



Do you fit the bill?

8 Skills of Successful Maintenance Managers

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Introduction

As a maintenance and reliability professional, you have technical training of some kind, you have a basic knowledge of asset management principles, you have technical knowledge of the equipment you manage, and you have practical experience from years working in the field. These are the hard skills needed to perform your job.

However, technical education, training, and knowledge will not give you the skills you need to effectively manage a team of maintenance professionals. In addition to these hard skills, you need a very particular set of soft skills to excel in your role. If mastered, these skills will lead to greater productivity and efficiency across the maintenance team.

More importantly, they will lead to less stress, greater job satisfaction, and ongoing career achievement for you. This e-book will cover what those important skills are, and how you can master them.

1. Leadership Skills

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way”
- John C. Maxwell

To be a successful maintenance manager, you need to demonstrate leadership ability. You must be self-motivated, organized, trustworthy, empathetic and optimistic. A true leader has a clear vision of where they want the maintenance team to go and they set a positive example that encourages others to follow. To be a successful leader, your motivation and confidence must rub off on the team and create a healthy and productive work environment

Leadership is also about getting the job done properly through others. Delegating work to subordinates is an important function of management otherwise nothing ever gets done. Delegation frees up precious time so the manager can focus on high-level, high-value activities. Lead Great leaders get things done by inspiring and empowering others to do great work for them. They foster motivation by giving subordinates autonomy to do the job, by creating a supportive environment, and by giving recognition when the job is done well. Follow this simple process to ensure the job gets done correctly:

1. Set clear policies and ground rules such as the level of quality expected.
2. Select the best person for the task, not necessarily the superstar on the team, but the person with the right skills for the job.
3. Agree on what needs to get done and agree on the the timelines
4. Provide the resources needed to ensure they are successful and remove any roadblocks along the way.
5. Follow up at regular intervals to ensure they are on schedule.
6. Recognize them when the work is done well.





2. Interpersonal Skills

“Nothing I say this day will teach me anything.
If I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.”
- Larry King

One of the most important life skills is the ability to communicate clearly and concisely with those around you. Having good interpersonal skills means that other people are more likely to see you as calm, yet assertive and employers tend to promote employees with good interpersonal skills, as they can communicate effectively and maintain good relations with both colleagues and customers. Having excellent interpersonal skills will help you maximize the value of each interaction you have to everyone’s benefit. Maintenance managers negotiate daily with subordinates, management, suppliers, contractors, machine operators and project managers - so effective excellent interpersonal skills are crucial to their day-to-day jobs.

One of the best ways to develop your interpersonal skills is to practice active listening. It’s important to realize that listening is **not** the same as hearing. When we communicate, 45% of the time should be spent actively listening, which means you’re really paying attention to what is being said and not just waiting for your turn to speak. That way you’re sure to hear other people’s point of view. Good interpersonal skills can be the foundation on which other life skills are built on, so they must be continually improved and refined.

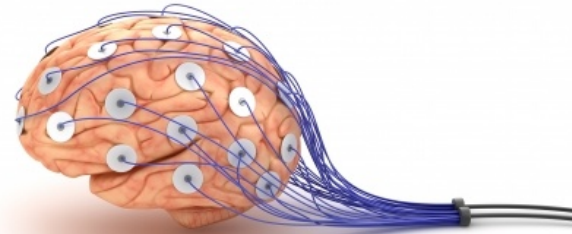
3. Problem Solving Skills

“It is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.”

- Abraham Maslow

Problem solving may seem like a straight forward skill to have, but it's actually considered to be one of the most complex intellectual abilities. According to a paper by Beyer (1995), critical thinking means making clear, reasoned judgments. Good critical thinkers can think clearly and rationally, solve problems systematically, and make the right decisions quickly.

Today's asset managers need to be both skilled critical thinkers and problem solvers in order to manage the maintenance budget, supervise a team of technicians, prioritize work based on need, manage maintenance metrics and stay on top of the latest technologies. Doing all of these things means processing lots of information quickly, and making quick, effective decisions. To do this, the most skilled asset managers will look at all the evidence, interpret the data, evaluate all the alternatives, and consider their top priorities to come up with a solution or suggestion.



Problem Solving Steps:

1. Figure out what the problem is
2. Gather the facts and come up with a plan of attack
3. Test out your solution to see if it worked or not
4. Did it work? Verify or revisit Step 2.

Problem Solving: The 5 Whys Technique

When you experience a problem, start by asking “Why did this happen?” Then repeat the process until a root cause becomes clear. By asking “Why?” repeatedly, you're filtering out the symptoms and uncovering the problem.

For example: Your company missed a big product order when some equipment broke down.

1. **Why did the equipment fail:** It overheated
2. **Why did it overheat:** Cooling fan failed
3. **Why did the cooling fan fail:** Regular service was missed
4. **Why was service missed:** Our paper tracking system was unorganized. It fell through the cracks.
5. **Why don't we have an automated preventive maintenance system?:** Our maintenance guy isn't good with computers

Now you know that just replacing the damaged fan means this problem will probably reoccur. The cooling fan wasn't the root of the problem, disorganization was. Now you know that you need a better maintenance management system, like a CMMS, to prevent this from reoccurring.

Read more about this here: <http://www.maintenanceassistant.com/blog/5-whys-simple-root-cause-analysis/>

SPOTLIGHT

4. Ability to Develop People

“The snake which cannot cast its skin has to die.” - Nietzsche

In any business, one of the biggest challenges is finding, developing and deploying the right talent in order to achieve business goals. A lot of organizations are very good at hiring and deploying the right people but they forget about the development part.

Change is inevitable, so your team needs ongoing training and development to learn new skills and take on bigger and more complex challenges. A successful maintenance manager works with subordinates to identify their areas for improvement and provide them with the training & development they need. Some people may want to further their skills through training and education; others may simply want more responsibility.

Hold regular knowledge transfers so the team can share information, ideas and experiences. Plan your work orders so experienced team members can mentor the less experienced. In addition, if you have well trained, capable people you will be able to quickly promote from within when more senior positions open up. Identify potential leaders in the group and reward them with promotion opportunities when you can.

Having the ability to develop people is an important skill for a maintenance manager to master, as it will create a culture of continuous learning and betterment. Make their long-term career development one of your top priorities as it leads to a high performing, productive and motivated maintenance team.



5. Time Management Skills

“You get to decide where your time goes. You can either spend it moving forward, or you can spend it putting out fires. You decide. And if you don’t decide, others will decide for you.”

- Tony Morgan

Time management is the process of organizing and planning how much of your time you spend on each activity in order to provide the greatest value for the organization. As maintenance managers, you are constantly interrupted and pulled in different directions by conflicting demands, so it can be difficult to plan your time.

Don’t run around trying to get everything done as it comes in

This is inefficient and leads to more stress, missed deadlines, and poor quality of work. Don’t confuse activity with achievement. Good time management requires a shift in thinking from getting stuff done to achieving results. It’s about working smarter, not harder. Spend 15 minutes each morning planning your day, stick to meeting schedules and ensure all meetings end on time.



You can use your [CMMS](#) to help plan your day, and your maintenance teams’ day, by prioritizing and scheduling the work. Insist all work requests are submitted through the guest request portal so your phone is not constantly ringing and you can get things done. You can schedule time in your day to review the work request queue. Reserve the phone for issues that could be critical to the business. The most effective maintenance managers have excellent time management skills and get more done in the same time. It’s a valuable skill that can be learned easily and then honed over time.

6. Teamwork Skills

“The strength of the team is each individual member.
The strength of each member is the team.”

- Phil Jackson

Teamwork is viewed as the most efficient way to get things done in any organization. The results achieved by the entire team are greater than the sum of the results achieved by the individuals. Why? Well, for one, when individuals work together as a team instead of going it alone they can bounce ideas off each other and arrive at the best solution quicker. Many hands also make for light work, so deadlines get met sooner.

Teamwork also often leads to better decisions, products, or services. All of this means that in your role as a maintenance manager you need to be looking out for and promoting behaviors that lead to effective teamwork.

Look for team players who are reliable, respectful, cooperative, flexible, and who show commitment to both the team and the task at hand. Those are the people you want to work with.

As a successful maintenance manager, you also need to recognize the different strengths in each individual member of the team and then create teams of people who complement each other and work well together. Putting two type-A personalities together is just asking for trouble.

Having the ability to get the most out of the team through teamwork and collaboration is a crucial skill to have and will take you a long way in your career.





7. Adaptability

“It is not the strongest or most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.”

- Charles Darwin

The world is changing fast. Markets evolve quickly, equipment and systems are getting more complex, health and safety is now the highest priority, Co2 emissions are influencing how we manufacture goods and we're using mobile apps for everything. Organizations must be adaptable to maintain a competitive advantage. The same is true for individuals. In today's fast paced environments, you cannot be set in your ways or you will get left behind. Change is inevitable, so the ability to adapt to change is a crucial skill for maintenance managers to have. In addition, great leaders also have the ability to facilitate change. The modern maintenance manager must have the ability to adapt quickly in response to changing circumstances and environments. They must be willing to embrace new ideas, new ways of working, and new technologies. The most adaptable individuals thrive on uncertainty and respond positively when their routine changes.

To become more adaptable, you must get out of your comfort zone and push the envelope. You must continually grow, improve and try new things. Learn new skills, adopt new technologies and continually reinvent yourself. Challenge the status quo, demonstrate openness to fresh ideas and loose the rigidity. Welcome new ways of doing everyday tasks or ways to make existing work processes more efficient. Being adaptable makes you more approachable and increases your ability to communicate with other people. It also makes you more able to handle change when it happens.



8. Stress Management

Stress affects your productivity, quality of work, and overall mental health.

If stress is allowed to build up over time, it can consume you. As a maintenance manager, having the ability to handle stress may not be a skill in the strictest sense but it can mean the difference between success and failure. Managing stress doesn't mean taking a deep breath

and just getting on with it, managing stress means controlling the things around you that can lead to stress. When you control the controllable you can reduce the chances you'll suffer from stress. If you have the skills mentioned in this book, you probably handle very little stress on a day-to-day basis. Having the skill to control stress will keep you in good spirits and positively affect those around you.



Did you know ...

Changes in health due to routine, daily stress from the pressures of work can be hard to notice at first. Over time, this continued strain on your body can lead to heart diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, anxiety and other illnesses.

Try to cope by focusing on what you did accomplish, and not the things that didn't get done. Learn to say no, to avoid becoming overwhelmed, and avoid dwelling on problems.

Read more about the effects of stress on your health here.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>

Conclusion

If your goal is to lead a team of maintenance engineers, then master these skills and you are sure to succeed. If you are already in a position of management, developing and refining these skills will help you get the most out of your team, help you gain greater respect from company executives, and give you more opportunities for career advancement.

Many of these skills intersect so improving one will have a big impact on others. Some of these skills will come naturally to you but they all will require additional effort to perfect. They will help you create a healthy work environment where employees look forward to coming to work and taking on more responsibility and exciting new challenges.

*“Leaders must be close enough to relate to others,
but far enough ahead to motivate them.”*

- John C. Maxwell

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