



How Good is Your Reactive Work?

How good is your reactive work? Those of you who have worked with me over the years may see that question and say, "*What is wrong with Mike? Mike is all about world class and best practices in maintenance management processes which always strives to reduce or eliminate as much reactive work as possible.*"

Well that is all true. In organizations that are stuck in the world of chaos maintenance all they do is reactive work or as some say 'fire fighting'. The reactive work seems to breed on itself and continually grow until it consumes your entire work and some of your personal life.

So let's get back to the question of why do I ask clients how good is your reactive work? Reactive work is never good for any asset or structure; it typically has the following negative aspects:

- Higher labor cost by 4 - 6 times
- Higher parts costs (*go get another one, this one didn't work*)
- Lower craftsman quality (*get the big hammer, I can adjust it right here*)
- Lower asset or part life (*what did the hammer do to it?*)
- Lower personal safety (*back to the big hammer again*)
- Higher downtime for repairs (*because of the chaos and reactive thinking*)
- Normally dispatched with two trades or craftsman (*if one is good, two must be better and faster; one has to carry the hammer*)

The bottom-line is reactive work causes all kinds of problems both the short-term because we have stop some other type of work to make this repair and in the long-term because we may have shortened the life the asset or system we were sent to repair.

In the early days of working with an organization in chaos, I tackled the problems above in order to repair things faster and better which gave them a little breathing room to begin working on proactive tasks like preventive maintenance which would ultimately reduce or eliminate most of the chaos and fire fighting.

To fix some of the problems above I begin by asking questions and implementing new polices in the following areas:

- Do the crafts have appropriate transportation (*lowers labor and travel time*)?
- Do they have the right tools (*lock up the big hammer*)?
- Do you have the right parts stocked for your critical assets?
- Review all jobs before assigned to craftsman, is it a one or two person job. Can the job wait until later or tomorrow (*learn to say no*)?
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By far the biggest lost cost of reactive work is travel (*you thought I was going to say the hammer, didn't you?*). Travel time for reactive work in a single building organization is around 16-20%. If you work in a campus environment or in a municipal public works organization it can swell to over 50% of total man-hours.

So that is why I ask "How is your reactive work?" The cost associated with it is eating your lunch in the short-term and is killing you in the long-term with higher capital and expense budgets to replace equipment that will never reach or exceed its designed life. Just remember to ask the question, "How can I make them better and faster fire fighters?"