Written by Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor
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Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor The 2004 Directory of Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) and Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) software lists major offerings. I recently had an opportunity to visit the headquarters of two of the companies listed and the people I talked to there echoed some of the things I have been hearing from other suppliers of maintenance information systems.

While stopping way short of saying they are in a commodity business, they agree that most of the primary maintenance management functions are available in all the packages on the market. They all manage work orders, track inventory, facilitate work planning, track costs, etc. They all deliver value to their users.

However, studies have shown that a surprising number of CMMS implementations fail—more than 50 percent by some estimates. If they all support core maintenance competencies and have the ability to deliver value, why do so many fail? Perhaps it is because those users are buying maintenance solutions (a favored term used by most software developers) rather than figuring out what they want to do and then buying a software tool to automate the process.

The companies I visited point out that their most successful customers have a well thought out maintenance and reliability process.

What is included in a well thought out processes? There are a number of recipes served up by consultants, but those are models. It takes a lot of hard work to build the real thing.

The three organizations sharing their experience at the Maintenance & Reliability Technology Summit have put in the hard work necessary to develop maintenance and reliability processes that work.

Each was unique to their company but they have a number of points in common. They have a vision, mission, goals, and measurements. They have a leadership team. They recognize the close relationship between good maintenance and reliability and enterprise performance.

And most importantly in my view, all three companies are looking beyond fundamental maintenance efficiency to maintenance effectiveness which depends on sucessfully embedding the principles of root cause analysis and reliability centered maintenance in their work processes.

The EAM/CMMS suppliers I visited were similarly focused on reliability analysis.

When leading users and leading suppliers are aligned, they must be heading toward significant value. If your alignment is not parallel to theirs, and you are not investing in reliability, it may be time to revisit your objectives. You may be missing something. **MT**

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