Written by Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor
Thursday, 04 August 2011 14:37

On a recent trip to Paris, I reveled in the role of tourist. Among other points of interest, I visited the military academy/museum at the Place Invalides.

There, I couldn't help but chuckle when my electronic "guide" referenced the graduation report for one of this college's most celebrated alums—*Napoleon Bonaparte.* The report writer had evidently noted something to the effect that "given the right circumstances," Napoleon would be able to "make something of himself." What an understatement!

Although Napoleon was greatly disadvantaged due to his Corsican background, he was a master at recognizing opportunity. He used his savvy to open door after door for himself and, in just a few short years, became the legitimate Emperor of France.

Fast forward several centuries to a Planning and Scheduling workshop I conducted three weeks after trekking around Paris… My introduction of the work-order backlog management section was met with an all-too-familiar refrain. Like similar groups before them, these attendees voiced great frustration over their inability to get at equipment assets and perform the most basic of routine maintenance tasks. This time, however, my response to all the venting was different from past workshops, in that I could flavor it with this classic Napoleonesque admonition: "Ability is of little account without opportunity."

The point of all this is that while we may know how to plan and schedule effectively, if we can't get to the asset it is to no avail. Throughout the year, many non-controlled shutdown events will occur within a plant (i.e., operator-induced equipment/line shutdowns, safety shutdowns, audit inspections, raw-material outages, etc.). There are also many short-term controlled shutdown events that occur on a daily basis (i.e., shift changes, product changeovers, break times, lunch times, manufacturing-target-completion shutdowns, etc.). Both non-controlled and controlled events represent a huge maintenance opportunity and the chance to introduce an Opportunity Based Maintenance (OBM) strategy and program.

For example, at one mining client's site, when production would not give up its underground scoop-tram vehicles for basic lubrication, we identified an opportunity to introduce a "pit-stop" maintenance service program to service the lubrication needs of the vehicles during normal one-hour lunch periods—outside the drivers' lunchroom. This "opportunity" resulted in handsome gains in both tram availability and productivity.

The fundamental difference between traditional scheduling and OBM lies not only in the duration of the event, but how the work scope is identified. OBM takes advantage of very small time windows. Therefore, the Planner/Scheduler must scope out proactive work tasks that can be scheduled immediately, require just one technician and have job-plan durations suitable for scheduling in increments of 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour, on up to a maximum of 2 hours. The scope of work that can be included in an OBM approach will include:

- Manual lubrication
- Oil/filter change
- Equipment cleanup
- Laser alignment
- Utility-system leak checks
- Calibration
- Wear checks
- Oil-analysis sampling
- Belt replacements

OBM program setup requires maintenance and production departments to develop a communication strategy that will inform maintenance immediately when a non-controlled shutdown takes place—*and to agree on an understanding about setting up pit-stop-styled maintenance tactics during short-term planned outages.* If you have the ability, find the opportunity! As the comedian Milton Berle put it, "If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door." Good luck!
LMT

kbannister@engtechindustries.com