

Howden improved customer support with augmented remote assistance

Employee expertise is the key to an effective and efficient workforce

Employee expertise is invaluable. From engineers who understand exactly how machinery works to operators familiar with every inch of the production line, expertise in the workforce greatly impacts a company's bottom line. Many manufacturers rely on these experts to support both internal business units and their end customers. Because businesses must rely on a finite number of experts, there are challenges to scaling that knowledge—especially for global operations.

Combining augmented reality with remote assistance solutions can drive support and deliver expertise anywhere it's needed, faster and more effectively than ever before. By connecting remote experts to service teams in real-time with augmented reality tools, manufacturers can improve communication and rapidly troubleshoot unfamiliar or unexpected issues. Augmented remote assistance ensures employees always have the knowledge they need to deliver exceptional customer service.

Howden's mission is to provide exceptional service to all their customers

Headquartered in Glasgow, Scotland, Howden is a global engineering business that provides customers with industrial products. With a focus on quality solutions for air and gas handling, their products support multiple sectors, including power generation, wastewater, metals, mining, transportation, and oil and gas. Backed by over 160 years of experience, Howden's wide range of rotating equipment helps customers solve the toughest application engineering challenges.

Howden's product unit in the Netherlands designs and builds reciprocating compressors, and they deliver these compressors worldwide. Like many of Howden's product units, this means they regularly receive requests for troubleshooting support from service teams around the world. These requests often require product experts to travel to customer sites. As a result, there's a limit to how many teams and customers Howden's experts can support at one time.

Howden partnered with PTC to implement augmented remote assistance solutions

To better support their customers and deliver expertise without having to send experts on site, Howden decided to implement an augmented remote assistance solution. They chose PTC's Vuforia Chalk not only because of its powerful remote assistance capabilities, but also because it can be used out of the box. The solution doesn't require extensive development or integration work, and Howden could quickly deploy and scale the solution.



"We wanted to focus on what we were good at—providing the equipment expertise. We didn't want to have to do any software development or worry about hardware requirements," says Graeme Russell, Commercial Lead, Data-Driven Advantage at Howden.

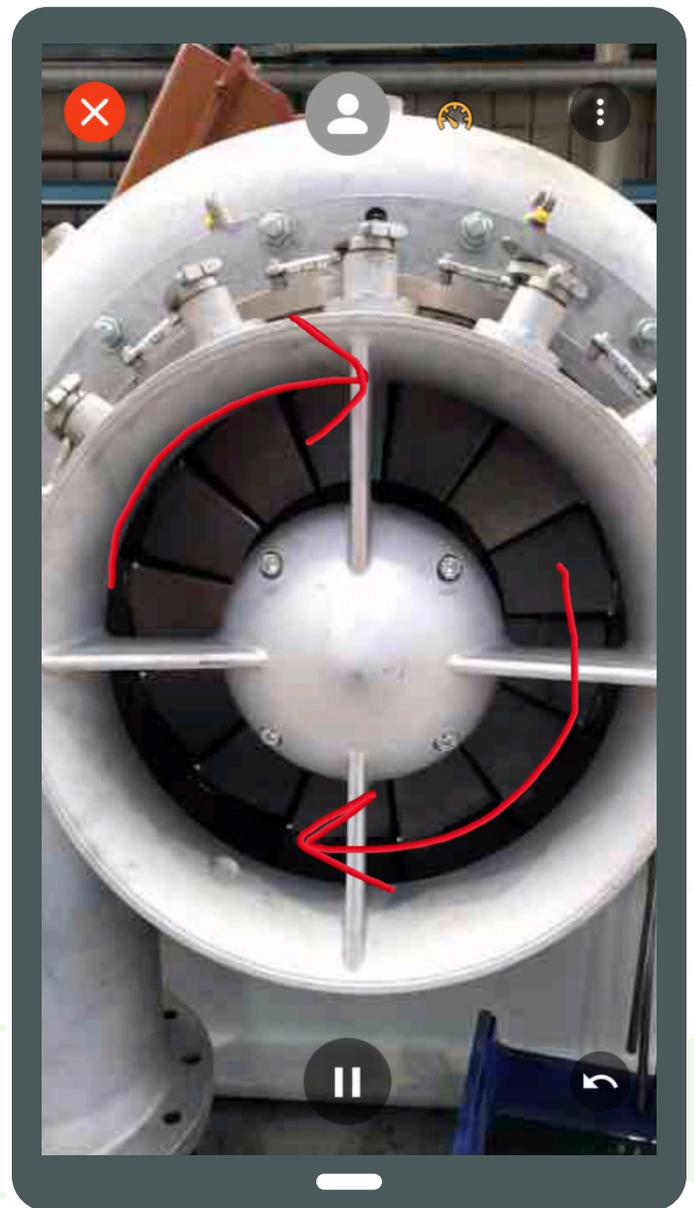
Howden started small, with several pilot programs that included their Netherlands team. But when the global impact of COVID-19 made it even more difficult for them to mobilize on-site support, Howden doubled-down on their investment and deployed a standardized program to their product and service units around the world.

Equipped with Chalk, local service teams use tablets and mobile devices to communicate with remote product experts. When a problem emerges, the product teams are able to triage problems and troubleshoot issues in real time via shared video and audio from the support team. Experts see exactly what the service team is looking at and can provide instructions by drawing digital annotations on the shared, real-world environment. Because Chalk's digital annotations are anchored to the technician's view, multi-step solutions are easy to follow and the potential for mistakes and miscommunication is greatly reduced.

As a result, local field service technicians receive help within a much quicker timeframe. They are more confident in their assessment of the equipment and the advice they give to the end user. And with the support of global experts, the local Howden teams can establish themselves as trusted advisors to the customer.

Due to social distancing and travel restrictions caused by COVID-19, it became apparent there was a broader opportunity to support their customers directly with troubleshooting and guidance instead of sending a technician on

site. Customers appreciate the ability to respond faster and resolve issues which would otherwise lead to downtime. Given the positive results they've seen, Howden plans to support customers with more complex service procedures in the near future.



Howden successfully scaled their expertise to better support their customers

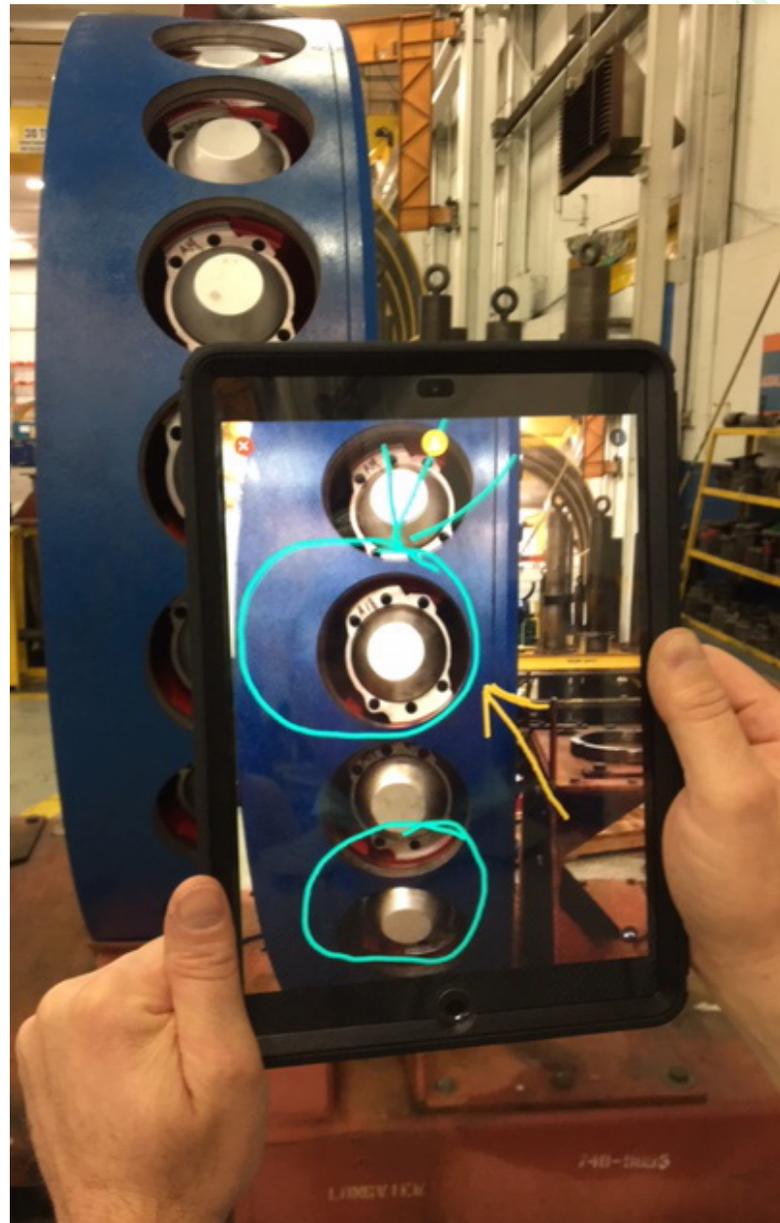
The results from the initial Chalk initiative were extremely positive both internally and externally. Internally, Howden went from seven to 144 Chalk users within a matter of weeks. And externally, customers were pleased with the high-level troubleshooting, maintenance, and support they received. Howden has scaled the initiative across their entire business—it's being used in almost all their product sites.

"There's no development work, and it's also very intuitive to use. It's been really easy. We've scaled up rapidly over the past few weeks," says Russell.

Following the success of the pilot program, Howden's engineers have used Chalk to guide customers in India and Asia through a grease replacement procedure and shutdown maintenance. Both engagements led to serving the customers with more aftermarket services, such as supplying spare parts and service agreements.

"These initiatives have resulted in requests for further work. We've been contacted for troubleshooting advice and been able to provide it with Vuforia Chalk. And as a result, we've been asked to quote for further aftermarket work," says Russell.

In the end, Howden realized their goal of scaling expertise globally and reducing the need for extensive travel. And they set the stage for a long-term service transformation, as they will be able to support customers more directly throughout the service lifecycle.



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