



How to Make Backlog Work for You

One of the things we notice in facilities and manufacturing plants that we go into, is that work backlog is often misunderstood and feared. Maintenance customers want an immediate response to all maintenance issues. In order to consistently respond at this rate with the right parts on hand there needs to be extra staff on hand waiting for calls and extra parts on the shelf to react to all possible calls. If your maintenance department was a stand-alone profit center it would have to charge a premium rate to be able to afford to keep this extra supply and manpower available. A PM plan will lower some costs and many companies go this route, but the extra costs of no backlog still exist.

Backlog is figured by:

- Total Weekly Available Man Hours to do Work Orders -
- Average Weekly PM Hours -
- Average Weekly Unplanned Labor Hours -
- Average Miscellaneous (meetings, training, etc.) = Hours Available for Scheduling
- Then divide the hours available for scheduling into the total backlog hours and that number is how many weeks of backlog you have. As a side note; all incoming work orders should get a quick estimated time associated to them immediately.

An educated business decision should be made on whether to support maintenance run this way. The cheapest and most efficient way to have your maintenance run is to have a consistent 4-6 week backlog. The parts kept on hand are only the ones that have high usage or go to the most critical equipment. As jobs come into the maintenance department they go through a prioritization, planning, parts procurement and scheduling process then the job is completed. This is roughly four times cheaper than being completely reactive to incoming jobs. Watching if the backlog is growing or shrinking gives opportunities to plan projects on overtime or bring in outside resources to catch it back up. Again though, it is planned and thought out which is always going to be cheaper than being reactive. How steady a backlog remains is also a great indicator of how well your maintenance department is staffed. A monitored backlog can be one of the greatest cost savers for your maintenance program.