

From Our Perspective

Written by Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor
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"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge, but imagination."

...Albert Einstein



Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor At a recent international roundtable discussion, attendees were asked to define their version of a "World-Class" maintenance organization. Many rolled out the proverbial shopping list of "must haves." These are attributes required by various maintenance award committees that have attempted to tangibly define "World-Class" status as a scorecard of the number of philosophies and policies followed over a defined time period. According to these committee definitions, "World Class" ostensibly is achieved by measuring a department's scorecard against a set of subjective performance measures—set and contributed to by most of the people around the table.

The term "World Class" has always bothered me, as it is a moving target and difficult to evaluate, often serving no relevant purpose other than for corporate bragging rights. I prefer "First Class" or "Best in Class" to describe a maintenance approach tailored specifically to a department that realistically understands its work culture, ambient condition factors affecting assets and ever-changing corporate market conditions. This means that the maintenance department must have the capability and the autonomy to continually adapt to the change around it, via two major attributes, "Innovation," and "Imagination." Those were the two words I used as prompts for my presentation to the roundtable.

In light of the current economic crisis and the massive looming loss of skilled trades, the maintenance industry is about to take a giant step backward—unless we allow innovation and

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imagination to shine through. Each maintenance department has a unique story, and will require a tailored solution to achieve and sustain a first-class approach in delivering an asset availability that meets or exceeds the immediate needs of the business. To achieve this, we must consult and listen to the people who best understand our business and our assets—ourselves!

Perhaps the best "Imagineer" of all time, Albert Einstein, valued and applauded intuition—and people who continually pushed for the most effective and appropriate approach to any event. The ability to distill complexity into its simplest form was a big part of Einstein's genius. Throughout my own career I have always tried to follow his statement, "Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler." This, in my opinion, is the essence of true "World Class."

Simplicity and relevance to approaching true maintenance needs is best achieved through questioning, listening and using our intuition to determine starting points for examination of relevant indicators that vindicate our action, allowing us to build relevant preventive strategy. For example, an operator instinctively knows when a machine is "out of tune." By trusting this intuition, we can perform an immediate number of predictive diagnostics and determine a relevant preventive strategy based on real need and the unique ambient condition factors found at the time. We intuitively know when a design, process or procedure does not meet the need. Fostering an environment that allows all affected parties to get together and use their collective imagination to effect relevant change is truly innovative and worthy of a "World-Class" moniker.

We must all focus on developing a value approach to maintenance, divorcing ourselves from ideas, strategies, methods and designs that add no value. This requires maintenance, operations, engineering and management all working together to developing innovative "real-time" solutions that fit each unique event, situation and culture, reserving the right to revisit and change as the present dictates. Don't procrastinate—*Innovate! Good Luck! LMT*