Written by Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor Friday, 02 April 2010 19:07



As I ate my sandwich in a small restaurant on the road to nowhere recently, I became intrigued by a large sign stating "Our Goal and Objective is to Create the Comfort of Home for Every Guest!"

Looking around at the austere surroundings, the tired plastic tablecloths and the apathetic waitress in a dirty smock, my thoughts wandered from the margarine-soaked, processed-chicken offering in my hand to the question of what the restaurant owner could have been thinking when posting this sign. Could this dismal environment really have been his/her personal interpretation of "Home Comfort?" If so, the intended objective had been achieved—on ly the owner should have stipulated "the Comfort of My Own Home. . ."

If, however, the owner's intent were universal, he/she certainly failed in achieving the expressed goal and objective with me (and, I bet, with the majority of the restaurant's patrons, not to mention most individuals reading this column). When asked about the sign's origins, the waitress informed me that it had been posted by the restaurant's previous owner, and that the current ownership—to put it kindly—neglected things.

The point of a goal or objective is to be tangible, measurable, current and relevant to its entire intended audience. The restaurant's stated goal and objective missed on all counts! Setting goals and objectives allows us to give meaning to improvement initiatives and programs by stating our intent and measuring our success in carrying out that intent.

Often thought of as mysterious—and as a financial anchor to the organization—the maintenance department is well served through the setting of goals and objectives that throw light on maintenance activities by defining and quantifying the department's impact on both operations and the corporation as a whole. This impact can be spelled out in economic, wellness (safety) and environmental terms that have universal audience appeal.

Goals and objectives become slogans and statements of aspiration for their owners. Thus, broad and subjective statements such as "Keep Machinery Working!" can dilute a message

From Our Perspective: Say What You Mean...Mean What You Say!

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significantly when the call to action can be met even if the machinery has been "band-aided" and is operating at only 40% of its design efficiency. A stronger, more effective way of saying things would be to proclaim: "Operating at Greater Than 95% Design Efficiency!" or "Delivering Greater Than 95% Asset Availability!" In both cases, a tangible and concise measurable is stated as the goal or objective. Asset reliability objectives can be expressed in terms of downtime-reduction or Mean-Time-Between-Failure (MTBF) targets, in days—not hours!

Improved lubrication practices allow us to target goals and objectives not only in equipment effectiveness (i.e. uptime, throughput, availability, reliability), but in terms of energy reduction by tracking kWh consumption before and after the start of a lubrication initiative. Energy reduction can be translated into an economic or dollar-saving target/deliverable, as well as an environmental target/deliverable, by linking kWh usage with Kg–CO2 emission-reduction figures. By cleverly crafting multiple targets for the same lubrication program initiative, the maintenance department is able to "say what it means" to a wider audience that includes operations, management and shareholders/stakeholders of the enterprise.

By working toward, documenting and achieving defined goals and objectives, we vindicate and validate the improvement process. At the same time, we help others understand the impact that lubrication programs and the role of maintenance have on them, by telling them that "we mean what we say!"

On a more personal note, weary road warrior that I am, I guess I'll have to strike another restaurant off my list of meal stops...

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