

Just a Thought
By Kevin Delahunt

Last week I had to buy a new oven. I say had because the old one, although only 11 years old, stopped working and when I realized it was an electronic issue, I phoned an appliance repair outfit. The service tech looked at the board and quite quickly pronounced its demise. At this point he announced that the oven was obsolete and that it was no longer being supported by the manufacturer. My options were to get a used board or buy a new oven. I choose the latter. But really! you are not going to support the product because it is 11 years old? At what point in time did it become obsolete? 3 years, 5 years? Can you imagine if the automotive or airline industry decided to make cars and planes that became obsolete after 11 years or less? Great for manufacturers but not so good for the consumer. Maybe we are just getting conditioned to the fact that anything electronic needs to be upgraded every couple of years or it will no longer be supported by the manufacturer. Just think of the cell phone industry and the need for a new phone every 2-3 years. What a great business model.

What If I extend this thinking to our industry? Manufacturers of air handling equipment currently suggest a 20-25-year life expectancy for equipment that have followed a proper maintenance regime. I certainly have seen a lot of equipment, tired as they may be, a lot older than this. Going forward as equipment gets more sophisticated electronically would the life expectancy be reduced because the electronics are obsolete and perhaps no longer supported by the manufacturer? This would certainly change the way that life cycle costing is done and increase capital budgets for replacement equipment. I see more “ovens” in the future.

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