Written by Doc Palmer
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In spite of the plant burning down? Well, not really. But victories are won on the shop floor every day by honoring the schedule even when new reactive work arises.

The operator and the maintenance supervisor are teammates and both have to work together on this issue. Neither must lie down and get rolled over.

Consider this scenario.

At 8:00 in the morning, the maintenance supervisor answers the "emergency" phone call this way.

"Hello? ... Send some mechanics right now? Well, for an emergency, I certainly will, but can it wait until next week? Then the planner can plan the job and schedule it for next week. I'm already working on this week's schedule. We made a commitment to Operations for the work we would try to accomplish this week to help reach a productivity goal. & You didn't know about this job last Friday? That's okay. That's why we have operators to know when things happen. But do you think this job can wait until next week?

"... It can't? Well, can it wait until tomorrow? Then the planner can plan it and I'll work it into tomorrow's schedule. I've already assigned everyone on my crew enough work for today to ensure each person does a full day's work. That's our productivity key. I'd sure hate to start reassigning folks. Can it wait until tomorrow?

"... It can't? No problem. But can it wait at least until this afternoon? Then the planner can still plan it by looking in the equipment file to see what we did last time and make this job run smoother. Also, the planner can take a quick look at the job site and see if we need a special skill set. I'd hate to assign a mechanic if the job requires a certified welder. The planner can also estimate how long the job should last so I can coordinate this job with all the other work. Can it wait until this afternoon?

"... It can't? I understand. Well, how about if I start it at 10 o'clock? A couple of mechanics already working on jobs now should finish about 10:00. Otherwise, interrupting a job in progress means spending extra time putting away parts and tools so they won't be lost or time won't be wasted later trying to remember what went where. Then no one's work gets done. Look, can this job wait until 10:00?

"... It *CAN*? That's great! Okay, 10:00 it is. Give me the work order number. ... What? ... Of course you have to write a work order for everything, even a 'come-in-the-middle-of-the-night' emergency. I guess if you radioed me from the field about a fire, I would enter a work order for you while I was radioing my crew to scramble. But you're in the control room. Go ahead and call up the work order module, press 'insert,' and tell me the work order number. Then you can fill out the request while I go and tell the mechanics. ... Oh yes, we need the work order even if we don't plan or schedule it. This work order will allow the mechanics to record feedback. Inventory parts and anything else we learn about the job will be useful next time we work on this equipment. We don't want to re-invent the wheel for anything. Plus, you can't do any kind of equipment analysis if you don't collect the information during the year on work orders. ... Okay, got it. We'll take care of it.

"And listen, by the way, I don't mean to give you a hard time about this emergency and work order thing. I want you and anyone else to call me immediately anytime for an emergency or other problem. I'd be glad to reassign my entire crew at a moment's notice if I have to in order to handle an emergency. But if every week we drive seriously toward completing a week's worth of work, we can usually get everyone's work done in two or three weeks.

"And if we ever drift back into simply waiting for operators to call with urgent work, we tend to take care of just that work and then sit back on our heels feeling we've 'done our job.' Then productivity drops and anyone who wants anything done in a reasonable amount of time has to call and say that he has an urgent job."

There were several victories in this conversation between operator and maintenance supervisor.

Victory for the operator insisting on assurance of the proper response to the true priority of the work.

Victory for the supervisor keeping the crew working as productively as possible under the circumstances.

Victory for culture. **MT**

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