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## PRODUCTION

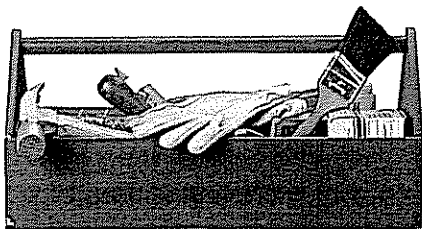
# Rethinking Maintenance

BY ANDREA FOOTE

**T**raditionally maintenance has been considered a necessary expense, but what happens when plant managers change their outlook and begin to regard maintenance as a valuable strategic tool? Reliability maintenance programs take the concepts of preventive and predictive maintenance to the next level by creating an environment where maintenance is viewed as an integral factor in becoming a low-cost manufacturing or distribution operation.

Reliability maintenance calls for plant managers to measure, budget for and perform maintenance services with the idea that they are directly related to productivity. "Reliability has become a buzz word in manufacturing," says Don Reed, director of operations for UNICCO, the largest provider of maintenance and facility management services in the US. "However, lots of people have adopted the mantle, but not many live up to it." In order to do so, Reed says it is essential that whoever is in charge of maintenance be well-grounded in the principles of maintenance

reliability programs "If you don't have the right individual in place, you will not be able to take the best approach to maintenance and you will miss out on cost advantages," he says



The first step in this direction, according to Reed, is making a thorough list of all assets and the condition of those assets as well as the technical skills required to maintain them. Once

this comprehensive inventory has been conducted, managers will be able to determine if their existing workforce has the capacity and skills to keep up.

Auditing existing process performance and maintenance procedures,

including tracking equipment downtime and preventive maintenance procedures (how many tickets are issued, how many are completed on time, how many require repeat calls) will not only aid in creating a maintenance program that optimizes productivity, but also provide vital information for future planning. Understanding the maintenance needs of your facility today will help you to plan for improvements, upgrades and expansions.

Outside firms, such as UNICCO, can assist in this audit and also recommend and conduct training programs. Outsourcing maintenance planning and execution also is an option. "This is our core competency," says Reed "We bring the experience of all of our years of working with thousands of customers and, as a result, our customers can focus on their business."

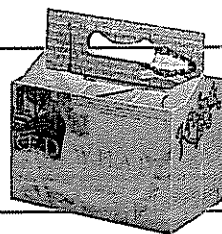
The most important thing, says Reed, is implementing a maintenance program that enables you to make the most of your capital and human assets. "If you have the right maintenance program in place you will improve not only your productivity and product safety, but also employee safety," he says. "And you'll do it with minimal disruption of the production process and while saving a lot of hidden costs." **BW**  
[www.unicco.com](http://www.unicco.com)

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