

Mineral Planning

Automation problems hit quarries

28 June 2016, by Jez Abbott,

Quarries are missing out on tens of thousands of pounds in savings by failing to grasp opportunities thrown up by automation, says a technology expert.

Command Alkon UK & Ireland sales manager David Taylor suggested streamlining paperwork to trim as little as three minutes off a truck's loading and unloading time could save £56,250 a year.

Taylor told the British Aggregates Association (BAA) annual conference in Buxton, Derbyshire, this Monday, 27 June, both large and small quarry companies could benefit from better automation.

"A key area is how to get trucks in to a quarry, loaded and unloaded and out again: options available include self-checking kiosks, RFID tags or software.

Taylor, a BAA associate member whose company supplies construction software, added software could be used to work out average loads, truck costs per hour and whether vehicles were being underloaded or loaded with wrong products.

"Using automation you can cut three minutes off an average time in plant for a truck of 15 minutes down to 12. If truck costs are £25 per hour, it works out at £56,250 a year.

"If you gain a reputation for your quarry's efficiency you can attract business. If you can trim three minutes off in-plant time, you reduce the stress of drivers as well as the amount of ticketing mistakes.

"And by automating the process you keep your drivers in their trucks, so there's less chance of slips, trips and falls."

He spoke of Command Alkon's MobileTicket system, billed by the company as a real-time paperless ticketing system.

Signatures are collected electronically, tickets are emailed directly to customers through the system, which also collects comments from drivers and customers.

"People say drivers wouldn't be able to use this system; it's too complicated. But drivers are using it all over the world. It's not just for high-volume companies but any business no matter their size."

"The key with automation is to keep it simple. We are not here to reinvent the wheel, but automation can be used to help improve your profits."