

Kelley's Corner

“Accountants are from Venus – Service Mangers are from Mars”

A famous character on Sesame Street used to say “I Love to count”. I took this to be the accountant on the show. I don't mean to say that all accountants are bloodsucking heartless vampires who fly around at nighttime. I know for a fact that accountants don't fly at night.

In the last Kelley's corner I talked about Fleet Manager Survival in the financial arena. It is a like arena in the modern business world in that it takes few prisoners. Fleet managers historically were expected to show technical and organizational skills. Performing well meant that the equipment was mostly running and costs did not increase beyond the annual rate of inflation.

Then came capital purchase decisions based solely on fuel mileage, competition from competitors using buying groups leveraging the economies of scale and worst of all, financial reports which had no relevance to maintenance management.

So when the accountants hovered down from the thirteenth floor with spreadsheets in hand and “What is wrong down here – the numbers don't add up?”, the service managers agreed and said: Huh?

The foregoing scenario, humorous if you like that kind of thing, is not that far from the truth. The maintenance business at the senior management level is analyzed very differently than it is on the shop floor. The operational and technical demands on the fleet manger have increased dramatically with due diligence/risk management and the increasingly complex systems on the equipment.

How does the Service Manager survive the onslaught of macros and array formulae? It is not practical to return to school to earn a degree in statistical analysis, but he can demonstrate his competence by using the tools already at his disposal. Very few shops are operating without some type of computerized maintenance management system (CMMS). Most systems have preinstalled reports which demonstrate the key performance indicators (KPI's) relevant to most maintenance operations. Few shops use these reports to manage their business properly.

It is crucial in today's maintenance operations to ensure that the business processes in the shop are configured to support the CMMS. The software systems have well developed processes built in. Don't customize the software to mirror your processes. Change your processes to support the software.

So how does this relate to senior management confidence in the Fleet Manager?
When the KPI's generated by the management system improve; so will the high level reports.

The CMMS KPI's are geared to shop floor management principles.
Nothing to it – right?