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for maintenance reliability and asset management professionals

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- Maintenance Planning & Scheduling
- Managing Maintenance
- MRO Spare Parts Management
- Failure Mode and Effect Analysis
- Root Cause Analysis
- Leadership

DANGER

Not Safe to Work Here?

You can rest assured knowing that in a safety and reliability poll of 1,000 industry chief executive officers, all 1,000 professed the desire to lead and/or head safe and reliable companies. But there is a gap between aspiration and achievement, and there is much work to be done in closing that gap, as an Uptime reader's letter shows. The reader asked for direction, which this article will try to provide.

The reader expressed frustration working as a maintenance manager in a factory, writing:

First of all, thanks go out to the reader for relating his experience and reaching out for a solution. We all know quite well that he's not the only one facing this dilemma. The reader is very concerned, and rightly so, with the inevitable cause and effect relationships that pertain to all industrial incidents. These incidents range from the simple and inconsequential to the catastrophic and life changing.

That said, these six tangible steps are recommended. A more specific example follows, which highlights how the reader could move from what is perceived as mere opinion to unassailable hard facts.

- Start keeping a pocket-size journal quietly and make detailed notes when you see something unsafe. Write down what it is, what risk results from it and what you suggest may solve the issue.
- Always follow-up by informing a supervisor or boss about the situation and your suggestion. Do it in writing and safeguard your own copy of the communication.
- Write down the recipient's reply, date and time of response. Do not leave the journal laying around anywhere. Get a new pocket-size journal when the old one is full. This also will keep your head clear and ensure you do not lose sensitivity to violations.
- Continue to commit details to your journal no matter what. This is extremely important. While it may not change anything, it will, nevertheless, protect you in case something bad happens. And something *will* happen, sooner or later.

"I see unsafe actions or conditions every day. Whenever I then confront the responsible unit supervisors, they tell me that's how it has always been done here. Or, if I explain to the employees involved that such and such is not a safe practice, they threaten me or yell in my face while the production manager stands by and laughs it off. My sense of self-respect tells me to fight back, but my manager's training and sense of self-preservation take over and I follow the chain of command.

"But nothing happens. I have been here for only nine months and am already looking for a new job. I love what I do, but I cherish working in a safe environment more. I don't want anyone to get hurt or worse. I have brought up some big equipment safety issues with management and even with the company's vice president. The inevitable answer mentions budget constraints and affordable cost run-ups. I know that's not a sensible answer.

"What advice would you give me?"

- Remind yourself to stay focused on finding a new opportunity.
- Give your new ideas to your next opportunity.

In addition to these recommendations, this reader and others in similar lower management job functions should intuitively ask why safer and more reliable work processes and procedures are often hard to sell to superiors. The answer usually is that people tend to convey opinions instead of facts. Opinions can be right or wrong; they can and will be disputed. In sharp contrast, facts are facts, regardless of how they are attacked or disputed. That's where this example on the next page comes in.

Fact-based recommendations are far more likely to carry weight, especially if you also explain both costs and benefits in quantifiable ways. So, with regard to our reader's question, if he gives fact-based and quantitative recommendations and his organization still disregards him, he should take it as a signal to switch jobs.

This may be a good time for the reader and others facing a similar situation to review the current job postings on reliabilityweb.com. Click on the jobs menu to view the listings. You can also use the Reliability Resume Matching service. Just be sure to indicate in your resume if you wish to travel or stay local.

Bright and highly motivated employees should endeavor to work only for someone who is delighted to have them.

This article is based on a letter to the Publisher. The result and reply was crafted by Terrence O'Hanlon with review and suggestions by Heinz Bloch. We acknowledge Heinz Bloch as our guide to doing things right and his amazing ability to create clarity in the fog that arises on the road to reliability. His guidance has proven invaluable for thousands in the reliability community.

EXAMPLE

Examine the two illustrations. You will perhaps express the *opinion* that the oil ring in **Figure 1** moves back and forth and will probably abrade. But, if you go the additional step and measure a new oil ring before you start the machine, as in **Figure 2**, left side, and remeasure after operating it for a few months, as in **Figure 2**, right side, you will capture the difference between the two measurements. The difference is converted into abrasion product. At that point, you are dealing with an *indisputable fact* and should recommend highly tangible remedial steps or actions to prevent this from ever happening again. To make these recommendations, you have to read a few pages in one of many reputable sources, such as books or scholarly journals, which provide more in-depth details and explanations. If you don't have time to read and absorb the information, you revert to being an opinion giver and will not mature to becoming a fact-based submitter. The choice is yours.

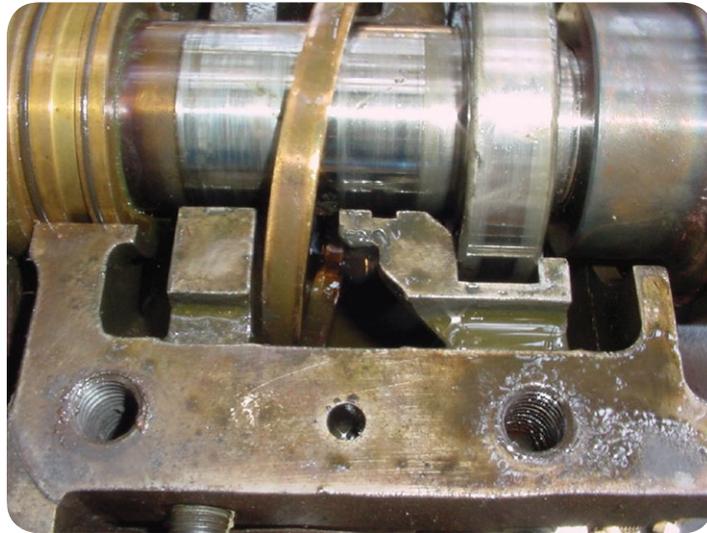


Figure 1: An oil ring which tends to move around and touch the inside of the bearing housing



Figure 2: If this is the before versus after oil ring condition and a measurable amount of metal is missing, abrasion becomes an indisputable fact



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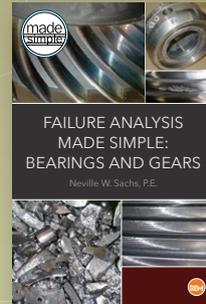
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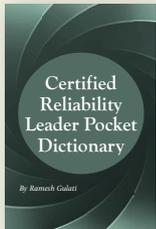
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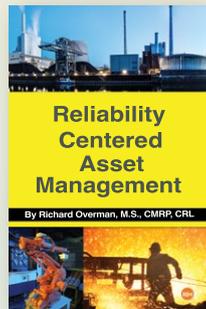
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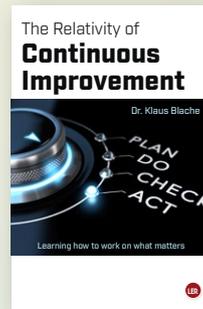
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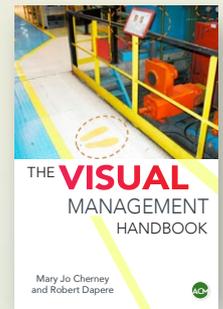
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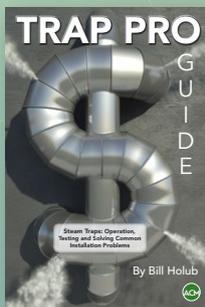


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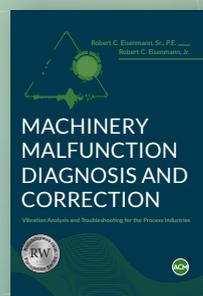


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