

Who are we? what do we do?

Written by Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor
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Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor It has never been easy explaining plant equipment maintenance, reliability, and asset management to people outside the field. But in the past, you knew where to begin because their view of what we do was probably somewhere between Schneider, the building superintendent, and Goober, the filling station attendant.

But now, people step up with much better ideas that they are getting from sources that have traditionally been outside the maintenance and reliability field. Unfortunately, important concepts or processes are sometimes presented in an unusual context or are too soft and fuzzy for clear understanding. But there are some good articles, too.

A *Control Solutions* article, "Maintenance finally moves into limelight, disguised as asset management," points out that "when you get right down to it, at the most fundamental level, asset management is simply maintenance—but maintenance perceived as a crucial function that, done properly, can give a tremendous boost to the bottom line. This is a big change from the days when maintenance was viewed by management as a necessary evil."

A columnist for *Managing Automation*, in "A Dam Good Application," writes about distributed asset management (DAM) that "permits the assets to have an interactive dialogue with external systems so that problems and opportunities can be announced way before they normally would be encountered... . Now, some may confuse this with maintenance or enterprise asset management. However, EAM technology is a reactive one based on averages and does not link to assets in real-time. It could, however, be supplemented with DAM to become much more valuable to many organizations."

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Data from the plant-level component of *IndustryWeek* magazine's "Census of Manufacturers" confirm the trend toward lean manufacturing practices, indicating that 32 percent of manufacturers use predictive or preventive maintenance. This is good news, but I had never thought of PM as a lean manufacturing practice. But it certainly fits because it reduces the waste of reactive maintenance.

With more players on the field than ever before, you don't know where to begin when explaining what we do because you are not sure of the game. There is a lot of running, passing, kicking, and tackling, but is the game soccer, football, or rugby?

We need a few good definitions that can serve as a starting point for the discussions we have with operations, top management, human resources, finance, and others outside our field. Do you have the courage to offer some suggestions? If so, let's hear them. **MT**

