

Simple exercises to cut waste today

I've been speaking to groups about using fewer resources to conduct our businesses. Some would say this is our sacred responsibility to deliver service or products while using the least amount of resources as we can. People have written to me that they don't have the time, that they are sinking with the work load they already have. I completely agree because I see that when I travel and visit organizations.

What if there was a way to save resources without a huge time investment? There are levels to Lean. If we just walk around and look at things we can get some savings without a big investment. Once we have some provable savings we can sell the bosses on bigger projects with greater commitment.

There are four dimensions to the area of Lean Maintenance. Even if you choose to only skim the surface it is useful to know the four areas so that you can stand in the right place as you do your mini-projects.

Practices: Lean Maintenance can be thought of as a set of practices and attitudes toward maintenance. These practices (like never sending someone to repair something without at least thinking about it) are like exercising, eating right, or self improvement. The improvement from the practice comes from its application over a long period of time. The good Lean Maintenance practices will carry you along, with gradual improvements over several years.

Attitude: Having the right attitude is related to practices. We are trying to produce our product or service with the least input possible because it makes sense from a profit motive and because it is the right thing to do for our environment and for our world. Like someone exercising, even if your attitude flags (I don't want to exercise today), the habit of the practice will carry you over (you don't have to like it - just do it!)

Technology: Breakthroughs in technology can happen at any time. Innovation is either continuous (incremental improvement) or discontinuous (giant leap in improvement involving shift to new approaches). Maintenance professionals who want Lean Maintenance will have to be in a constant search for new technology. The key to using technology is to wait for others (who like living on the bleeding edge of technology) to do the initial "beta" testing and to have a program in place to try some of the successes. Testing new technology in a scientific way (that is with rigorous testing and a control) is essential to know if a new technology is indeed better than the old.

Duration: Savings (of resources or money) from Lean projects are like little rivulets of water flowing back to the company. Over time and with ongoing attention they gather together into massive streams and then rivers of savings. The key is time or duration. One project will not

make much difference, but dozens of projects over a few years can make a substantial, quantifiable difference.

With these four dimensions in place and fully understood take a look around your shop.

When (if) your shop is ever quiet, walk around and listen for compressed air. That sound is the sound of money being flushed (to pay for the electricity), coal being burnt (to generate the electricity), and the compressor being used up (to make the air).

Of course there are sophisticated ways to make your operation leaner. But in most shops your team can just skip through and pick the low hanging fruit (Can't you just see the picture –your grizzled maintenance guys skipping through the shop picking the fruit?). Waste is everywhere.

Look at the ground where you park your mobile fleet or the spaces around any hydraulic machine- see leaks? That's more low hanging fruit.

Look at your work benches and rebuild area see trash, old parts, random tools, coffee cans filled with this or that? That's more low hanging fruit.

Heavy dust and grime on spares in the stockroom? That's may be low hanging fruit but be careful on this one since you don't want to get rid of something hard to get that you might need..

See people waiting around for a job assignment in the morning (or any time)? That's more low hanging fruit.

Commercial message coming: I've designed a short seminar (only 2- ½ day sessions) called Lean Maintenance. It is based on my new book ***Lean Maintenance*** and is designed to start-up a cost cutting, Lean Maintenance program.

Joel Levitt, Director International Projects JLEVITT@LCE.COM

Life Cycle Engineering | 4360 Corporate Road Office | Charleston, SC 29405

843.744.7110

Mobile +1-267-254-0061

www.LCE.com