



Are You Overstaffed and Don't Know it?

Over the past (almost) 14 years in my maintenance career; I spent four of those years in the maintenance outsourcing business and almost 10 years in the consulting business. As you can imagine during that time I have had the opportunity to come in contact with hundreds of business of all shapes and sizes. I have seen tug boat companies, airplane manufactures, hot dog plants, and various government organizations, and one of the common complaints I hear in the first few hours of an onsite assessment is "*we could do a lot better if we had more maintenance mechanics,*" or "*everything was doing great until we had the head count cut backs in 2006.*"

It is always difficult for me to hold back my comments until *after* I have completed the maintenance assessment... but I try. The truth of the matter is; over 90% of the organizations I have worked with, who constantly tell me they are understaffed, are actually not or are overstaffed. Many of you are talking to yourself as you read this and are most likely suggesting I am crazy because you feel you are currently majorly understaffed. It is important to understand you are not overstaffed if you look at your current culture and work processes. If your organization is close to a 'state of chaos' and you are 'drowning in a sea of reactive and emergent work'; it *appears* you are understaffed. This leads you to constantly wish you had more staff so you could respond to the incoming calls even faster.

Those of you who have attended my classes, presentations, or have been reading my monthly newsletters, have heard me talk about the cost of reactive work as it compares to planned and scheduled work. Being reactive is costing you 4 -6 times the planned and scheduled work cost so you believe you need more manpower to accomplish the work demands. If your maintenance work was planned and scheduled; thus your reactive work is brought to a minimum, you will see a substantial reduction in your maintenance staffing needs, overtime, or the need to hire contractors to assist you with repairs.

Don't forget the key to reducing your reactive and emergent work is the development of a well-structured preventive maintenance (PM) program. A structured PM program is the *only* method, short of buying all new equipment each year which is not going to happen, of ensuring your equipment will have a chance to operate and perform as you and your customers require. Don't forget, every time you have a significant failure with your equipment you should question



whether an improved PM program could have reduced its magnitude or eliminate the failure all together.

You can assist this process by having good work order data on hand that can help you justify your existing work needs and requirements. If you have an accurate backlog and data that explains where and how you are spending all of your maintenance labor resources you will have a much better chance to *explain and justify* your maintenance labor needs. Remember having your historic data is the key to understanding and predicting your future.

So back to the subject at hand for this month; because your labor costs are 4-6 times higher than they should be (which is mostly labor), the perception is you need more labor to accomplish the requested work. If you evolve into a more proactive organization you will see a significant decrease in emergent work, an increase in proactive work, like PM's, and you will be able, through attrition, find that your current head count in your organization can meet all of your current obligations and even more. Make sure you go through this process slowly and completely to ensure you adjust your staffing levels without making major mistakes.

Good luck, and of course, let me know if I can help!