7 Maintenance Planning Mistakes to Avoid

While maintenance planning and scheduling go hand in hand when it comes to driving optimal equipment uptime and plant productivity, [they are distinct activities](#).

Essentially, maintenance managers pave the way for effective scheduling by preparing work orders that outline the plan for preventive maintenance tasks needing to get done. Work order details typically include instructions and/or manuals explaining how the work should be performed, the amount of time it should take, needed parts, and required technician skills, to name a few. Once work orders are created, maintenance scheduling can begin. At that step, the scheduling manager assigns specific tasks to be completed on a specific date by the available technician to do the work.

Common Maintenance Planning Mistakes

Considering the importance of maintenance planning it's essential to ensure this is handled flawlessly. Yet maintenance planners commonly make mistakes handling their many tasks – especially when business is expanding, and plants are churning out more products.

In a [separate post](#), we explained the role of maintenance scheduling and top mistakes to avoid. Now let's walk through common maintenance PLANNING mistakes.

Manually planning maintenance activities.

Many organizations call upon an ERP system like SAP – and the SAP Plant Maintenance (SAP PM) module for maintenance planning and scheduling, yet many overlook the opportunity to augment it with automation. Planning with SAP PM requires preparing each individual work order with numerous details. For instance, a final planning task in preparing preventive maintenance for scheduling is to check inventory and vendor turnaround time on replacement parts. When handled manually, such tasks are time-consuming, and errors can lead to parts not available when a technician is scheduled to complete the work.

Duplicating work orders

It is tedious to manage work orders and keep the backlog clean in SAP. As a result, it's not uncommon for the system to show duplicate work orders for preventive maintenance due to missed work. For example, if a monthly lubricating task was missed in February, the backlog would show two work orders in March: the missed one and the new one. One of those should be canceled. It is important to catch this issue and then close the duplicate work order in SAP.

Failing to prioritize preventive maintenance

Breakdown and corrective maintenance is critical when it occurs. However, when it overtakes and forces a significant deprioritization of preventive maintenance, it causes enormous stress for planners and schedulers to quickly triage situations – never mind the costly repairs, unplanned downtime, and lower productivity. This is compounded by reliance on paper-based work orders that make it challenging for maintenance schedulers to ensure preventive maintenance tasks occur in a timely and regular fashion. Rather than allow a backlog of preventive maintenance, it's best for planners to apply a prioritization scheme by raising the priority of those tasks that are missed a certain number of times and/or based on the criticality of the equipment.

Planning on the wrong cadence

Preventive maintenance tasks are often scheduled on the wrong cadence wasting maintenance resources including parts, materials, and technicians' time. It's important to consider equipment performance metrics and conditions as part of planning, it's even more important to base maintenance plans on the criticality of the equipment or component. Another mistake is to batch all preventive maintenance tasks together. Considering that preventive maintenance applies to somewhere between 5% and 11% of equipment components, it makes no sense to schedule all these tasks for the same time frame. In fact, it's far too costly to plan a huge production line shutdown to repair and replace numerous components over a few days—many of which won't need repair or replacing at that interval.

Ignoring equipment manufacturer recommendations.

Equipment manufacturers provide invaluable recommendations for optimal maintenance intervals, service procedures and spare parts. When reviewing equipment manufacturers' recommendations, maintenance planners can easily overlook such guidance, leading to premature equipment failures, suboptimal performance, and even warranty violations.

A planner's job is hampered without a history of failure and repair data within SAP to analyze. This history comes from capturing details about every maintenance task conducted including how long the task took, parts and materials used, what tools are needed etc. And for a breakdown or corrective repair, details are needed about the cause of failure, work tasks completed to fix the issue, amount of time it took to affect the repair and more.
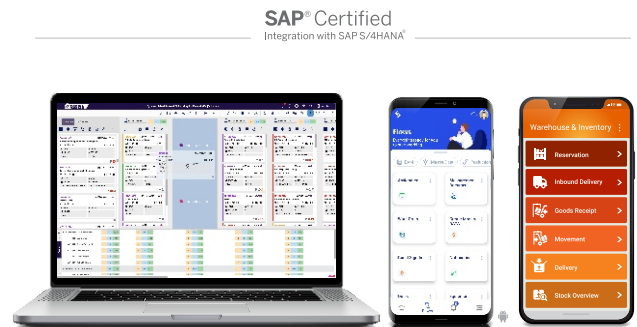
Adding to the data challenge is working with paper-based work orders. Not only the challenge of capturing complete notes, but the tedious task to open, update and close each work order individually within SAP to enter the data. Understandably, people will find shortcuts – meaning some information may be omitted. Even when all information is captured, data within open-text fields within SAP can vary greatly, depending on who is entering the information – making it nearly impossible to analyze this data with system tools.

Ideally, organizations replace their paper-based processes with solutions that ensure an accurate and complete trail of historical data that can be analyzed with modern-day machine learning and artificial intelligence solutions.

Optimize Maintenance Planning With the Right Software

With the right tools, maintenance planners can work more efficiently and help ensure equipment uptime that powers organization-wide productivity. When it comes to planning, the right software makes all the difference.

SAP® Certified
Integration with SAP S/4HANA®

Calling upon more than 20 years' experience with SAP, asset management, and industrial maintenance solutions, Sigga offers a Planning and Scheduling solution that integrates seamlessly with SAP and closes functionality gaps in SAP PM. Our planning and scheduling software is designed to support the near-term planning of a work order, whether for regular preventive maintenance or in response to a problem notification. With this solution, your company can better execute preventive maintenance activities by assigning the right technician to perform the right tasks in the most efficient manner.

Complementing this, Sigga's integrated mobile maintenance solution makes it possible to capture work timing and details about needed parts so technicians are empowered to complete more planned, preventive work within normal work shifts. At the same time, it creates a closed-loop process that improves future planning of preventive maintenance tasks.

By calling upon automation solutions like these, your organization can optimize maintenance planning, better utilize maintenance resources, and minimize breakdown maintenance for better ROI in your plant and facilities equipment.