



## How to Sustain Sustainability

In the last 10 years I have developed a new pet peeve (peeve - some little seemingly not very important detail that drives old gray headed and bearded people nuts), not that I had a shortage and needed to add to the list. On the contrary I had plenty of little things that drive me nuts when it comes to leading and managing organizations and especially maintenance departments. Those of you who know me well can, I am sure, make quite a list of the things that drive me nuts.

The new pet peeve started when I began working in the outsourcing business, managing all types of organizations around the America, and it has grown in importance since I founded my company in 2004.

The peeve is, [we continue in America to install new equipment and construct new buildings but we seem to forget that they need immediate care if we have any prayer of maintaining them in a "like new condition"](#). I guess most of the management teams out there think "well it's new stuff so why do we need to do anything?" and they figure the warranty will cover it for at least a year if it fails or has problems early in its natural life cycle.

With the advent of the "green" and "sustainable" movements in the last five years, this problem is presenting itself in a different form. We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in new equipment and the replacement of older equipment in an effort to save the planet without putting our financial side of our brains into gear, (but that is a topic for another tip of the month when I am a little mellower). The problem I am seeing currently is we do not have the systems, culture, skills, and people in place to properly take care of these advanced Leed Certified systems and buildings once the warranty comes to an end. I continuously observe that these complex systems are being turned from 'auto' to 'manual' and the high tech flush-o-meter is being replaced with the old fashioned models that require a hand or foot to make them function and the automated hand towel dispenser is now replaced by a stack of paper towels on the counter.

Don't get me wrong, we have made some very important improvements in the way we design and operate buildings which have lead to significant improvements in employee productivity, patient health in hospitals, student learning abilities in schools and universities, higher selling prices on buildings, and lower energy costs for owners and operators.

Buildings go through several phases during their useful life: design, build, start-up, and operate, use and maintain, and end of useful life. The design, build, and start-up phases are pretty easy to master and for most of us the end of useful life is relatively easy to determine and manage. It is the use and maintain portion which causes all of the headaches and problems. What I am extremely concerned about, as it relates to the LEED and sustainability programs, is that we will build some very complex energy efficient and sustainable structures. But what happens after they get a little age on them and we are no longer capable of maintaining the fairly complex energy and environmental systems? These systems can go downhill for a number of reasons; reduced funding, lack of training and system knowledge, lack of proactive culture, and many others.

The key to maintaining our certified buildings in a 'like new condition' over its useful life is fairly simple but do require an organized approach along with a long-term vision and master plan. This will enable the facility management team to continually monitor the program and its process and



make simple course corrections over the years to keep the operation and maintenance on a sustainable path. The following components are the essential keys to sustaining asset reliability:

- Management vision and culture
- Proper staffing and organization
- Asset history and data management
- Work order process flow and management
- Work planning and scheduling
- Preventive and predictive maintenance
- Craft and skill training
- Repair parts procurement and stocking
- Performance measures and metrics

As we design and build more and more complex building systems and put in place more reporting and certification processes we must have a facility wide program and processes in place which will allow us to track system performance and costs in order for us to properly manage and maintain our buildings. This won't happen by itself but only with a management vision of sustainability and support along with a facility management and maintenance organizations which have the skills, knowledge, tools, and performance measures to support the long-range vision.