



## Work Order Planning – How Many Details Do You Need?

This month's topic is one of the most highly discussed and debated topics in the maintenance management world, how much detail do you need on a planned work order to ensure the work is completed properly, in a timely fashion, safely, and efficiently? One of the first things to keep in mind is that any level of work order planning will improve your chances of having a successful outcome of the work request. Keep in mind the unplanned work order is typically 4-6 times more expensive than a planned work order. Most of this extra cost is due to inefficient labor but there is also a parts and quality component to the elevated cost. So based on that we all understand the value of planned work, the big question is still... ***How much planning is needed??***

Every industry is different so the easiest way to explain how much detail is needed is this way. The simple, repetitive, and low detail work often needs very or no detail for the work to be successful. On the other hand, the complex and unusual work requests demand much more detail. A good example would be to compare two industries, the corrections industry is on one side of the coin with 500 cells with the same doors, toilet/sink combinations, the same flush valves, beds, and on and on. Now compare it a typical manufacturing organization that has hundreds if not thousands of different types of assets and equipment. Without a doubt the manufacturing plant will require *much* more detail for the normal maintenance work order. In the corrections facility you may only need to plan the unusual and odd requests where in the manufacturing plant you should be planning 70-80% of all work requests.

I believe all work order plans should have the following basic components:

- Basic description of the requested work
- A mention of safety considerations or at the very least reminders that will enhance the safety of the work
- List of all parts needed (even if only for a light bulb replacement)
- Special tools required (i.e. ladders or lifts), and
- Any unique procedures of job steps that will ensure the is completed properly

I advise planners in my courses to always ask the question: *What could possibly go wrong with the work and if something does go wrong, what are the consequences of that happening?* When you identify the possible consequences successfully you will be able to modify your work plan to prevent them from happening.

So the bottom-line to the big question is if you properly identify the possible problems and concerns for each work request as it travels through the planning process and then address those concerns and plan them out of the process; you will have a successful planned work request with the appropriate amount of detail. Keep in mind the whole purpose of work planning is to complete a successful work request with no problems or major changes in the original content of the work.

Work order level of detail is totally controlled by the level of work complexity!