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While safety and reliability remain a key man-agement initiative, I see a shift taking place in our industry. The best industrial organizations are focusing not only on boosting productivity and reducing operating costs, but on improving their systems' overall efficiency.

These organizations are moving beyond basic maintenance strategies and incorporating preventive maintenance programs, power-system studies, electrical-distribution equipment upgrades and, of course, energy-management plans. This approach becomes a differentiator for their businesses—*and can translate into substantial energy savings and dollars.*

Understanding the business value

In any organization, understanding the business value of energy management allows managers to work with their power bills as an asset, not just as a fixed cost they have to pay every month. In many cases, companies can cover the cost of facility upgrades or other business priorities through energy-bill savings that are achieved as a result of active energy-management initiatives. Many companies have the ability to fund energy-management projects out of their capital budgets, using the savings (as much as 30% or more) as the basis for the investment.

We are seeing something very interesting today: Most company leaders know the exact cost of their IT or healthcare spending. However, most of them do not know the costs associated with their energy use. (And this energy spend is generally the single largest controllable operating expense a facility has.)

Being proactive about energy

Active energy management—*the process of mea-suring where you are today, fixing the basics, then automating and continuously monitoring and improving* —can typically reduce consumption by 30% or more. It's a fast way for companies to maximize short- and long-term cost savings with technologies that are readily available today.

Our company recently sponsored a poll through Harris Interactive in which we asked Fortune 1000 CEOs a number of questions about energy efficiency. The results showed that 88% of these Fortune 1000 senior executives feel business has a moral responsibility—*beyond*

regulatory requirements
—to make their companies more energy efficient. However, the vast majority (61%) of respondents say that cost savings are required to initiate projects.

Cash is king—*and companies are leaving a lot of it on the table when it comes to energy management* . That's unfortunate given the fact that every business has an opportunity for significant energy savings.

Technologies exist to make energy visible and manageable. Facilities need to take an active role in cutting their energy consumption. Putting a program in place to measure, monitor and improve is crucial.

Putting it simply
I truly believe that most companies want to be good corporate citizens regarding their energy usage. They often just don't know where to start.

Awareness is a great first step. The next is taking action. It really is a simple task. Change the way you think about energy and realize it's good for the environment and good for your bottom line. **MT**

The opinions expressed in this Viewpoint section are those of the author, and don't necessarily reflect those of the staff and management of Maintenance Technology magazine.

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