

Cotton Industry News *Issue One*

Ideas to slash the costs of running your cotton gin



HOW RIVCOTT SAVES \$100,000 PER YEAR

RivCott's Sam Buster reveals the key to slashing his costs



RivCott CEO Sam Buster

“This is a game-changer for the industry! We gin for 6 months of the year. This new system will save us over \$100,000 each season,” says Sam Buster RivCott CEO.

In this detailed report, we reveal what was put in place at this Carrathool plant that has changed the way a key aspect of their gin's operation is performed.

This exciting new approach will provide cost savings for many seasons to come.

RivCott reduces daily

RivCott, CEO, Sam Buster reveals the one thing he did that slashed his workload while providing growers new benefits

How do you make your cotton gin more effective under the mounting pressure of rising costs? How do you offer better value to your growers?

RivCott Ginning, CEO, Sam Buster knew that there had to be a better way to manage the daily process of running his Carrathool based cotton gin.

One task that consumed up to six hours of work each day, was the process of producing production reports.

These reports provide essential information that determines the best way for the gin to operate.

Plus, they assist growers in key decisions they have to make.

What was the problem with your current reporting procedure?

“Our production reports are vital in the production of top quality cotton,” says RivCott, CEO, Sam Buster.

“In the past, we had provided growers handwritten summaries of each of the readings that had happened in the production process.

“But if the Gin run takes 10 hours and we give them only one reading, obviously it’s, at best, generally indicative.

“Basically, our manual approach to producing these reports was not giving us or our growers a minute-by-minute true picture of what was happening.

“We knew that if we could provide more detailed reports, right throughout the production run, significant changes could be made.

“These changes would allow us to save many thousands of dollars on unnecessary production costs. There is no doubt it would be a game-changer for our industry.

“Plus, our growers would get a more detailed picture of what was happening which would enable them to improve



RivCott Carrathool plant NSW

the cotton we were ginning.”

What did Sam do to improve the production of these reports?

“It was taking up to six hours a day for both myself and my staff to produce these complex reports. There had to be a more efficient system,” says Sam.

“I decided to seek out the help of SierraTek, qualified gin and PLC programming electricians, asking them to brainstorm a better way of producing these reports.

“So what SierraTek said they could do, and to be blunt, shocked me when they succeeded in doing it, was to develop software that would automatically interrogate the different PLC systems that we have in our Gin.

“To add to the challenge we were working with PLCs that were designed by people around the world who we did not have a direct relationship with.

“Which means SierraTek integrated their systems with the technology they had no direct connection.

“But despite this challenge, SierraTek created integrations which worked.

How did SierraTek handle the challenge of improving the processes of producing your detailed reports?

“SierraTek were able to interrogate them with timestamps and pull that data, which is just realms of data, into an environment where they could then turn that information into a reportable graph,” says Sam.

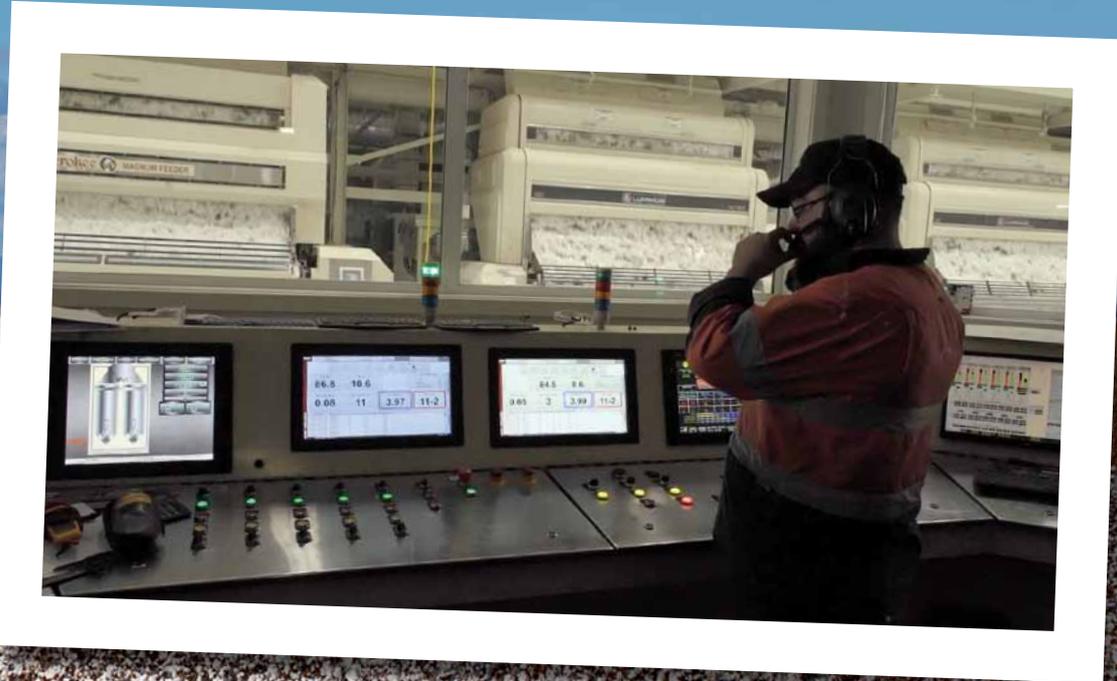
“So the outcome is, that at the end of every Gin Run, through almost no cost to RivCott, we now have a detailed set of reports for our growers.

“We are able to gather all the information from all the different PLCs and/or decisions database, that the Gin has made.

“Growers are now able to look through the chronology of their Gin Run and look at what machines were operating, what temperatures were running, what capacities, what the grades were as they were going through, and then a summary of the outcomes is made available to them.”

What was it like working with the team at SierraTek? How would you

workload by 6 hours



describe their service?

“Oh, it was unbelievable! They are very diligent. They are very good at thinking outside of the box.” says Sam.

“The brainstorming sessions we did with the SierraTek team has enabled us to develop a complete package.

“I really appreciated the hours they put into making this project a success. They met every one of my requirements.

“It was also political because they had to deal with a number of their potential competitors PLCs and yet they were able to make it work.

“As they came off non-threatening to these other PLC suppliers, they were able to do that and gain the necessary material to complete this project.

How has the SierraTek system improved the process for you, your team and your growers?

“The product that they delivered is amazing,” says Sam.

“I work Excel, and one tab has a billion numbers, and it translates into another tab, and when I press a button, it creates a PDF and presto, I’ve got it!

“It’s pretty impressive. It required Excel expertise, multiple database expertise and thinking outside of the box to be able to do it.”

Were there any other challenges to the implementation of this project?

SierraTek, Managing Director, Jamie Condon commented, “As well as the reporting and database work, a great deal of integration work involving field devices and third party ginning systems was required to collect all this data and present it to the Sierra Analytics reporting system, for a fully connected and integrated gin.”

Prior to this, how were you entering this data?

“I wasn’t entering it. It was handwritten,” says Sam.

“So the ginners would sit there and look at one PLC, the heating module, moisture drying and it has its own little graph on it, and they’d just look at that and write down their best estimate, e.g. 12 to 14.

“They had to do that for every gin run, for every PLC. With the old system,

the quality of information was not the best, you cannot take 500 datapoints and summarise it with two numbers and get good information. They did it all by hand.”

What has been the reaction of the growers to your new reporting system?

“We are giving the grower all the information to help them make a good accurate assessment of the ups and downs of their production,” says Sam.

“We did not do this to protect our position, but because we are committed to educating the grower so that they can see the cotton gin as a vertical integration of their farming.

“Just as every farmer is wanting to fine-tune their fertiliser, fine-tune their herbicides, insecticides and tractor equipment, they can also fine-tune the product they deliver to us and understand how their growth will impact the ginning.

“This new due diligence on our part has been favourably received by growers as they truly know where they stand with this new reporting system.”

Industry Game Changer

RivCott are now saving \$100,000 in man hours for every 6 month ginning season

How has this computerised reporting system benefited your gin's operations and your growers?

"For the ginners and myself to hand generate something that was monumentally inferior to what we are giving them now would have taken 6 hours," says RivCott, CEO, Sam Buster.

"And I say monumentally because this software reporting system is collecting accurate and continuous process data and presenting it an easy to understand way. No more having to average graphs and chase data.

"We wrote down after looking at a graph, the PLC on that one database we'd say 'average about 12'.

"This is a game-changer for the industry! We gin for 6 months of the year. This SierraTek software will save us over \$100,000 each season.

"The biggest benefit is transparency to growers and inviting the grower to know all the information so that they can maximise profits.

"This detailed reporting then enables the grower to do the best job growing their cotton. It allows them to get the best outcome at the gin which is higher turnout and better quality.

"We've presented them with a gin that can perform.

"And we have added to that reporting, the gin has also employed an agronomist who does research work and is available to the growers so they can ask the question, 'what do I need to do to grow better quality cotton?'

"We also measure more, we measure the seed and we report to the grower how much seed produced every gin run.

"Again so we can then measure the

trash.

"The trash is the third piece of the pie – we measure the lint, we measure the seed, therefore we know the trash.

"By giving them that information the growers can then understand why their turnout was lower.

"Or if I grew a crop that had a higher percentage of seed than everyone else and they go back to the agronomist and say what can I do to fix it? And a lot of our growers have already done that."

What do you think overall this new

system has done for your gin?

"It's by providing them with the key information necessary to help the growers make more money and do so more efficiently.

"The driving factor was helping the growers who own us to be able to do it smarter, better, and make more money.

"The by-product is that we have saved money and our systems are more efficient. SierraTek has done a great job which will save us \$100,000 each season."



To find out how your cotton gin could benefit from using the SierraTek systems please contact Jamie Condon +61 427 991 484. SierraTek are working with cotton gins all over Australia and around the world.



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