

Senior Management must be committed to maintenance process

Written by MT Staff
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Senior management commitment is required for any initiative to be successful. Simply stated, without its commitment or demonstrated leadership, initiatives stall, fall substantially short of expectations, or just plain fail.

Today, perhaps more than ever, companies must improve safety, reduce total cost, meet shorter delivery cycles, and meet more stringent quality requirements. Even the most competitive companies must improve in order to compete with off-shore competitors. Driving this need for improvement are tight capital for investment, an increased regulatory demand, the reality of global competition, and the “urge to merge.” Every company simply has to get better in order to survive. The best way to insure survival is to continually improve results by continually improving business processes, i.e., the way we do business.

The number one initiative in most companies today is safety. In today’s society it’s unacceptable to injure or kill people. The good news is senior management has recognized this and is committed to and leads the safety initiatives in their organization. This could be attributed to the fact that, if there are accidents, senior management is the first to be charged and potentially face a jail term.

The usual second on the list of competing initiatives is quality improvement. The driver in this case is the customer and is well understood by senior management. Today’s reality is that plant operations are viewed as a system of processes to which quality system principles are applied—consistency and continuous improvement. To this end, numerous process improvement techniques are available—total quality management (TQM), total

productive maintenance (TPM), and lean manufacturing. Unfortunately, many of these programs grind to a halt because they fail to generate the desired results.

When many senior managers utter the word “maintenance” it is as if they are speaking of a terrible illness. Senior management has to include maintenance and reliability excellence in the organization’s top priority initiatives; they must be committed and demonstrate leadership. Maintenance must be viewed as a process also.

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Enhanced asset reliability is a critical element in manufacturing performance and market competitiveness, maybe even survival, in today's manufacturing environment. Management must recognize the impact and importance of increasing equipment availability and utilization, increasing maintenance productivity and resource utilization, and increasing the quality and responsiveness of maintenance as a critical element in manufacturing performance and market competitiveness.

There can be no doubt that well-executed maintenance processes can play a major role in reducing quality defects, increasing production capacity and throughput, and improving overall plant productivity and profitability. Maintenance and reliability excellence is an investment in an organization's ability to produce a product or provide a service. It's not a necessary evil or dammed cost.

Unfortunately, many senior managers view the job of maintenance as "fix things when they break." When in reality, if breakdowns occur maintenance has failed. The job of maintenance is to maintain things so they never break. In some companies, fast reactive maintenance is often viewed as good maintenance performance.

However, it is actually lousy maintenance, just fast service. Repairs are made because "real" maintenance wasn't done. Proactive maintenance is work that is planned and scheduled and is completed at a time in the equipment's life cycle when the condition being corrected can restore the equipment to its design capability with a minimum investment.

It is likely that senior management does recognize the need to improve maintenance and reliability excellence. What they haven't recognized is that maintenance and reliability is a process and requires continual improvement of business processes. Unfortunately, they keep doing what they have always done and expect a different result. With safety they got it because they are being held accountable by society. With quality they got it because the customer is holding them accountable.

How many more jobs have to be lost to other countries or how many more companies have to fold before they realize that they also are responsible for maintenance and reliability excellence? This initiative requires and demands their commitment and leadership.— [Fred Dunbrack](#)