



Work Order Scheduling Strategies

Work Order Scheduling is one of the areas within the world class components many organizations struggle with. Work Order Scheduling (**WOS**) is attempted in many forms but, in most cases, has limited success because maintenance supervisors and managers miss or overlook some of the key strategies that are essential if you want **WOS** to be successful.

One of the first things to talk about is why we want to schedule or, in other words, why is it important to us and/or to our organization and customers. The reasons are several.

First is *Customer Service*. We must have a structured maintenance process that allows us to commit to our customers when we will be on the job site to perform the promised work. This is a little like working with the "cable guy" when we continue to promise we will do things but we never show up on time which reduces customer satisfaction, lowers moral, and increases the daily work chaos. If we want to improve customer satisfaction and their willingness to work with the maintenance organization we must be reliable and perform as we promise. This will change their perception of the typical maintenance group and their employees.

The second reason is to improve maintenance *Labor Efficiency*. If work is scheduled successfully the cost to perform the work will be significantly be reduced. When the cost to perform work is reduced, that is an indication the work was completed more efficiently which allows the maintenance group to complete more work with the same staff. The third reason for WOS is that it typically, if done well, results in improved the work quality and safety.

So we have improved customer satisfaction, lower costs, have a higher efficiency rate, improved quality, and safety. Then why do most organizations not do it or when they try, do it poorly?

Well the answer to that may be a little more than I can discuss or resolve in this Tip of the Month, but I will try to at least hit the four key strategies for WOS.

(1) The first key strategy is what I talked about, having the desire and understanding that **WOS** is important to successful maintenance programs. Once you understand how important it is then you can begin to look into the details on how to make it happen. All organizations should have a written **WOS**. This written **WOS** should be completed with discipline and never sacrificed for other "more important events". I have included as part of this tip of the month a very simple **WOS** which identifies the work to be schedule and the technician assigned to complete the work by the day of the week and the hour of the day. ([Weekly Work Schedule](#))

(2) The second critical strategy, and some would say the most important of them all, is to have a competent work order planning component. The single reason work scheduling is successful in organizations is that all work placed on the **WOS** has a detailed and complete work plan. When I say a detailed and complete work plan I mean a work plan that includes and identifies: all parts, all special tools, and all special jobs steps needed to properly complete the planned job. Once you have a work order with these components and included an accurate estimate of the time required to complete the work then it is easy to schedule the work with your customers. To understand the concept of a well-planned work just think for a well develop cooking recipe. It has the parts, tools,



and processes clearly identified. A well executed work order from a well designed work schedule is just like the Thanksgiving dinner on the table at the perfect time with the perfect taste!

(3) The third critical strategy to successful work order scheduling is to never over schedule your maintenance team(s). Many organizations believe that if they over schedule technicians they will get more done each week. The truth is completely the opposite of that. When one continually over schedules, the perception is that: **a.** Nothing is a high priority and **b.** Nothing is important. The result is to continue plodding along and attempt to do whatever a technician considers is the next most important work assignment.

The key is to **add** up your total available hours, **subtract** your normal amount of reactive work, and **subtract** your normal lost man-hours (personal time, vacation, meetings, etc), **equals** total available man-hours.

Of the remaining amount available man-hours schedule only 60-70%. Once you are successful at completing above 95% of your schedule on a regular basis then begin to increase the total hours scheduled. So the bottom-line strategies are:

- Have a written Weekly Work Schedule
- All work on the schedule is completely planned
- Never over schedule
- Measure you schedule compliance (should always be above 95%)

The key here is to set your goals, have a solid plan to begin scheduling work, and always have a method in place to measure you progress.