

# A shared vision of the future

When Cementos Progreso wanted to streamline its incoming and outgoing material processes, it looked for a supplier that shared its vision of the future. Command Alkon enabled the digitalisation of the company's systems, which resulted in reduced truck waiting times and improved bagged cement dispatches.

■ by **Command Alkon, USA**



A shared view on the road ahead enabled Cementos Progreso to improve its incoming and outgoing processes with support from Command Alkon

Cementos Progreso was founded over 120 years ago as the first cement plant in Guatemala by Carlos Federico Novella Kleé, a visionary who wanted to innovate the construction industry.

The company is part of Progreso, a leading regional cement, construction materials and solutions group with business units in the construction, agricultural, energy and real estate development sectors, and a presence in seven Latin American countries.

Cementos Progreso's mantra is "Building together the country where we want to live," and the company seeks to generate economic, social and environmental value in every country in which it operates.

Built in 2019 the San Gabriel cement works in San Juan Sacatepéquez is Cementos Progreso's most recent plant.

The facility includes the single largest kiln in Central America and represents an investment of more than US\$1bn in operational, social and physical infrastructure.

## Successful receipt and dispatch processes

Cementos Progreso was founded by a forward-looking entrepreneur, and Command Alkon shares the same vision of improving the future of the construction materials sector. This shared vision has led to a nearly 20-year partnership between the two companies, which started in 2003 when Cementos Progreso implemented COMMANDbatch and COMMANDseries in its ready-mix operation.

In 2011 Cementos Progreso expanded its cement production facilities to San Miguel in Sanarate and was experiencing

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extremely long lines of trucks waiting for the weighbridge. It was managing 400-500 outbound flatbed trucks. To improve the control of inbound and outbound processes, it needed a way to automate ticketing and weighing operations.

Cementos Progreso had previously implemented a solution from a local

vendor that ultimately did not integrate well with the plant's existing SAP system, and the service that the cement producer received from the vendor was less than impressive. From then on, service and support became an integral piece of the jigsaw when vetting a technology supplier.

As a result of previous collaborations, the company knew that Command Alkon had a scale ticketing solution that could meet its requirements. Apex is an established, proven product and Cementos Progreso was pleased with the support that it had received in the past, making its decision to implement Apex at the San Miguel operation a straightforward one.

The golden ticket for speedy onboarding was getting its scale operators' buy-in for Apex from the beginning of the project. They were part of the development and testing processes, which proved to be beneficial because by the time the solution went live, all the scale operators were trained, significantly expediting the adoption process.

### Supporting positive change

With the Apex implementation, Cementos Progreso saw an impressive reduction in throughput time, going from an average 2m 14s to 30s per truck on the scale. Before Apex, the company was processing 30 trucks/h. Now, it is able to process 70 trucks/h for incoming raw materials.

Moreover, prior to implementing Apex, all the planning for incoming materials was implemented through SAP, which

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was not designed to automate and identify trucks coming in and out of the plant. The check-in process was carried out manually. However, following the implementation of Apex and Auto ID, Cementos Progreso could identify the truck that was associated to a purchase order, helping the process to flow fast so the trucks could get on the weighbridge quickly.

Today trucking efficiencies have gone through the roof with no more queues or waiting times, and more loads per day.

One unexpected improvement that Cementos Progreso realised is that the integration between SAP and Apex works very well. It has significantly reduced manual processing while inventory and order information are up-to-date. A further bonus is that Apex can manage its operation independently without having to be connected to SAP at all times.

On one occasion, the company had to migrate SAP with its AP system and therefore, had to operate without SAP for three days. Operations did not stop because everything could be managed through Apex. Once SAP returned online, all of the orders and tickets were already synchronised from Apex.

### Customised to accommodate business challenges

Cementos Progreso also faced major challenges when it came to its outbound materials, particularly bagged cement. This was also a challenge for Command Alkon to overcome because Apex is typically used for ticketing bulk materials, so some functionality in the system had to be adjusted. However, one of the key advantages of Apex is that the solution can be customised to accommodate unique challenges such as this.

Assets and equipment are the backbones of a business. The ability to account for them is crucial to productivity, efficiency and cost control. It also helps to reduce material theft and other problems that lead to higher costs.

Bagged deliveries account for 80 per cent of Cementos Progreso's cement dispatches. Apex's enhanced ability to validate the total expected weight of the product, packaging and vehicle against the actual total weight captured by the outbound scale, and sending a supervisor request for approval when the validation is outside of set tolerances, enables Cementos Progreso to reduce product bag theft before leaving the facility.

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This process is critical because it also involves a scheduling flow and a time commitment for the bagged cement to be at the jobsite. It added a lot more complexity but also reduced time for outbound material.

To save even more time, the company's next steps are to integrate Command Alkon's Wireless Loader with its fork trucks to load the bagged cement. The loader operator can use a Wireless Loader programme to view all vehicles onsite to be loaded. The programme provides all the information needed to load the vehicles from a portable tablet mounted inside the cab of the customer service loaders.

### Moving forward together

Command Alkon's strategy is to create new possibilities for customers to improve business outcomes through process optimisation, increasing production and implementing digital workflows. The digitalisation specialist aims to cultivate partnerships such as the one that it has with Cementos Progreso and to continually evolve its products and improve their functionality and scalability as it learns and grows with customers every day.

Going forward, Command Alkon looks forward to continuing this partnership and discovering new ways that both partners can work together to enhance Cementos Progreso's operations, ultimately enhancing "the country where they want to live". ■