Converting a Maintenance Plan into Reality

Let’s talk about the maintenance plan and how to make it a reality. Many organizations start with preventive maintenance when they begin the process of developing work order plans. Probably because they are the easiest to plan and because we have done those many times and hopefully we have the beginnings of a good plan from the OEM to assist us in developing a great and useful plan. They look great on paper, they are distributed to the preventive maintenance supervision and technicians but for many reasons the plan is never followed or even looked at. The two big questions are: Why does this happen and what do we need to do the convert a maintenance plan into a reality?

One of the biggest reasons is the planning group is separated from the maintenance group and I am not just talking about geographical separation but a management and leadership separation. Physical separation is bad enough but the management and leadership separation is even worse.

The next reason is that the planning group has very little or no maintenance experience. Often they have never had any exposure to maintenance or even what the purpose and value of a planned work order is. They write and plan work requests, place them in the out box and they never see the plan or the results of it again. The last big reason the plan never becomes a reality is that there are no processes in place to measure the performance of the planning function or the quality and completeness of the finished work request. Remember a well-planned work request which is carried out and completed in a manor very similar to the plan will improve the quality, labor costs, customer satisfaction, safety, and the life of the asset.

So to have a successful planning program you need to fix the problems listed above and create a new direction for your planning effort.

- First is to ensure that leadership and management are on board with the planning process.
- Secondly, the supervisors and technicians must believe in the planning process and its worth to the maintenance process. If they don’t the system will fail, guaranteed.
- The next thing to do is get the planners in the same area with the supervisors. And I mean next to them. Move the office or cubical to the maintenance area so that communication can be rapid and effective. Don’t move them to the unused welding booth; build them an office space in conditioned space as near to the supervisors and shop as possible. Good planning is not a 100% white collar job. There is a blue collar component to it.
- The next thing to tackle is to hire planners who have actual maintenance experience. Normally if I am hiring planners for the first time I choose them from my list of the best technicians in the shop. The best technician has made the mistakes that when described in the plan will prevent or minimize the mistakes from happening to less experienced technicians.
- The last thing to do is to develop and put in place performance metrics or in “Mikes World” Scorecards which will measure the performance of the planning and scheduling function and at
the same time measure the compliance of the completed work to the plan. I do several things to ensure we have a good planning process. First measure the planned hour estimate from the planers to the actual hours it took for the technicians to complete the work. Once you have some numbers to compare you can begin to ask the hard question of why was there so much spread from planned to actual. Could be a planning problem or a work completion problem, or both.

Remember planned work is one of the keys to changing the culture from one of chaos and reactive work to one of organized and proactive work.

Good Luck