

The Road To Sustainability Is One Truly Worth Traveling

Written by George Dettloff, President and CEO, SKF USA Inc.
Wednesday, 01 August 2007 00:00



George Dettloff, President and CEO, SKF USA Inc. If “sustainability” is not yet part of your organization’s lexicon, it likely will be very soon. Proactive sustainability programs aim to help businesses become more productive and competitive, safeguard natural resources, cultivate community outreach and involve employees as valued partners. For all the right reasons, sustainability is gaining share-of-mind among forwardthinking companies around the world, regardless of their market sector or industry.

Capturing the benefits

Benefits derived from sustainability initiatives can extend throughout all aspects of an organization. For the maintenance function, the road to sustainability offers opportunities to move in more effective strategic directions and develop more efficient approaches. Along the way, operations can realize measurable energy savings, improved equipment reliability and a smaller environmental footprint.

The outlook for industry, in particular, and the world, in general, brightens whenever the concept of sustainability is embraced, goals are identified and meaningful programs are fully integrated into an organization. In our case, we have made great strides since becoming the first bearings manufacturer to achieve group certification to ISO 14001, the international standard for environmental management systems. In 2006 we reached yet another milestone when, for the seventh year in succession, parent company SKF AB was recognized in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes.

Such distinctions combined with a long history of sustainability-related experience have instilled us with keen insights into how the process of sustainability can best fulfill its promise. Our experience further has led us to one of many important conclusions: Sustainability is good for maintenance.

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As an example, a top-to-bottom energy and environmental analysis typically serves as a starting point on the road to sustainability. This type of analysis is intended to evaluate highenergy consumption areas, lubricant use and other operating processes with an eye toward meeting sustainability objectives.

A real-world example

Illustrating the benefits in the world of maintenance, an analysis performed recently for one of our customers ultimately led to a cut in lubricant consumption for plant machinery by 18%. This was followed closely by a significant reduction in the time and money previously spent for associated lubrication-related maintenance.

Even more dramatically, overall production eventually rose by 30%. This was accomplished by repositioning equipment maintenance practices to reliability-centered paradigms driven by condition-monitoring technology. Recurring and costly unscheduled downtime for machinery virtually vanished.

Developing your roadmap

How an organization maps and implements a viable sustainability program will depend on a wide range of factors, not the least of which is an organization's culture. Clearly, there is no "one size fits all" blueprint for success. But, the road to sustainability—by whatever route—is well worth taking.

For our part we have logically organized our established sustainability program under four umbrella cornerstones: *Business Care*, *Environment Care*, *Employee Care* and *Community Care*.

In *Business* a key mission is to partner expertly with customers to develop environmentally and economically sound solutions for industry challenges. Under *Environment*, our everyday job is to minimize negative impact, exceed goals and set a shining example. Our Employee approach seeks to encourage pride, loyalty, dedication and full potential. For the global *Community*, our mandate is to serve as "good neighbor" around the world.

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Perhaps the most meaningful way to view sustainability and the intrinsic potential can be summed up quite simply: *Sustainability is not about us, it's about all of us.*