

Survival of the Fittest

Written by Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor
Monday, 01 May 2000 20:51



Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor So far this year we have had an opportunity to participate as speaker, conference attendee, and exhibitor at a number of maintenance and reliability events from the giant National Manufacturing Week (NMW) conference and exhibition to smaller specialized events such as the user group meeting of Design Maintenance System Inc. and the annual meeting of the Machinery Information Open Systems Alliance (MIMOSA).

Practitioner presentations testified to the success of modern proactive maintenance and reliability practice. Yet, stories of failure circulated "offline" during breaks. Not failures of proactive maintenance, but the failure of plant or company leadership to understand what is going on. "They just don't get it," is the phrase I heard more than once. John Mitchell touches on this theme in his final* Viewpoint editorial on page 60.

Well, top management may never get it unless it is explained in their terms. They need to see how modern proactive reliability and maintenance practice connects to high-level enterprise objectives. That connection has been examined by several authors: John Mitchell in "Understanding Producer Value" (5/99), Keith Burres in "How Reliability Affects Earnings per Share" (2/00), and Carol Vesier in "Profit Driven Reliability" (3/00). These articles are on our Web site; a special ["Enterprise Values"](#) box on the home page points the way.

The story of how maintenance and reliability links to enterprise success must be told repeatedly. Jay Levinson, author of *Guerrilla Marketing Attack*, notes that it typically takes nine repetitions of an advertising message to incite the reader to action. That is

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the good news, he says, because they miss it two out of three times. That means you have to repeat the message 27 times to make sure they get it.

On the other hand, perhaps they will never get it, and they will succumb to the effects of Darwinism, a term that was reintroduced to John Mitchell and me by MESA International Chairman Eric Marks in his presentations at NMW and MIMOSA. He used Darwinism in the context of information technology, but it fits the reliability context as well. To paraphrase Marks: Firms that invest in reliability as a strategic resource for the future will survive. Those that do not will perish. Furthermore, executives who drive investing in reliability as one of their primary strategic levers will thrive. Those who do not will be deselected.

After 27 tries at enlightening leadership that doesn't get it, perhaps you must give them up for deselection and try to hook up with a company whose leaders do get it. **MT**

