



MAINTENANCE TIPS



Taking requests

The devil is in the details of maintenance orders

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Too often, a maintenance manager will complete work someone has requested, only to be blasted by the person later, saying the result was not what they intended. In other instances, people requesting maintenance work are frequently frustrated when they discover the work was not completed as requested. Or how about you, as the requestor, coming in one day to find the work you requested was not completed at all like you wanted it to be?

What does it look like to get orders right the first time? A popular diner in South Carolina can demonstrate. It is a busy place where orders are done accurately the first time around. Here's how they do it: Customers check the box of their desired entrées on pre-printed forms; they circle what condiments and side items they want, as well as their drinks. Employees read the orders back to customers out loud. If something is missed or unclear, the order-takers ask for clarification. Next, the order is clipped to a wire hanging in front of the cook. The orders

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are prioritized first-in, first-out. When the food is done, the order is placed with the food and is delivered to the customer, who is then asked to check the order. When the customer pays the check, the server asks if everything was alright, which it almost always is because they have a formal process in place with the essential attributes of a good system that results in little to no errors.

Implementing excellence

What are those essential attributes of a good order system? How would this process look if they were applied principles in the maintenance department of a processing plant?

Because maintenance departments don't always have the ability to choose when to work on equipment, a process must be developed to encompass both the formal and informal work requests. Formal work requests are pretty straightforward. They are usually generated by supervisors or plant management, but can also originate out of safety, ergonomic or process-improvement initiatives.

The more-difficult work requests to manage come from informal sources. These can be initiated by breakdowns or adjustments to equipment; comments to maintenance personnel by employees on the line or by supervisors; and even informal requests by plant management. Breakdowns or adjustments are always going to occur and can usually be managed by documenting them on a preprinted daily "pocket card." These pocket cards, when combined

with weekly blanket work orders from a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS), can provide mechanics with an easy way to track the time spent making adjustments or repairs to equipment. Note that repairs requiring parts require the creation of an official

work order so the parts can be assigned to it. The other types of “informal” requests should be discouraged as it can greatly affect integrity of the maintenance departments cost data.

The first step in a formal work-request process is to complete the requestor’s

section of the work-request form. There is certain information that must be contained on the form. There should be two or three sections on the form, depending on whether the facility has a dedicated planner. The first section is to be filled out by the requestor. It contains the name of the requestor, the date of the request, the equipment, a brief description of the work requested and a signature of the requestor and his/her supervisor. The signature of the supervisor and/or plant manager is required to ensure the validity of the work being requested. If this is not required, maintenance will get inundated with requests, often multiple requests for same work.

The second step in the process is a personal hand-off of the work request to

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the maintenance manager. This step is very important because if the hand-off is accomplished by putting the request in a mailbox or laying the request on a desk, the maintenance manager does not have the ability to review the request and ask questions to clarify what is being requested. Often the description of the work being requested is written in terminology that is different than that of the maintenance department. It is important to provide the maintenance manager the opportunity to review the request, ask probing questions and even ask to go out into the facility and show them exactly what is being requested. This information-gathering step is the single-most important step in the work-request process to ensure the accuracy of the work request.

The maintenance manager then completes the maintenance department section of the form with the date received, the estimated time to complete, a priority

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assignment and a signature. There should also be space on the form for the maintenance manager, if necessary, to write the description of the work being requested in the maintenance department lingo. He then signs the form and in those facilities that utilize a maintenance planner, he gives it to the planner.

The planner will again document a date received, enter it into the CMMS, sign it and based on a number factors such as, parts availability, manpower availability, production schedules, etc... he will schedule a completion date. This information should then be forwarded to the requestor to validate to the requestor that their work is being scheduled to be completed.

Priorities are assigned by a number, usually, 1 through 4. Priority No. 1 is reserved for safety and other urgent requests. In fact, safety-work request forms can often be color-coded by printing

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the form in red to ensure the safety requests don't get "lost in the shuffle." No. 2 means the request will be completed within 24-48 hours. No. 3 will be for items to be scheduled for completion within two weeks. This is usually due to parts availability or the fact the work must be completed on a weekend. Priority 4 is for larger projects that get scheduled three or more weeks out.

Once the work request is completed and the data from the completed work order is entered into the CMMS, the com-

pleted work order will be attached to the request and returned to the requestors so they can review it to make sure all work was completed per their request. This completes the work-request cycle.

Successfully implementing a formal maintenance work-request process requires support from plant management. Without their support and dedication to following the process, no one else involved will be motivated to follow the procedures. As you can see, by designing and following the right process for maintenance work requests a lot of time can be saved and more importantly errors can be avoided. **M&P**

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