

## **Solution Oriented Asset Reliability**

*A paradigm for immediate improvements in maintenance management*

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A Solution Oriented Asset Reliability program focuses on transforming today's problems into today's solutions by using several simple solution keys.

Managers learn to facilitate a new kind of language and conversation that points toward the future with an eye to the possibility of "*reliability solutions*" rather than "*reliability problems*". Analysis becomes brief and purposeful. When a strategy is solution oriented, analysis creates deliberate action that creates immediate results!

Many problems that create machinery malfunctions or failures are traceable to human causes. These behaviors are the ones we need to change. Searching for who is at fault or for someone to blame is not valuable and will not create a positive or lasting change. Changing the reason or the root-cause of the fault will usually create a lasting change.

People must be held accountable for their actions. They should be made aware of how those actions affect the operation of the plant. They can also be active participants in providing the solutions for ensuring that those problems are eliminated in the future.

Participants who join us in the search for Solution Oriented Asset Reliability will find themselves on a path leading toward greater competency and empowerment for everyone involved in plant maintenance and operations.

Solution Oriented Asset Reliability shifts *complaint talk* (statements that are filled with complaints) into action packed *solution talk* (statements that are filled with solutions)! Problems are mapped, goals are specified and the future becomes an instant reality.

The positive shift created by Solution Oriented Asset Reliability lays a solid foundation for any future maintenance initiatives such as improved Work Flow Management, Planning and Scheduling, TPM or RCM.

This presentation outlines a human approach to Action-Oriented Solutions for a maintenance operation. Each method is defined, explained and illustrated. By the end of this presentation, we will have exposed participants to a large selection of strategies.

### **Performance Improvement Challenges**

The following list displays the resources we generally have access to enhance performance.

- **Technologies** like CBM/PdM, sensors, computers, internet, wireless etc...
- **Strategies** like TPM, RCM, RBI, PMO etc...
- **Budgets** are available when a business case can be made or ROI demonstrated
- **Qualified people** are available and whatever skills they lack can be developed with training
- *So what is missing?*

***Asset Management Includes:***

- *Leadership*
- *Management Skills*
- *Communication*
- *Managing Change*
- *Team*

You cannot ignore the human side of Asset Reliability. Learn to understand your co-workers, managers and executives before you ask them to understand anything you are doing.

Without listening and understanding, you will not know enough about their concerns and what their priorities are. Learn the language of change to manage assets effectively in the 21st century.

People are not your best asset. Knowledgeable, team oriented, mission aligned and well trained people are your best assets. People are the number one cause of anything meaningful that will happen in your maintenance & reliability program.

What people say something affects what they think. What people think affects what they do. In order for you to affect what they do, you must work with what they say!

Most managers have been trained to understand Maslov's Hierarchy of Human Needs.

- *Physiological: (food, water, air, shelter)*
- *Safety: (safe from harm, security)*
- *Social: (need to be liked, need to be close to others)*
- *Esteem: (need to be recognized as a person of value)*
- *Self-actualization (doing what a person always desired to do; doing for what he/she is fitted)*

So the idea here is, that if you feed and cloth your people, make sure they work in a safe environment, love them and feed their egos, they will self actualize and achieve self fulfillment.

These aspects of life are certainly important in life. Making sure that you meet the physical and emotional needs of your people will go a long way to ensure higher performance and satisfaction. However, knowing these elements still does not answer the questions about what seems to be holding everything back!

### ***Knowledge Workers Have Choices***

If your company employs people who are particularly skilled at technologies like Vibration Analysis, Infrared Thermography, Oil Analysis or Alignment & Balancing, they are in great demand and have a freedom of choice about where and for whom they contribute their skills.

If your company employs people who have successfully managed a CMMS implementation, an MRO Stores optimization program, a TPM, PMO or RCM program, they can work in almost any company, anywhere, as these skills are highly sought after.

In the US, our entrepreneurial personalities along with continued corporate reengineering (downsizing) create additional opportunities for these practitioners to launch their own businesses, offering many of these same services.

If you want to keep your knowledge workers contributing to your program, you need to remember a few things:

- *Manage staff as if they were volunteers*
- *Knowledge workers are mobile and they can leave for sure!*
- *Knowledge workers must get satisfaction from their work*
- *Workers are partners, partners cannot be ordered, and they must be persuaded*
- *One does not manage people*
- *The task is to lead, coach and support people*

- *The goal is to make productive, the specific strengths and knowledge of each individual*

### **The People Side of Things**

You need your co-workers to develop an effective strategy to manage asset reliability. They are the ones who have the knowledge and experience.

They must be offered an opportunity to communicate, be listened to and acknowledged if you are expecting a positive and lasting outcome.

- ❖ Maintenance problems are best solved in two stages: (1) change the way people think (2) get them to apply their changed thought processes to technical/ process problems - one step at a time – *John Moubray, Author, Reliability Centered Maintenance and RCMII*

We call that change the viewing and change the doing!

### **The Management Side of Things**

It is the asset owner's responsibility to establish the paradigm of asset reliability. It is management's job to work through that paradigm.

### **Clear Planning & Direction**

It is critical to have a plan to reach a future destination. You may be off track 90% of the time, but who cares? With a plan and direction you can always find your way back on course. The key is to have a clear sense of direction. If everyone knows the destination, the journey will be much more effective.

Do not simply announce a new plan (even if you already know how to get to the destination). It is very important to involve everyone who will be affected by the plan in the planning process. Simply announcing a new plan reeks of a corporate plan d'jour! You may get your plan started but no one will buy in for the long haul unless they also have input into the process. No one will get involved without respectful communication and acknowledgement.

Employees will not get involved if they are not acknowledged. Not just heard, but acknowledged for what they say and where they are, not what you want them to say and not where you want them to be.

### ***Acknowledgement***

According to Merriam Webster: acknowledge is defined as

- 1) to admit as true
- 2) to recognize the authority or claims of
- 3) to respond to
- 4) to state that one has received

It further defines acknowledgment as

- 1) a declaration or avowal of one's act or of a fact to give it legal validity.

Acknowledgement:

- Requires comprehension
- Is not passive listening
- Must be respectful
- Natural Curiosity or Interest
- Caring is also helpful

## **Solution Oriented Asset Reliability™**

The SOAR concepts we will cover today were originally created by Bill O'Hanlon, a noted psychotherapist, for patient use. We adapted these same strategies to maintenance. Detailed problem analysis is not required; the focus is on changing human responses. They are a series of reflections/responses that acknowledge and promote positive change without manipulation. If you can change what is said - you will change what is thought - and change what is done.

Other components of SOAR include process mapping and making a business case for an integrated reliability program based in well established elements of successful maintenance programs. SOAR holds asset owners accountable for creating the paradigm for asset management. This area of SOAR is not covered in this presentation.

### **SOAR Techniques**

We break these reflections/responses into a few categories for you to remember them. Use the ones you think will work for you. We use examples from a manager perspective however these same techniques work equally well for co-workers or even for your management.

- **Future Talk** – Move the current problem orientation to a solution oriented future
- **Dissolving Impossibility Talk** – Move impossible to possible
- **Solution Talk** – Move problem into solution
- **Video Talk** – Use specifics (vivid pictures) to create solutions
- **Side Door Talk** – Use the secret language of salesman to create solutions

#### **Future Talk**

- **Method #1 Expectancy Talk** - Use phrases that create expectancy such as “yet”, “so far”, “up to now”, and “when”
- **Method #2 Problems into Goals** - Turn problems into goal statements
- **Method #3 The Crystal Ball** - Ask people to envision a future in which the situation is better, a problem is resolved or a goal is reached

#### **Dissolving Impossibility Talk**

- **Method #1 Spinning Problems Into The Past** - Use the past tense when people speak about current problems or limitations
- **Method #2 Going Un-global** - Respond to generalized statements by restating them with slight changes in the quantifiers and qualifiers
- **Method #3 Spinning Reality Perceptions** - Reflect limitation statements by inserting perception phrases in them

#### **Solution Talk**

- **Method #1 Exceptions to the Rule** - Ask people to detail times when they haven't experienced a problem
- **Method #2 Worst Case Comparison** - This is a backward way of finding solutions. Ask why it is not worse than it is

#### **Video Talk – what is it?**

- ❖ **Type #1: Politician Talk** - Easily misunderstood and vague. It is non-specific subject to different interpretations
- ❖ **Type #2: Crabby Cab Driver Talk** - Creates problems by blaming or analyzing. People do not like to be blamed or analyzed. Analysis may lead to an understanding but not a solution. Blame and analysis may hinder solutions

- *Method #1: **Action Complaints** - Get people to complain in Video Talk rather than political or cab driver talk about things they do not like*
- *Method #2: **Action Requests** - Get people to talk about they would like to see happen, specifically, in the future*
- *Method #3: **Action Praise** - Instead of general praise or compliments, tell people specifically what you liked about their actions or the results they got*
- *Method #4: **Action Commitments** - Ask people to agree to do a certain action or to produce a certain result by a specific time*
- *Method #5: **Committed Listener for Accountability** - Ask a people to make sure a follow up and/or a follow through is completed*
- *Method #6: **Just the Facts, Ma'am** - Ask people to detail complaints to replace vague or blaming words*

### **Side Door Talk**

- *Method #1: **The Yes Set** - Start a conversation with a series of easily agreed to statements or questions. Then follow with a series of questions that are more leading*
- *Method #2: **The No Set** - Opposite of the Yes Set. Use it when people are being negative or resistant. Use questions with obvious "no" answers, followed by the questions you want a no answer to*
- *Method #3: **Hidden Messages** - This method involves verbal & non-verbal emphasis of certain words and phrases*

### **10 Solution Keys for Solution Oriented Asset Reliability**

*Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting the different results.* If you change the viewing, you will change the doing.

- *Break problem patterns*
- *Use solution patterns*
- *Know where it comes from*
- *Create a new focus*
- *Envision a future without the problem*
- *Change problem-talk into solution-speak*
- *Use inspiration to resolve problems*
- *Use action oriented speech to solve problems*
- *Perform a ceremony once the problem is solved*
- *Develop methods of connecting people that create solutions*

**Break problem patterns** – Breaking a problems pattern does not have to be complicated. Small and simple changes can create profound effects. Look for opportunities to change the timing, the location, the sequence of events that leads to the problem, even the language of how the problem is described

**Use solution patterns** – Try something that worked in the past on this or another problem. Repeat past actions that made the problem less severe or even solved it

**Know where it comes from** - Be aware of how this problem has been created and dealt with in the past as well as peoples responses to it. The past can provide useful information for creating change in the present.

**Create a new focus** – Focus creates expanded attention and awareness. It also sends a clear message that the problem and its solution are important!

**Envision a future without the problem** – Stop looking at the past and imagine a future in which the problem is solved. Now work backwards to figure out what you need to do to make a problem a reality.

**Change problem-talk into solution-speak** – Substitute solution words and ideas for typical problem words when referring to the situation, i.e. change “*breakdowns are just normal operating procedure around here*” to “*we have developed great skill to react to unexpected breakdowns, now lets focus on eliminating the need to exercise that skill!*”

**Use inspiration to resolve problems** – Do not hesitate to visualize how your hero’s such as presidents, writers, movie characters, philosophers and other important figures would solve the problem.

**Use action oriented speech to solve problems** – Stick to facts rather than interpretations. Describe what happened as if you could see and hear the event on television. This will make your communication be received in a non-defensive manner. Action requests, action complaints and action praise.

**Perform a ceremony once the problem is solved** – It is important to acknowledge and mark the success of a problem transitioning into a solution. This helps everyone involved move on. (Time limited actions)

**Develop methods of connecting people that create solutions** – adopt regular activities that prevent future problems and connect everyone’s jobs to each other

### ***Summary***

Lighten Up! These are not rules, just suggestions for more effective and satisfying communication. They are designed to support the small and immediate changes that will lead to big changes over time. Use the ones that work for you.

Remember that what people say affects what they think. Remember that what people think affects what they do. Use respectful listening and acknowledgement to promote change. People; their experience, and what they know, are really your most valuable asset!

***Presenter Bio:*** Terrence O’Hanlon, CMRP, is the publisher of Reliabilityweb.com (<http://www.reliabilityweb.com>), the solution oriented asset reliability web site for the plant maintenance community. He is also a member of The Association of Facilities Engineers (AFE) and the Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals (SMRP). He has over 20 years experience in industrial maintenance & reliability and a certified maintenance & reliability professional (CMRP). He writes a monthly column for Maintenance Technology magazine and has published many articles in magazines such as Chemical Processing, MRO Today, Maintenance Journal (Australia) and Industrial Maintenance (UK). He can be reached via email at [tohanlon@reliabilityweb.com](mailto:tohanlon@reliabilityweb.com)