

Racing For Reliability

Written by Terry Wireman, C.P.M.M. Editorial Director
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Terry Wireman, C.P.M.M. Editorial Director This year, we made a conscious decision to use "Racing for Reliability" as the theme for MARTS, an annual event held in Rosemont, IL. It's been a great choice given the fact that so many readers—and attendees—are NASCAR racing fans. On the other hand, is it realistic to link racing with the pursuit of reliability? Let's see.

Jeff Hammond of Fox Sports is the Keynote Speaker at MARTS this year. His address has a specific focus on the communication between a race car driver and pit crew, and what this type of teamwork means to reliability—be it in the pits, on the track or back at the shop. Hammond also is discussing what it means to be competitive, always striving for improvement—what it takes to be consistent, a winner and a champion.

As we readied this issue of MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY for press, we took the opportunity to preview Hammond's presentation. From it, we could see that being competitive in NASCAR racing bears many similarities to making equipment reliability improvements in industrial operations. Success in both of these areas depends on highperforming and reliable equipment.

For example, are you and your company striving for continuous improvement? Are you constantly looking for ways to be the preferred supplier in your marketplace? Are you aggressively reducing wasteful practices to lower costs and increase throughput? Are you trying to accomplish this before your competitor makes the improvements and takes a leading share in your market? Answering "yes" to any of these questions would qualify you to sit in the front row at MARTS 2006.

Scott Lampe, CFO of Hendrick Motorsports, is another featured presenter at MARTS this year. His talk explains how the Hendrick fleet of race cars, spare parts inventory and

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components are properly maintained and provides examples of how the organization has significantly improved its inventory and maintenance management practices to win on the NASCAR circuit. Lampe also notes how teamwork, a winning attitude and computerized recordkeeping has helped make Hendrick teams top competitors in the racing world.

Learning how representatives of NASCAR think can help you improve maintenance and reliability practices around your own plant or facility. Instead of being locked into your current paradigm of maintenance and reliability as "necessary evils" or a necessary expense, look at the situation in NASCAR terms. By doing so, you can begin changing the attitude at your plant or facility to one where improved maintenance and reliability functions are keys to competitiveness.

Don't be misled. The fact is that Reliability IS very much a "race."

Improved reliability is a major—if not the most important—component in the race for business and industry survival. Improved reliability can help your company lower expenses related to maintenance labor and materials, boost production throughput and increase Return On Assets (ROA). That's serious stuff.

Thus, instead of getting into a silly debate about reliability being a race, your organization should be asking itself if it can improve its asset maintenance and reliability practices before your competition does. Are you up for it? **MT**