

8 Attributes of Successful Reliability Projects

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1. Start with value in mind.

Successful projects start with the value in mind. This is where we fail often. We use criticality as a means of defining value, when it really doesn't do that at all.

If we do criticality properly, and that is doubtful often, then it will define our most important assets – not our greatest value.

Focus on the Value Quadrant. Most companies look for revenue first, then costs, then risk and then knowledge. Make sure to tie it to your own company's views and what your management thinks.

I might agree that risk is most important, or that knowledge is truly the most important. I might, but I am not paying the bills in your company. So get an understanding of what your management wants.

As a guide you need to be shooting for at least 10x the cost of the work. (Preferably a lot more)

Achieving success is easy, under promise and over deliver. That doesn't mean you promise nothing.

You won't get very far like that.

No. You promise a lot, and deliver a lot more.

2. Only productive work, no waste!

Focus, focus, focus!

I have been waging my own personal war against waste now for several years. What do you want to get out of this project, as defined by your value statements, and what is the best way to achieve that.

If you are implementing RCM it makes no sense at all to train everybody to a facilitator level. That's waste in execution.

Instead focus on spending more time doing technical training with senior management. Keep your eye on the ball, and if the work doesn't contribute to the end goal then cut it or don't start it.

Once you have a budget in the millions, or even the hundreds of thousands, it is easy to start meandering all over the place. "But what about this" or "If we just did this as well as could get a lot more value" and so on.

It all sounds great, but it isn't what you started out to do. In consulting we call this scope creep and it can be fatal to the success of the project. If an idea comes up that warrants additional work, then define it as its own mini-project, get approval and funding, and set it free.

3. Be Inclusive

You've seen this before haven't you? That group of industry experts who are sequestered off into a far away part of the company for months on end. And then all of a sudden they turn up with demands on how you need to change!

Don't become those guys!

Every part of the company needs to understand what's in it for them. Or the value of the work, this is not a directive it's a conversation!

Don't demand change. It won't work, no matter how important your sponsor is.

You need to convince them, just as you did with the sponsor, that this project will deliver outstanding value, value that it is worth having.

Then, and only then, start talking to them about what you need from them. Not before! If you don't take this step then your initiative will be resented, your efforts will be resisted, and you will need to roll out the project on a "do it or else" basis.

And that's not sustainable.

4. Tie it to wider strategic goals

If you are in physical asset management, in any industry, then your goal is to achieve minimum cost for a given level of performance and risk. Period!

When you bill it down it is that simple.

So you need to be able to paint the picture, very clearly, of how your initiative fits into the wider whole-of-life management. How it will aid the company to increase net present value and how it complement other initiatives in this framework.

We do not want to be part of the "program of the month" crowd.

5. Calculate, quantify and record the value

The default approach to value by many of my clients seems to be to go for statements like "to improve the efficiency" or "to reduce the number of failures".

Unfortunately the approach of their boss is generally along the lines of "What's it worth?"

I train my RCM facilitators to be thinking of benefits even before they finish the analysis. I train them to speak confidently about big figures, even if they are only 60% sure.

What will the boss say if you tell him that you are 60% sure that he will be able to increase revenues by \$5 million over the next two years?"

"Come back when you're sure"

Great, thanks! You just received the scarcest commodity in your company, the time of the executive leadership.

You need to be continually thinking about what value this will provide, quantifying it and recording it.

In fact, you should plan your project to release regular short bursts of improvement, which you can track and record to help build momentum.

Does it match where you started out from? It had better.

If it doesn't then you were very wrong, or you lied. Either way you're not in good shape now and you can only blame yourself.

6. Telling tales

It is not enough to do a good job. People need to be made aware that you are doing a good job!

If you're anything like me then this area can cause heartache. We often don't like crowing about what we have achieved, we don't think we should be boastful, and anyway shouldn't

they already know?

Unfortunately, my experience is that generally they won't notice. "They" (your management and stakeholders) are busy. They have many, many things drawing on their attention and they don't often have time to look into things that are not on their radar.

So put it firmly in front of them.

As you get near important milestones you need to make sure people are aware of the value that you have already created. For example, this should be done at the end of every RCM or RCA analysis.

The temptation is to wait until the benefits are actually achieved. This is not the right way to do it. You need to be forecasting benefits, honestly, and telling everybody about them.

Some tips:

- Get trained in presentation skills, not PowerPoint® skills but how to tell a story
- Don't just present facts. People are more receptive to stories. Put the facts in context. Wrap them up into an inspirational story. Stories get remembered, facts get questioned. Stories are entertaining, facts are often torture.
- Get the lowest ranking person on the team to present to the highest ranking person you have access to. This isn't just about you. It's not a chance for you to be grandstanding. It's a chance for your initiative to get noticed. This is very, very powerful.

7. Prove it!

Analyses by themselves do nothing. Any form of study does nothing without the action required to implement.

Implementation is where we all fall down very regularly. We do splendid analyses, train high level facilitators, and don't focus on what happens next.

In fact, in times of great change companies will put greater value on people who can execute; not just come up with the ideas. Everybody has good ideas, few people can make them a reality.

Work processes, authorization processes, escalation systems, data management, involvement, continuous improvement. You name it. You need to think the project out all the way through, not just to the end of the analytical stage. Or just to the end of installing the online condition monitoring equipment.

And once it goes in, record the results. Prove that what you are saying is true. And, if anything, you were actually understating the value of the work you did.

People will trust you without facts. They will be persuaded that your initiative is worthwhile and that they should support you.

But if real world facts do not materialize in quick order, then it won't last long.

8. Be persistent, reliability does achieve results!

This is probably the hardest lesson to learn.

It all starts well. The easy benefits are found, resolved and banked. The management are behind the project, and everything is smooth sailing.

Then you hit the rocks.

Implementation is harder than you thought. Management is concerned about the drain on resources.

The sponsor has turned her attention to the next big idea. It's hard to keep going; you feel you are on the losing side. Don't panic, don't over extend, and don't stop.

If it is well implemented reliability will achieve incredible results. The jury is in on this now, and today we know this to be a fact!

The reason why there are not many companies out there who have successfully implemented a value adding reliability program is because this is exactly the point where they quit. So don't quit. Check you approach, adjust, change, and continue.

Reliability will yield great results. Your company will be far better off because of it, and you will be among the small number of successful professionals globally who have been able to do this.