



Is untracked lost time eating your lunch?

Many maintenance managers and supervisors believe they have a firm grasp on the causes and durations of lost time that occurs on a daily basis and they have the proper procedures in place to minimize it. Most would be stunned if they knew the real numbers and the productivity that evaporates every day. Be it from schedule breaks, incorrect material/parts or long permitting times, most sites can experience a loss of 20 percent to 25 percent of their productive hours but still fail to track that loss so steps can be taken to correct the circumstances that generate it. Considering perhaps the best craft utilization rate in a work day is 65 percent, a 20-percent shortfall represents a significant impact.

If lost time is not being measured and analyzed on at least a weekly basis, there is surely a large black hole on site, sucking the productivity from your resource loading schedule. The barriers that impede productivity need to be identified, the problems discussed and solutions to those barriers designed to enable increased productivity and profitability.

You can't address what you don't know

First, the pool of available wrench-turn hours to measure against must be determined: work hours minus nonimpactable functions including permits, job safety analysis (JSA), breaks, travel, etc. On average, two and a half hours per day per man are spent on such activities, and the two and a half hours are based on the hopeful assumption crews adhere to the expectation of no early or long breaks and lunches.

Second, a set of practical lost-time codes that will address the circumstances specific to your site should be established. Crafts need to be engaged for this input as they will possess a better understanding of the problems transpiring and their frequency. Their participation will also assist with their buy-in of the use of the codes. The codes instituted must be consistent across all areas of the site to ensure coherent data and evaluation.

A threshold at which the lost-time tracking commences should then be instituted. For example, an allowance of 15 minutes to obtain a permit or write a JSA is a given; it

happens for every job. Anything in excess of that threshold should be documented.

Next, a document for the crafts to use in the field must be created that captures the lost-time occurrences they encounter each day. This information can be tracked by individual or by crew, but the information has to come from the crafts in the trenches, not from a supervisor. The form should be included in the crafts' daily work packet.

Roll it out

Training for the crafts will need to be provided on proper and timely documentation, along with the clear expectation of data needed, the minimum criteria and their responsibility to report it. They are the ones who experience the starts/stops/waiting/changes. They are, therefore, best suited to chronicle it.

It must be made clear to the crafts gathering this data is imperative to improving productivity and work flow, and not an attempt to eliminate positions or apportion blame.

Capture it, report it and use it

Finally, a tracking database where the

information on the forms from the field is entered and stored must be set up. This should be done using software that makes data manipulation easy, such as Microsoft Excel®, so tables and charts can be generated that quickly and clearly show the lost time associated with each code.

The resultant information should be reviewed and discussed at a regularly scheduled performance meeting. The lost time with the greatest number of hours should be reviewed, along with their causes. Clear solutions must be designed and agreed upon, with responsibilities assigned with a due date to address the problems. Then, following the Deming Cycle or Plan-Do-Check-Act, the causes of lost time can be continuously attacked and responses adjusted accordingly.

Lost time can be reduced and controlled, and craft productivity significantly increased, if the information gathered is evaluated and utilized properly and does not become mired in "analysis paralysis."

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Join Mike Johnston, CMRP for more about tackling the root causes of lost time at the SMRP Annual Conference in Orlando, FL on 22 October, 2014.

We look forward to seeing you there!

919.510.8142
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