Written by John Mitchell
Monday, 01 November 1999 20:02

Insights into critical issues of plant equipment maintenance and reliability management

Judging from comments received via e-mail, expressed on maintenance-oriented web sites, and repeated in Bob Baldwin's Uptime editorials in the July/August and September issues of MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY, there seems to be general agreement in at least one area within the maintenance and reliability community. Maintenance professionals are concerned about the stature, respect, consideration, and response received from both their own and supplier organizations. Although there appears to be a lot of complaining, there does not appear to be much real corrective activity.

The primary issue The general question is how do we as a community change what most agree are discouraging conditions. The real question is what are you doing personally to drive change?

Before the answer, some observations: For a soon to be released book on asset management, I personally reviewed over 100 papers presented over the past two years. Out of more than 70 pages of notes, I had a little more than two pages on results and benefits. Many authors seem to be talking about what to do and how to do it, but they seem to be ignoring the benefits that have been achieved. Is that because process is more important than results to maintenance professionals? If so, priorities are reversed.

If my experience is typical, comments to Viewpoint opinions are always well thought out--but are few in number. This observation parallels that of others. A good friend who writes monthly editorials for another magazine seldom receives any comment--even to controversial subjects. On one occasion he offered more detailed information on a subject of great interest. Only a few replied. One of the replies was so far removed from his offer that he had to go back to the editorial to make certain he had been clear. Do these observations mean that many members of the maintenance community like to complain but few are willing to take the next step and become personally involved driving a solution?

We seem to be a vast army, largely unorganized and content to complain among ourselves and on web sites. We complain to the choir in ways that will never attract the attention or interest of a manager or anyone positioned to do anything about the complaints.

Is there a solution? There are at least three organizations capable of driving a process to gain greater respect and stature for the profession: the Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals (SMRP), Association for Facilities Engineering (AFE), and the American Society

of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), Plant Engineering and Maintenance Division. These three organizations probably have a total membership of 16,000 to 20,000 maintenance professionals.

That leads to more questions: why isn't membership larger and are you an active, participating member? If you are a member, are you weighing in with your successes and results and your requirements for the changes that must be made to gain recognition and respect for your contribution? If not, please don't complain about how managers and suppliers don't listen. While they may not listen to you individually, they will have to listen to 15,000 yous, especially if the message is conveyed through an influential organization known to represent a consensus of active, energized members. If you are complaining but don't belong to any of the professional societies, don't help set their agenda and drive their efforts, don't participate in any conferences, and don't publicize your requirements and successes. I suggest you need look no further than the nearest mirror to find the person who could make real change occur. Some are probably saying I don't have the time to participate, can't afford to join, my boss won't allow me to attend conferences, and my company won't allow me to publicize success. Again I'll say you must do something more than complaining individually for change to occur. Some are finding the time--more must do so.

Your participation is mandatory not just needed. With your active participation and leadership, changes are not only possible, they will occur. **MT**

For more information on the professional societies mentioned, visit their Internet sites:
Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals, www.smrp.org
Association for Facilities Engineering, www.afe.org
American Society of Mechanical Engineers, www.asme.org

Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF