your costs pie-chart can be easy to overlook.

However, the decisions you make when it comes to purchasing lubricants could have a direct impact on up to 90% of your maintenance costs.

“ The most expensive piece of equipment is one that is sitting idle, as it is not generating any revenue even though it is depreciating in value. ”

Equipment failure and downtime can derail project timeframes and budgets. Frequent breakdowns increase maintenance and associated costs (such as parts and transport, as well as replacement equipment and underemployed operators) – especially if you are operating in remote areas.



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The dust and mud encountered in typical construction or mining scenarios can take their toll over time, and when you're on a deadline, there can be pressure to run each unit for longer between services. This increases the strain on components that may not be adequately protected.

This brings us back to the question of lubricants. There is an understandable temptation to see these as a commoditised item and to overlook the differences in quality between the various products on the market. At entry-level, there is arguably little to choose from in terms of product specifications between different brands, but this is certainly not the case with higher-quality lubricants.



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Compromising on lubricant quality can soon prove to be a false economy. Lower-quality lubricants are often exposed as inadequate, especially when machines are running at high-stress levels in challenging conditions.

There is often a direct correlation between the cost of lubricants and overall maintenance costs. In other words, a modest increase in spend on lubricants and coolants (due to a switch to higher-quality products) can help to reduce that huge maintenance figure.

Quality lubricants specifically formulated for heavy duty applications contain the correct blend of base oils and additives to provide the protection that even the toughest machines need. This can help reduce the maintenance cost component of the TCO of assets, meaning that any investment in quality lubricants can really pay dividends.



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Longer intervals between component failures save money, while machines that are able to perform optimally contribute to project efficiencies. Of course, the opposite is also true, and I would caution against adopting a short-term mindset by seeking to economise on lubricants.

This belief in the beneficial impact of using quality lubricants was the driving force behind our recent move into heavy duty lubricants. With over 165 years of experience and expertise, we instinctively understand the importance of choosing the correct lubricant for the correct application.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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