

Trends in Facilities Maintenance: Tight Budgets, New Solutions

Gabriella Jacobs, Contributor

As budgets shrink in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors, facility maintenance professionals have found new ways to cope.

Do more with less. That theme has been echoing across the business world for some time now, and it's particularly resounding for facility managers. But as budget belts tighten, requirements and requests for high-quality maintenance remain.

"Cost-reduction pressures and eliminating non-core competencies are the current trend in almost every facilities organization," says Joseph Greil CPE, corporate director of facilities and services for United Technologies, a high-tech product manufacturer in Hartford, CT. "The view that facilities are a necessary evil drives many head-count and budget reductions. This has never been truer than today, where everyone is looking for another way to raise profits."

Idaho-based author and educator Terry L. Wireman, CPMM, who also works as senior industry analyst for United Kingdom-based software maker Avantis-IPS, agrees that the "do more with less" trend is driving new approaches to maintenance. "It's forcing facility managers to look for ways to improve efficiency," he says. "This leads to trying to improve planning, scheduling and backlog control. But if a facility manager has not started working in this direction before he is asked to improve organizational efficiency, he usually won't have the time to develop the disciplines to improve work effectiveness. This leads to forced downsizing, and the organization is left with insufficient resources to carry out maintenance."

In this case, the facility manager can turn to outside contractors, says Wireman, but equally important, say many, is the need to automate maintenance procedures, a trend that's underway in the manufacturing sector, but probably less advanced in non-industrial facilities.

"Outsource service providers have the resources to employ wireless handheld inspection terminals and Web-based portals that make it easy to track equipment performance, plan maintenance, control inventory, inform repair technicians and report results to management," says Jeffrey Peterson, vice president of information technology for UNICCO Service Co., a facilities services provider based in Newton, MA. "This is clearly the future of plant maintenance."

Pat Conroy, president of MicroMain Corp., the Austin, TX-based CMMS software maker, identifies the following three trends to watch for:

- More use of handheld devices to reduce paperwork and increase the accuracy of information collection

- Consolidation of facility management and maintenance management functions and departments

- Increased interest in consolidating facility/maintenance/building control systems (hardware and software).

Claud Kissmann, PE, CPE, a mechanical engineer in the physical plant/architecture and engineering section of the University of Texas at Austin, notes that much of the technology non-industrial facilities use today came from the industrial-plant

Trends in Facilities Maintenance: Tight Budgets, New Solutions

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

maintenance sector. "But while maintenance practices are equally beneficial in both," he says, "priorities and performance indicators are different. In the industrial environment, performance indicators can verify results such as production increases or improved product quality in a relative short period of time. In the service industry, documenting improvements is not as pronounced and requires monitoring complex data over longer periods of time."

Indicators such as higher asset value if property is liquidated, increased productivity due to better indoor air quality, lowered sick-leave per units of work hours, and employee morale, are complex, says Kissmann. As a result, "The facilities profession is just beginning to tap the technology which will allow the data required to develop case studies and verification of these issues."

Paul Sheehy, CPE, a corporate industrial engineer at Douglas Battery Manufacturing in Winston Salem, NC, predicts that this complexity puts added focus on another challenge: commitment. "Preventive and predictive technologies remain the cornerstone of an equipment-reliability program," he says, "but it takes committed people to make them work effectively. I find most young individuals trying to get into this business do not possess adequate long-term desire to stick with it and see the long-term results of hard work."

Faced with reduced staffs, younger staffs and the lack of commitment Sheehy observes, employers often turn to outside providers to fill the expertise gap. Such firms often not only provide maintenance services for the client, but also teach the client's maintenance personnel how to perform their duties better and faster. Life Cycle Engineering in North Charleston, SC, for example, is one that has carved a niche by helping manufacturers and production companies with maintenance engineering, maintenance management and computerized maintenance management services.

Similarly, Boston, MA-based services provider VFA recently introduced its Facilities/Infrastructure Certificate Program. It offers two educational tracks with various levels of training and accreditation for planning and assessment. They include the Facilities Inspection Certificate (certifies participants in the technical facilities-condition-assessment methodology to gather and maintain accurate, consistent, building and infrastructure conditions data) and the Facilities Planning Certificate (certifies participants to use facility and infrastructure condition data and technology in long-term lifecycle and capital asset planning). According to VFA, professionals who receive certification in one or both enhance data integrity and the validity of an overall, long-term, capital planning process.

Not-for-profit trade and professional organizations also have resources to help facilities maintenance professionals adapt to turbulent times. For example, the Association for Facilities Engineering (AFE), Cincinnati, OH, conducts Certified Plant Engineer (CPE) and Certified Plant Maintenance Manager (CPMM) programs on site at companies across the country. These programs supplement the usual CPE and CPMM training programs. Held several times a year, certifications are conducted at designated locations for representatives of any company or as an independent study/testing under proctored conditions at a candidate's own employer.

The four-year-old CPMM program helps define standards of competence for industrial, commercial and institutional maintenance management. Criteria for eligibility are three or more years of experience in plant engineering, facilities engineering, maintenance management or related and/or equivalent employment. Students must successfully complete a written examination that covers details in

Trends in Facilities Maintenance: Tight Budgets, New Solutions

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

numerous categories, including maintenance management, preventive maintenance, inventory and procurement, work orders/work flows, computerized maintenance management, training, predictive maintenance, reliability-centered maintenance, total productive maintenance, and others.

At its annual national conference, Facilities America, held next month in New Orleans, AFE will for the first time offer not only credits for recertification in these two programs, but also Continuing Education Units. More information is available at www.afe.org.

Other not-for-profit sources of information include Ohio's University of Toledo, which last year introduced a Maintenance Management Certificate program. It can be obtained online at www.learningjourney.cc, or by attending on-campus seminars. The curriculum includes benchmarking maintenance management, performance indicators for managing maintenance, computerized maintenance management systems, achieving total productive maintenance and "zero breakdown" strategies. Also last year, New York City Technical College in Brooklyn announced it had more than 100 students enrolled in its new bachelor of technology in facilities management degree program. According to a school spokesperson, the program was developed to meet growing demand for "well-educated facility managers with sophisticated expertise and management skills."

There is plenty of facility-management training assistance available on the Web as well. Numerous sites address continuing education and the training needs of those who maintain facilities of all types. Information is free, but access usually requires registration. Some sites include:

• Reliabilityweb.com. Offers a "training zone" where users can learn about maintenance techniques and facility-management topics.

• Schooldude.com. For managers of school facilities of all types, the site features a "knowledge warehouse" that contains benchmarking information, research documents, basic job descriptions, budget spreadsheets, and other material.

• Plantsupport.com. Offers independently certified training programs for steam systems, utilities and compressed-air systems.

• FacilityManagement.com. The online site of *American School & Hospital Maintenance Magazine* offers articles on topics such as CMMS, grounds, HVAC, lighting, maintenance, roofing, and security.

• Fmlink.com. A comprehensive selection of facility-management news and training information. It includes special reports, articles from industry publications, surveys, an idea exchange, and other sources. A calendar section identifies several months' of classes, conferences and seminars at a glance.

• Maintenanceresources.com. Features maintenance articles, an events calendar, and an electronic magazine sign-up. There's also a free CMMS demonstration section.

With the wide range of help that is available, facilities director Greil suggests that, despite cost-cutting hurdles, there is still no reason to retain outdated, inefficient procedures. "Have we looked internally to shed crafts that do not directly contribute to corporate profitability?" he asks. "Have we developed multi-skilled trades that are more productive? Have we simplified and standardized our facilities to reduce costs? If not," he says, "we are a cause of the trend and not part of the solution."

Gabriella Jacobs is national communications manager for the Association for Facilities Engineering (www.afe.org) in Cincinnati, OH, and editor of its flagship

Trends in Facilities Maintenance: Tight Budgets, New Solutions

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

publication, Facilities Engineering Journal.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/29/2015 - 5:19am):

http://www.impomag.com/articles/2002/08/trends-facilities-maintenance-tight-budgets-new-solutions?qt-digital_editions=0&qt-most_popular=0