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When asked to assist in improving and optimizing the maintenance and reliability performance of a client, we begin by conducting a maintenance effectiveness assessment. If this assessment is performed properly, it gives us, a third party, the ability to see how maintenance and reliability are managed—*and how it impacts the bottom line*. Although not our primary objective, this also lets us see how the maintenance and reliability function is perceived by the company and the plant leadership team.

A simple question we ask of the leadership team is “Does the plant view maintenance as a contributor to operational performance?” We want to get a feel for how the management perceives the maintenance and reliability function. Is it viewed as part of the core business? Is it mentioned in the plant Vision and Mission statement? Is the maintenance function viewed as a contributor to plant capacity and operational excellence? In general, if the plant views maintenance as a key contributor to the business, the stage is set for the maintenance organization’s contribution to be translated into measureable results on the shop floor and in the operation’s bottom line.

In some cases, unfortunately, what the plant management says and what it actually does are two different things. Alas, we’ve discovered on occasion that a leadership team, either directly or indirectly. treats its maintenance function as a “hobby”—*or as defined by Webster’s as “a pursuit outside one’s regular occupation engaged in especially for relaxation.”*

Here’s a example: Many companies attest to having a solid maintenance program in place. They claim to have done everything necessary to implement and install new systems and processes for managing maintenance and reliability. Their programs, how-ever, are not delivering the value they expect. This is usually evidenced by the lackluster performance of their KPIs. Ultimately, the maintenance processes are unable to deliver the financial performance that’s expected by the senior leaders.

Upon closer examination of these types of maintenance processes, we frequently see what I refer to as the “hobby syndrome.” While I’m not implying plant leadership teams literally treat the maintenance function as a “hobby,” to a casual observer, this is—*regrettably*—a picture that

often comes across. Implicitly, some attitudes, behaviors and actions seem to suggest maintenance and reliability is just that: something that a leadership team does in its spare time.

The hobby syndrome is typically manifested by the following patterns:

- A production-driven type of environment, wherein “production is king!”
- A lack of adherence to the maintenance schedule
- Poor prioritization of incoming maintenance
- PM routines deferred because the production group will not give up the equipment
- A maintenance organization’s influence reduced to that of a service organization, instead of it being considered a contributor to the bottom line

In today’s manufacturing environment, there’s no time for hobbies. The maintenance organization must be managed as a core part of the business so its contribution can be realized in bottom-line results. **MT**

The opinions expressed in this Viewpoint section are those of the author, and don’t necessarily reflect those of the staff and management of Maintenance Technology magazine.

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