

Your Facility Maintenance Staff is an Asset - Not an Expense

Prepared by:
James L. (Jim) Newman
Newman Consulting Group, LLC



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Your Facility Maintenance Staff is an Asset - Not an Expense.

When you build a building, hopefully the owner, architect, engineer and contractor's ideas about system design and energy use align. We count on all of them to do their part in designing and constructing a sound, energy efficient building. In most cases, they do just that. But what happens once the building is built and in operation?

I open many of my presentations to professional and academic groups with a quote from Bill Harrison, an ASHRAE Past President: "Most buildings will lose up to 30% of their efficiency in the first three years of operation." (Data based on Texas A&M Study)

Of course the audience wants to know why. Why would a well-built building - with all the right equipment - lose so much of its energy efficiency in just the first three years?

The answer is simple: Less-than-optimal operations and maintenance.

Buildings are not "set it and forget it." They require people to properly operate and maintain them. It's the people, specifically the facilities maintenance staff, who will help the building maintain efficiency over time. One of the best ways to maintain efficiency is for the staff to actively monitor the building and its operations with, for example, a building automation system (BAS), or even better, a [building energy management information system](#) (BEMIS). These systems are becoming more and more automated, and less and less expensive. Some can even make minor adjustments without human intervention.

To be truly effective, however, it's the people on your team that need to know how to access, *understand and act on* the signs and signals from the BAS, and all the data and information collected. When they can do that, they are more like an asset than an expense. Not only will they stay ahead of potential comfort issues, they also will [prevent unnecessary expenses and even improve the bottom line](#) in many ways, including the following:

- Reduce unscheduled downtime
- Lower maintenance costs
- Cut energy and operating costs
- Lengthen equipment life
- Increase operating efficiency
- Improve productivity of personnel
- Avoid crisis management

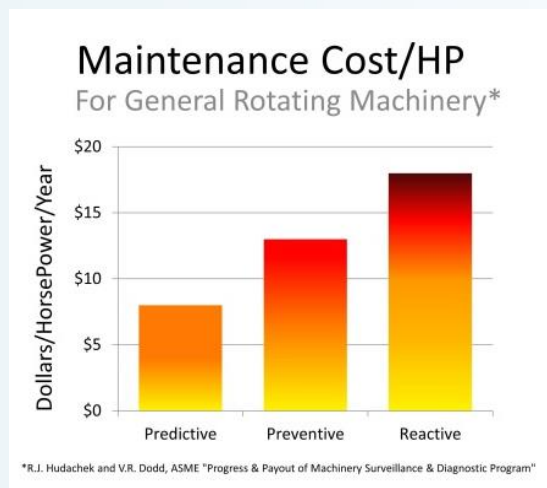
Monitoring and managing the data and information can also help your team stay on top of, and in front of, any major mechanical equipment issues, which will maintain the efficiency of the equipment better as well as lengthen its useful life. Studies show that when it comes to certain machinery, the maintenance perspective really matters. Addressing a maintenance issue, whether it's altering a setting, making a repair or scheduling a replacement, only when something goes wrong is known as being *reactive*.

Reactive maintenance, which is how many facilities are run, costs approximately *25% more* than following a *preventive* maintenance program, often prescribed by the manufacturer. But your costs can be cut by half – or more – if you use your data and information to *predict* when issues will need to be addressed or repairs will be needed. This *predictive maintenance* should be everyone's goal, but the primary

responsibility will fall to the maintenance staff. Treat them well, like the asset they are to your team. It's as simple as saying "Thank You" every once in a while, or even daily.

A knowledgeable, supported staff, coupled with a proactive (predictive) operations and maintenance strategy, can have a positive influence on quality assurance, operating efficiency, and life of the equipment. Those net positives translate to dollars in lower costs and higher asset value. The choice is yours.

If you think it might be time to update your HVAC equipment, and want to include BEMIS in your plans, you may be eligible for new financing. [Click here to see if you qualify for PACE or other financing.](#)



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