

ASSET MANAGEMENT MORE THAN YOUR COMPUTER PROGRAM

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There are different perceptions of asset management within our industry. Utility managers and technicians often point to their computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) or enterprise asset management system (EAMS), when asked if they have an “asset management program.” It is not uncommon to hear the phrase, “We purchased our software five years ago, so we have an asset management program.”

Unfortunately, this thought process is like someone purchasing a stethoscope and saying they practice medicine! The software tool that sheds light on the program and quantifies success is being confused with the asset management program itself. Why is that a problem? Because it can lead us to expect results from the software alone. Implementing and maintaining software programs is an expensive task. We can be left disappointed when we wind up with expensive time-keeping devices, instead of robust asset management programs.

Organizations can become so focused on implementing software that they see the implementation itself as the end of the asset management journey when in fact it is the beginning. Asset management is about making informed decisions to help us gain value from our assets. Our software programs help us be informed in our decision making, they cannot make the decisions for us!

How do you know if your CMMS is working well for you? You may already have a good sense from office discussions about unnecessary data entry and other frustrations. But another option is to just look at the data. How often is the program being used and how many individuals in the organization are using it?

To move from expensive time-keeping device to asset management tool, utilities can take simple steps that focus on informed decision making. Here are three steps we think organizations can leverage today.

Pick a Goal and Work Down

Fundamentally, asset management is about taking the goals of your organization and using your assets to help you realize them. This can feel overwhelming, but it does not have to be. Start small with something that motivates you. Perhaps minimizing emergency repairs is very important to your organization. Work down from this goal to understand how your CMMS can help you track and manage it. In the below example, this was done using Maximo, an enterprise asset management software (EAMS), to track emergency repairs and better understand how that was impacting the organization.

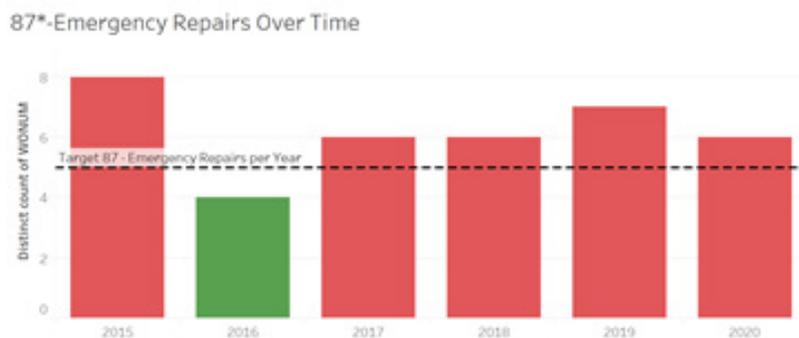


Figure 1: Tracking emergency repairs is one example of linking CMMS data to goals

In the beginning, you may find that this method reveals more data collection problems than it provides answers. But uncovering missing data, inconsistent data entry, and analysis blind spots is exactly the point of this exercise. It gives you the tools needed to start collecting and reporting on the information you need.



Empower Staff Decision Making

Field staff know a system better than anyone else in the organization. But it can be hard to convert their insights into actionable strategies. Luckily, your CMMS is the perfect listening tool. Perhaps you already collect data on where you perform work and inspect assets but struggle with what to do with the data. Highlighting this data to field staff can pinpoint and resolve problem areas.

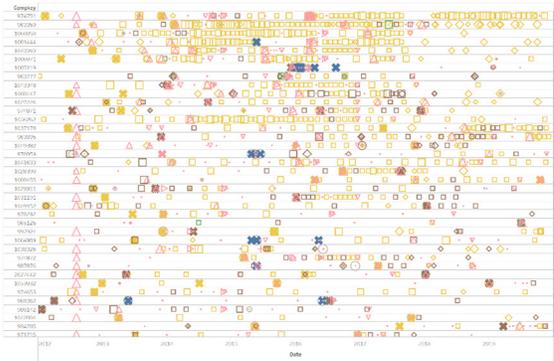


Figure 2: Comparing failure information against maintenance history can help empower decisions in the field

Consider the data-filled graphic above, which maps sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) against maintenance activities as collected in Infor, another commonly used resource planning software. Showing this to field staff can empower everyone to improve maintenance intervals, identify hot spots, and solve problems. It also has the added benefit of getting the staff that collects the data excited about using the organization's asset management tool.

Look at Your Reports

The best place to find where you can leverage your CMMS to build your asset management program is to simply look at your existing utility reports. Do you have a monthly production report? Do you need to track the hours spent on corrective maintenance? You may be doing this manually; taking paper forms and recording them in Excel to produce bar charts. Generating these reports takes time and migrating the data production to your CMMS not only saves frustration, but it also saves valuable staff resources as well.

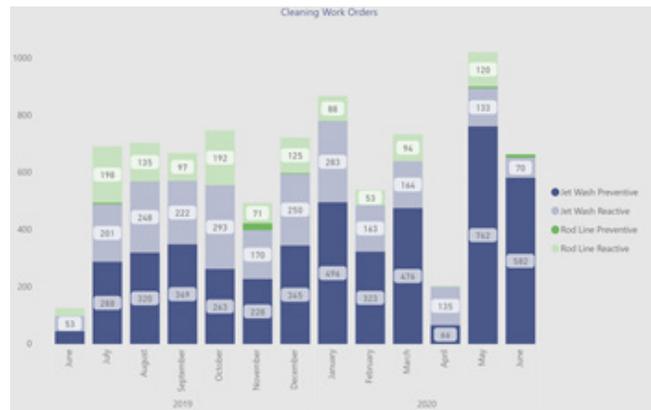


Figure 3: Automating reports like this preventative maintenance one can increase accuracy and save time

The organization, used as an example in Figure 3, used to manually calculate preventative maintenance activities on a monthly basis, which cost dozens of hours of valuable field staff time. Migrating this data collection and production to Cityworks, this organization's CMMS, streamlined the process and reduced overall frustration with collecting valuable field data.

Ultimately, realizing value from a CMMS or EAMS does not require a fundamental restart or reimplementing of the program. The largest hurdle is to rethink the purpose of the software; that the CMMS is not your asset management program but a tool. Once you see it as a tool, it is easy to start using it to pick up the low hanging fruit in your organization and start a journey of building a robust asset management program.

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