

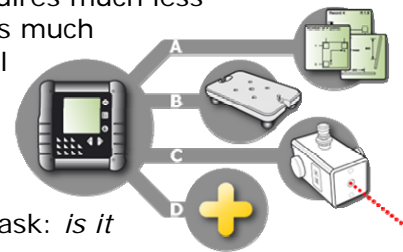
## ***5 Critical Factors to Consider For Your First Laser Alignment Tool*** ***By Paul Berberian***

There may be no more critical factor in the success of a new alignment program than in selecting the proper alignment system. Whether you are starting a new alignment program, or planning to move from straight edge / dial indicator alignment to laser alignment, there are several considerations to keep in mind to ensure you get the best value, not just the lowest price. Before you start, make sure you know what you need it for, and what types of alignments you will be doing. Have a list of what you want in the way of features and rank them by actual need vs. cost.

Whether you want an entry level or more advanced product, here are five things everyone should consider when they evaluate their options:

### **1) Functional Design / Upgradeability**

Look for functionality in the design. A dual beam laser requires much less calibration. Two rods supporting the lasers and detectors is much more stable for measurement. If you choose an entry level system to start, make sure it is upgradeable, that the money you invest today will still have value when it is time to upgrade your alignment program. If you get a dead-end system, you'll have to start all over if you find that you need more functionality in the future. Be sure to ask: *is it upgradeable?*



### **2) Rugged Industrial-Grade Tool**



Your alignment tool should be of rugged construction. Anodized aluminum is preferred. Plastic units can break easily when they are dropped or stepped on. Look for detachable cables. Units with integrated cables will require the entire unit to be returned for repair. With detachable cables the repair is as simple as replacing a cable. A broken laser or detector or a failed integral cable may mean a calibration

fee as well.

Be sure to consider where and how these tools will be used, and purchase accordingly. An inexpensive tool made with plastic may be fine for a classroom, but is unlikely to hold up in the field. Future repairs of inexpensive tools should be figured into the total cost of ownership. Put simply: *"How much does it cost to fix if I break it, and how breakable is it?"* If you save \$1000 on the initial purchase, but spend an additional \$2,500 in the first 2-3 years on repairs, was it really worth it?



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### 3) Professional Programs for Accuracy

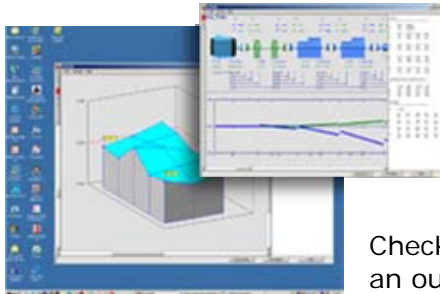
Having the right programs and features can make all the difference. Make sure the product you are purchasing has the ability to tell you when you are within tolerance. You don't want your team to have to refer back to charts every time and second guess themselves. Built-in **Tolerance Tables** give you accurate dependable readings every time.

A program like the **EasyTurn** program, that allows minimal rotation of the shafts, is essential for alignments in tight quarters where a wall or pipe or conduit may block a full 180° rotation. In shaft alignment, it is always best to be prepared. Your new alignment tool should also include a **Soft Foot** program.



Soft Foot must be corrected before any precision alignment job. **Compensation for Thermal Growth**, while not always necessary, can be vital in some alignments. This is another program that should be included in a professional alignment tool.

### 4) Documentation



Alignment tools must have documentation capabilities. Electronic documentation ensures that every job is completed and completed correctly. Electronic documentation can also tell you when additional training is required. It is essential in any machine warranty dispute.

Check to see if the documentation is a database or simply an output to a PDF screen capture. Database documentation ensures that the data won't get lost and keeps a historical record of every machine.

### 5) Cost

You're probably thinking that getting a laser alignment system with all these features will cost a boatload. Not necessarily. Use the internet and look at all of your options. Compare features, prices and total cost of ownership. Go for value! Get a demo of the product to make sure that it is easy to use, fills your needs, and fits your budget. Let a professional help you choose the features you need and don't pay for more than you need. And, don't overlook the value of a great warranty - ask the manufacturer what warranty they offer, and how often they have to service warranty claims.



In summary, whatever laser alignment system you choose to purchase, look for value instead of price, substance over promises. Spend your maintenance dollars wisely – choosing the right system can be the most critical factor in a successful alignment program!



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