

My Take: The No-Brainers Around Us

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
Tuesday, 01 September 2009 00:00



We used the term on this month's cover: "No-Brainer." It's intended to draw your attention to some of those "why didn't I think of that" or "we shoulda' been doing that all along" types of approaches to various issues in your workplaces.

In his "Uptime" column, Bob Williamson notes that troubleshooting training, root cause analysis training and "5S" program training certainly would seem to fit in the category of "no-brainer" strategies to implement within most operations. They are, but they aren't—*are not actually and/or effectively implemented, that is*

Although it doesn't actually use the term "no-brainer," Ken Bannister's "Communications" column for September questions whether maintenance groups are fully harnessing the remarkable and wide-ranging power of the many digital and infrared imaging technologies available to them these days. The cost of doing so is relatively low—*the returns can be significant*

Then there's Ben Stevens' article beginning on page 22. In it, he calls on you in the reliability and maintenance arena to adopt ROI—*no doubt the favorite KPI of the bean-counters in your organizations*—as your own. That definitely belongs on your "no-brainer" list. Applying business thinking and doing only things that bring value to your operations would appear to be crucial in any economic climate.

Those are just a few of the many "no-brainer" approaches and solutions you'll see in this issue. I have another one for you, too—*one that's cooking in Washington, outside the pages of this magazine*. It involves the Administration's decision to create a position to steer U.S. manufacturing policy. According to news reports, the White House "wants someone who wakes up thinking about manufacturing policy." Finally! One person who is strongly supportive of this move is Keith Nosbusch, chairman and CEO of Rockwell Automation. He says it is exactly what's required.

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As Nosbusch puts it: "American industry needs a transformation unlike any other in its history. Innovation must be a high priority to maintain our nation's current, but very vulnerable leadership as the world's largest manufacturer." He and Rockwell are hardly alone in this opinion.

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), Manufacturers Alliance/MAPI and the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), among others, aren't just on the bandwagon. They are way out in front of this parade. In fact, as we go to press, representatives of these groups and their member companies—*Nosbusch included*—are going Washington to discuss Federal support for research and development in the area of smarter, safer more sustainable manufacturing.

Sans government support for an effective national industrial strategy that encourages U.S. businesses to invest and innovate, Nosbusch predicts that American manufacturers will find themselves squeezed between low costs in developing countries and low costs in highly efficient, developed ones. If that happens, it goes without saying that the future of our own industries and workforce won't be very bright. If you have an opinion on these or any other "no-brainer" matters, let me hear from you! **MT**

