

Empowerment. Empowerment. Empowerment.

Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
Wednesday, 29 April 2009 15:33



We hear a lot about *empowerment*. I believe the word is used too often and in too many situations, so much in fact that its meaning is beginning to drift.

Bored workers see empowerment as nothing more than another hollow platitude espoused by top management during the current productivity campaign.

Old-style harried supervisors think of empowerment as having to give up some power, responsibility, authority, or control to workers, making them more difficult to boss around.

Cost-pressured managers think of empowerment as a way to offload management responsibilities onto the workforce so they can "re-engineer" a few more middle level people out the doo.

One presumptuous editor thinks of empowerment as providing maintenance and reliability workers with the tools and technologies discussed and advertised in his magazine.

I was disappointed when I found that the dictionary simply lists empowerment as the verb "to invest with legal power; to authorize."

Is that all there is? I was hoping for more, something to justify the use of the word empowerment in the notes I took during a recent reliability-centered maintenance (RCM) workshop. The workshop, sponsored by the Society for Maintenance and Reliability

Empowerment. Empowerment. Empowerment.

Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
Wednesday, 29 April 2009 15:33

Professionals, was led by John Moubray, author of this month's Viewpoint article.

In one instance, Moubray spoke of the need for empowerment to implement the recommendations of the RCM analysis. In that case, empowerment indeed had to do with authorization.

My other note on empowerment dealt with a common scenario for participants in RCM review groups that analyze plant equipment. These groups ideally consist of an operator, a maintainer, an operations supervisor, a maintenance supervisor, and a facilitator. Time and again, Moubray says, operators leave the RCM experience noting that for the first time, they fully understand how the machine they operate really works. He also states that maintainers leave the RCM experience noting that they finally understand what operating requirements are all about. They are both now fully empowered to do the job for which they are being paid.

Once workers have been empowered by real knowledge and current information, all you have to do is get out of their way and watch their progress. **MT**

Thanks for stopping by,

