

## Parsec Takes Manufacturing Intelligence Mobile

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Aiming to provide shop floor managers with actionable insight into their production lines, manufacturing intelligence (MI) software provider Parsec Automation Corp. has announced the general availability of a portable performance management tool that contains the core functionality of its TrakSYS enterprise-grade MI offering.

Called LEANTrak, the portable system is a self-contained unit that comes with an industrial notebook PC pre-loaded with the performance management software, sensors, and a data collection device that manufacturers can set up on one line and then move to others as needed.

"Our basic product line [TrakSYS] typically requires a certain level of setup and infrastructure. Although it can deliver a significant level of benefits, some customers are skeptical" about the cost of an enterprise-grade installation, said Parsec President and CEO Eddy Azad, in an interview with *Managing Automation*. "They might not have the budget for large projects, but they want the benefits."

Parsec's answer is to put the core functionality of TrakSYS into something portable that can be set up quickly, in order to demonstrate the capabilities of a full-featured MI system. Some manufacturers, he added — especially those with smaller production shops or with lots of manual or semi-automated processes — might never opt for an enterprise-level solution, but they still can realize many of the benefits with the portable system.

The primary difference between LEANTrak and TrakSYS is that the portable system does not tie into existing control infrastructure or other enterprise systems, Azad said. Manufacturing workers can use mounting brackets included in the package to attach sensors at key points along the line. The sensors feed production data to the data collector box, which then transmits it to the laptop via a wireless connection. The information then can be analyzed using traditional MI tools, such as trend charts. In addition, because the system is self-contained, it doesn't disrupt the operation of a production line, Azad said.

The idea for the system came about when Parsec was in talks with a client interested in TrakSYS: "We had a rather large opportunity with a major food processing company, but before they invested in rolling out software installations in all their facilities, they wanted a measurable pilot project without a disruption in operations or existing infrastructure."

After a show of interest from other companies, Parsec decided to roll the system out as a separate offering. Today, the system is used worldwide by approximately 200 customers, including some that already use TrakSYS, Azad said. Most customers are discrete manufacturers with significant packaging operations, including food processing and pharmaceutical companies.

In addition to LEANTrak's obvious use as a demo for broader MI implementations, lean and Six Sigma project leaders can use the portable system to perform spot evaluations on capital assets, Azad said, "instead of traveling between facilities with stopwatches."

Customers have also reported using the system for factory acceptance testing to assess OEM equipment before they decide to purchase, Azad said. The OEMs, themselves, are also using the system during the same process to illustrate their machines' capabilities. "If there's an issue and you don't know the origin, it's hard to improve, whether you're the OEM or the customer. Both can benefit from actionable information," Azad said.

The system costs \$23,000, including the industrial laptop, data collection box, and three photoelectric sensors.