

Bread And Butter And Self Actualization

Written by Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor
Tuesday, 01 May 2001 09:14



Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor A reliability manager I know socially mentioned that he is now receiving MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY at his new job location where he is responsible for raising the level of maintenance at his new company's plants. Our conversation escalated to include reliability centered maintenance (RCM), which he fears could duplicate his experience with quality in other companies. People would often get caught up, he says, in the program of quality rather than the application of the principles of quality. They kept up their control charts, yet never improved manufacturing processes enough to substantially decrease the rate of defects, but they could claim they had a quality program in place.

In his current bootstrapping situation, my friend says RCM, predictive maintenance, and other higher-level strategies will have to wait until he gets some planners on board. He knows he will not be successful without being able to plan and schedule his work.

His logic parallels a point I tried to make during my presentation at the recent annual meeting of the Machinery Information Management Open Systems Alliance (MIMOSA). I presented a slide that listed Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchal human needs:

1. Physiological-the need for food, clothing, and shelter
2. Safety-the need to be free from physical danger and emotional harm
3. Social-the need for affection, to be accepted, and to belong
4. Ego or Esteem-the need for self-respect, to be heard, to be appreciated, and to be wanted
5. Self Actualization-the need to achieve one's potential (doing things)

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According to Maslow, one of the early humanistic psychologists, self-actualization is the highest motivator, but only after lower levels of the motivational hierarchy have been met. For example, the musician engaged in self-actualizing activity of making music will eventually become tired or hungry so that physiological need for rest or food becomes a primary motivator.

I suggest that a similar hierarchy of needs governs the behavior of reliability and maintenance organizations.

Physiological needs must be satisfied first. These include people, skills, and money. Unless you have some, you can't make much progress toward self actualization. Unfortunately, changing worker demographics and current economic behavior are making them harder to get. This means the self-actualized manager may have to step down a few levels to make sure these bread-and-butter issues are met. On the other hand, perhaps having enough people, skills, and money to get the job done is the real meaning of self actualization. **MT**

