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Viewing Maintenance as an organizational hub, we have, to date in this Partnership series, explored its relational connection with internal and external partners at the department management level. In reality, Maintenance connects with others on many different levels, something that influences the decisional outcomes of the entire Maintenance organization. These connections take place on a daily basis through actions—*and non-action!*

This high level of connectivity is evident even in a minor, seemingly insignificant, preventive maintenance event such as a simple oil and filter change. Quarterbacking the event is usually the role of the Maintenance planner/scheduler, who is, arguably, the most important person within the Maintenance and Operations groups. It's the planner/scheduler who controls the field of play with a series of connective actions that must take place to ensure the successful completion of any maintenance event.

On any given day within an organization, thousands of decisions are made. Reaching any single decision calls for a series of connective actions or events linked together via established business processes that predetermine at what point a decision is required to make the next connection. For example, a simple PM event requiring an oil and filter change requires the planner/scheduler to set up and execute the PM in three distinctive stages.

Stage 1: PM event set-up

To execute his/her job correctly with regard to any planned or unplanned maintenance event, a planner/scheduler must develop an initial job or work plan that describes the actions needed to complete the intended event. This simple chronology requires the planner/scheduler to connect with the Engineering Department and the machine manufacturer or the lubricant supplier (depending on the best resource) to determine the required lubricant, the filter, the recommended change-out procedure and the change-out interval.

Once the work plan is established and entered into the CMMS, materials must be ordered and placed in stock, which leads to the Maintenance planner/scheduler having to connect with the Maintenance Inventory Control person, who in turn connects with the Purchasing agent, who in turn connects with the material supplier. If the material supplier is a new one, the Purchasing agent must also connect with Accounting to set up invoicing and payment schedules.

After materials have been shipped and received, the receiver connects with the Inventory Control person, who in turn reconnects with the planner to advise that the oil-change materials are now in stock—*and the department can move on to Stage 2, in which the event can now be scheduled.*

Stage 2: The maintenance event
To perform the event, the Maintenance planner/scheduler must now connect with the applicable Trades foreman, who in turn connects with the technician who will perform the oil and filter change. The technician proceeds to the inventory crib and connects with the Inventory Control person to gather the oil and filter materials.

Then, it's off to the jobsite, where the technician may or may not need to connect with the Production foreman and/or operator to receive control of the equipment on which to work. Once the oil change is completed, the technician again connects with the Production supervisor and/or operator to return control of the equipment, then reconnects with his/her own direct supervisor to deliver the completed work order.

Stage 3: The paperwork
With the event completed and equipment available for work, the Maintenance planner/scheduler may choose to connect with the Trades supervisor and/or the Production foreman and/or equipment operator to perform a work-quality check. Confirming that the work is completed satisfactorily, the Maintenance planner/scheduler then connects with the CMMS coordinator or clerk (if applicable), to have the work order closed and filed within the CMMS.

During the performance of the oil change, should the technician find a problem requiring additional attention, he/she will connect with the Trades supervisor to discuss the matter or write down the requirements on the work order. The Trades supervisor once again connects with the planner/scheduler to discuss the new or additional work requirements, after which the planner/scheduler repeats the entire connection cycle by commencing with the new work requirement at Stage 1.

The power of connection
What we see in this scenario calls to mind the lyrics of an old song: "The knee bone's connected to the thighbone, the thighbone's connected to the hip bone, the hip bone's

connected to the..." A series of purposeful connective events involving both Maintenance and non-Maintenance Department personnel are charted for a simple oil and filter change. Setting up and executing this simple event requires over 20 connections to take place, all of it carefully orchestrated by the Maintenance planner/scheduler.

The connection path will change according to the availability of repair parts, tools, trained resources, equipment availability, communication tools, etc. How smooth that path is will depend greatly on the systems and business processes already in place, at both the departmental and organizational levels, and on the organizational ability of the planner/scheduler.

With this kind of connective power, it is easy to understand those who conjecture that a good Maintenance planner/scheduler may be equivalent to three technicians! How well are you connected? **MT**

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