

## From Our Perspective: Daring To Imagineer

Written by Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor  
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I've been doing a lot of research for my upcoming "*Don't Procrastinate ... Innovate!*" series of columns outlining innovative, value-based maintenance approaches, tips and tricks for this magazine's sister publication, *Maintenance Technology*. The process has put me in touch, so to speak, with a number of industrial and scientific visionaries.

Albert Einstein needs no introduction: His affable, white-haired, bed-headed image epitomizes the "mad scientist" label, and his genius in quantum physics is undisputed. Einstein's real genius, however, was deeply rooted in his ability to communicate complex theories in simple terms and memory pictures so that every person could understand. Quoted as saying, "I rarely think in words at all," he dared others to think in pictures and let their imaginations run wild. Many have done quite well in taking that dare.

Alcoa coined the word "imagineering" in the early 1940s, for an advertising campaign promoting its innovative use of aluminum. The ads explained the concept as one of "letting your imagination soar, and then engineering it down to earth." Walt Disney later jumped on the idea with an "Imagineering" department to design and develop his innovative theme parks in the 1950s. Others, though, including Henry Ford, for one, had been imagineering long before Alcoa and Disney.

Ford, whether or not he knew it, must have done some real imagineering on the moving production line. More important, he capitalized on the genius of teamwork, affording workers an opportunity to contribute their own imagineered thoughts and concepts for evaluation.

Many of maintenance's recognized best practices can be found in the practice of TPM (Total Productive Maintenance) activities. TPM is a proponent of effective engineered lubrication practices, scrupulous cleanliness, visual factory and the collaborative development of condition-based preventive work tasks involving both operations and maintenance personnel.

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Putting together a team charged with looking after an asset's best interest from daily-care (operator) and long-term-care (maintainer) perspectives obliges both sides to understand the asset's needs in the true context within which it is operated. Forgoing the "blame game"—*by recognizing that both production and maintenance staffs are almost equally at fault in an asset failure*—and encouraging imagineering via a brainstorming session will break down many of the failure-causing obstacles that plague and hinder the asset's ability to perform in a sustainable manner.

Outcomes of such sessions will produce small redesigns that facilitate easier access for preventive maintenance (PM), or the introduction of value-added PM that can be executed from the asset's perimeter (perimeter-based maintenance) without a lockout requirement or machine shutdown. Many effective visual checks can be performed this way, including those for lubricant fluid levels, throughput or pressure. These can easily be turned into split-second visual checks by operators or maintainers (or any passerby) by permanently marking on a Hi/Lo-level visual indicator on fluid reservoirs, and by marking the gauges with a colored Safe-Operating-Window area edged by the predetermined maximum and minimum gauge flow or pressure marking. These simple Go-NoGo visuals require almost no explanation. They simplify the preventive maintenance process, allowing the asset to be maintained by condition and maximizing its effectiveness.

The truly innovative among us recognize the power of teamwork and develop opportunities for imagineering—*and the ability to visualize and simplify our approach and execution to one based on value.* Einstein may have summed it up best in his memorable definition of insanity as "doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Your industry needs your ideas now. Do you dare to imagineer? Good luck!

**LMT**

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