Written by Bob Baldwin, Founding Editor, Maintenance Technology
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This month's "Viewpoint" first ran as the December 1989 installment of founding and long-time MT Editor (1988–2005) Bob Baldwin's "Uptime" column. While it refers to an event that occurred 23 years ago and includes a quote from an industrialist who died in 1910 (another highly successful "founder"), the "advice" in it is timeless.

I recently had the opportunity to chair an all-day session at a maintenance seminar in Chicago where the speakers had a great deal to say about what can be done and what should be done to improve the lot of maintenance professionals, as well as what maintenance professionals can do to improve their operations. They addressed topics such as developing a maintenance strategy, maintenance planning and control, and applying reliability centered maintenance, predictive maintenance, and computerized maintenance management.

All the speakers acknowledged that many top managers, department heads, and specialists often had a hard time accepting maintenance as a worthy partner. At the same time, however, the speakers were able to tell of some success stories where maintenance managers made significant improvements to the bottom line and turned things around in troubled operations.

They also pointed to some promising maintenance improvement plans, ranging from vibration analysis to computerized scheduling and inventory control, that had failed because the participants dropped the ball. The champions for these projects had retired or were transferred and the projects died. Or the participants were unrealistic about what it would take to get the program rolling, or they overran the budget before it was up to speed.

The point is this: Individual managers can make a difference when they champion the right causes. Success is a product of intelligent hard work from managers and staff alike. And maintenance success improves the stature of the maintenance profession. With these points fresh in mind and the experience of the seminar hardly over, I was quite receptive to the message I saw when I visited The Timken Company's repair facility for large tapered roller bearings. The message presented advice offered near the turn of the century by Henry Timken (1831-1910), the company founder.

"To be successful, you must be independent. If you want to lead in any line, you must bring to it independence of thought,
unfailing industry, aggression,
and indomitable purpose.
If you have an idea, which you think is right,
push it to the finish. Don't let
anyone else influence you against it.
If we all thought the same way,
there would be no progress. But above all,
don't set your name to anything you
will ever have cause to be ashamed of."

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