

Want to prepare your company for planning and scheduling?

By Joel Levitt



All firms want the benefits from effective scheduling but few are willing to pay the price to have it. If scheduling is not effective in your shop there are two interpretations that can be made and actions that logically follow.

One interpretation is that the leader is the problem and has to go. Replace the leader (maintenance manager or shop foreman, etc) then hire one who will do what you want. Many companies decide on this course of action because they do not want to face the facts of their inadequate business systems. Scheduling requires several subsidiary systems to be in place, operational and effective. If any are missing scheduling will suffer.

One symptom of an inadequate business system is that several people have been through the position and have not been successful. In some cases the successful candidate muscled through changes to the system to make shop scheduling work as advertised.

Take a look at the list below. If your shop operations and scheduling leave something to be desired perhaps there is a missing system or control. How many can you check off? Where are improvements needed? Look at the areas.

Area of preparation	Where to look if missing
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective storeroom and Stock system (either the part is on the shelf or in your hands when indicated by a schedule.) No jobs are started and stopped waiting for parts.	Investment, Culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Thorough PM inspections leading to an effective PM program so that work is identified before failure.	Culture, training
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone has the time, training and attitude to look into jobs before they are put on the schedule to insure resources are available.	Investment, culture
<input type="checkbox"/> An up to date Maintenance Technical Library with an extensive library of vehicle manuals (showing parts needed), flat rate books (to assign times to jobs). Access via Internet is ok if it is easy and reliable.	investment
<input type="checkbox"/> Timely reporting of potential problems by drivers (to provide lead time for planning). Drivers feel as if their concerns about the equipment are listened to. Open dialogue with drivers and dispatchers on troublesome equipment	investment

<input type="checkbox"/> Good use of a CMMS or good manual system	Training, culture, investment
<input type="checkbox"/> Meaningful feedback (written comments) on completed jobs by supervisors and technicians so when you look up old jobs you can see what happened	Culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete equipment repair history from date-in-service (usually in the CMMS)	Investment, will
<input type="checkbox"/> Good communications with dispatch so that unit delivery and usage schedules are incorporated into the daily schedule.	Training, culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Thorough failure analysis when breakdowns do occur	Training, culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Good relationships with vendors	Culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of who can do what work. Ongoing program to cross train mechanics so that (the goal) everyone can do everything reasonably well	Culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Existence of overhaul and rebuild capabilities (either in-house or identified 'good' vendors)	investment
<input type="checkbox"/> Good workmanship by craft personnel and an attitude toward solving all quality problems	training
<input type="checkbox"/> Good use of repair technology (ongoing training relationship with both OEMs and local tech schools)	training
<input type="checkbox"/> Proper tools and proper use of tools.	Investment, training

(Not in priority order)

Another way to look at this is to ask the mechanics where they are stopped (doing actual maintenance work) by the business system. In some cases the stop is a gap in the business system that can be addressed in the above chart. In other cases the business system is just plain bad and should be looked at. In some fleets the business system takes up an unusually high percentage of people's time. Make sure yours is not one of them.

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