TOP 5 MYTHS OF MAINTENANCE

Over the years all of us in the maintenance business have been criticized and labeled in a negative manor. All of us have plenty of excuses and reasons for the criticism, but the painful truth is many times the criticism is truthful. I call these labels the maintenance myths. So if some of these are hitting close to home I will try to give you some suggestions to change the myths and ultimately your maintenance culture.

So the top 5 myths, as I see them, are as follows;

1. The Maintenance function is a Necessary Evil
2. We Don’t Have Time to do Preventive Maintenance
3. Deferring Maintenance Activities Saves Money
4. Reactive Work is the Best Method to Complete Maintenance Work
5. We Don’t Need a Maintenance Training Program

I am sure we could make this list into a top 10 or even 15 if we wanted to, but we will focus on these 5.

Myth #1 - The Maintenance Function is a Necessary Evil – The unique thing about maintenance is that no one wants a maintenance department! All they do is spend money, they are overpaid for their skills, they never fix anything, and it takes two or three tries to get the same problem fixed. The truth is a maintenance department is always an afterthought. If you study the history of the industrial revolution you will find the average maintenance department was always an afterthought, we always start the manufacturing or operational process and then when things begin to fail they all say, wow we need some maintenance. But with that being said this myth is partially created by our own actions or in-actions.

The key to fix this myth, assuming it might be true, is to put in place the following components of good solid maintenance management.

- Demonstrate your value to management
- Track performance as it relates to the organizations performance
- Migrate from a reactive to a proactive maintenance culture
- Be part of the solution not part of the problem

Myth #2 - We Don’t Have Time to do Preventive Maintenance – We have tried this but we have too many emergencies, no time to do PMs, it is a waste of time, need to be working on failures not inspections, our customers won’t let us have the asset or equipment, when the shop does PMs the
machine never runs properly afterward. When I hear these excuses my blood pressure goes off the charts. My favorite is we have too many failures or breakdowns, so no time to do PMs. Unbelievable to say the least. I struggle to find an explanation for this culture, I can’t decide if it is ignorance or just plain stupid. You know ignorance is fixable but stupid is forever.

The key to fix this Myth is pretty simple.

- Replace the leader who thinks like this with one who understands the relationship between breakdowns and preventive care
- Change the culture and create one of no late or canceled PMs
- Develop a dedicated PM crew
- Track the PM effort performance
- Always remember that reactive maintenance is 4-6 times the cost of proactive work

**Myth # 3 - Deferring Maintenance Activities Saves Money** – Really! We can always work on it later, it costs the same to fix it later as it does now, it won’t affect its value or life cycle. This is pretty common but if you stop and really do some critical thinking it makes no sense.

The key to fix this Myth is easy.

- Maintain all equipment is a like new condition, it’s cheaper in the long run
- Track downtime costs or sub-par performance costs, do a beta test and prove it to your management
- Develop an accurate asset priority system to provide guidance in your repair strategy

**Myth # 4 - Reactive work is the Best strategy for managing work requests** – It’s faster, can’t afford to wait on planning and scheduling, just need faster and better firefighters, planners and schedulers are non-value added employees, we need tools in hands not pencils and paper.

The key to this one is a little more complicated.

- Change the culture after understanding being proactive that work is much cheaper
- Reactive work has lower quality
- Reactive work produces more accidents
- Develop a planner/scheduler employee or function
- Create daily and or weekly planning meetings
- Just learn to say “No”, not today but we will repair it next week. Control Chaos!
Myth # 5 - We Don’t Need a Maintenance Training Program – They were trained when we hired them why provide more, what if we train them and they leave the company, maintenance has not changed since they were hired, no time for training too many things are broken.

The key to this one takes a little time and maybe a little money, but not much.

- Task knowledge diminishes after 18 months
- 25-40% of maintenance failures are cause by improper maintenance practices
- Organizations need to train at least 5% of total man-hours
- If you’re not continually growing your knowledge, you are falling behind
- What if we don’t train our employees... and they stay 30 years!

Keep in mind some of these myths are true and you really need to do some sole searching and change your culture and practices as needed.

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