



Sharpen Your Tools

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Down Get to Business

Nine tactics to manage a facility department's bottom line

As any facility manager knows, the bottom line is one of the driving forces behind every decision made in a company. By thoughtfully managing your department's bottom line, you can help ensure the success of your team—and the company as a whole.

Here are nine tips toward effective time and budget management:

1. Be a thinker, then a doer Though it may be cliché to suggest planning before executing, many leaders work reactively instead of proactively. Today's economic uncertainty, competitive environment and old work habits have created conditions in which planning is sacrificed for the sake of execution.

Phil Musgrove of the Brookings Institution suggests businesses or departments can spend 1 percent of their budget upfront in planning, or take three times longer to complete projects over time. In an eight-hour day, that means spending five minutes listing, scheduling, delegating and anticipating a reasonable investment for a significant return. Have a maintenance plan for each trade, and then decide among the "do, delegate, defer or dump" options for each area of maintenance to be executed.

2. Define reality

Answers to the following questions provide the basis for making wise business decisions:

- What is important?
- How is it measured?
- Is the business meeting each benchmark?
- Where should the business be?
- Are there outliers to be considered?
- What is the value of the difference (over time) between where it is and where it should be?
- What is the plan for moving forward?
- What are the constraints to making the change?

3. Create change

People respond to change in one of the following ways: deny, ignore, react, anticipate or create. The most common tendency is to react, although creating change would be the most effective. Real deliberate progress comes from clarifying the department's or company's vision, setting goals that relate to and support the vision, and then outlining plans that lead to the attainment of each goal. While this formula is well known and proven, it's often overlooked.

4. Ruthlessly prioritize activities

Once a plan has outlined who needs to do what and when, stick to it. Work on the few critical tasks rather than the many trivial tasks, and review everyone's calendar to ensure work is performed consistently.

5. Make meetings meaningful

Insist that every meeting of any size or length follow these

guidelines:

- The meeting's purpose and desired outcomes are defined before the meeting begins.
- The agenda addresses meeting objectives and allots enough time to complete everything.
- Actionable items that arise during the meeting are documented and provided to each participant.

The outline, which includes what must be done by whom and when, establishes accountability and provides a checkpoint for review at the next meeting.

6. Tighten the chain

Map the company's "contact-to-contract" process, identifying the factors that influence with whom it does business and their impact on the successful execution of your maintenance plan. Assign team members to build meaningful relationships with these vendors or customers and understand each party's needs.

7. Ask high-impact questions

Questioning is the No. 1 skill for building relationships and creating long-term partnerships. Giving forethought to a situation reveals missing information that must be sought. Develop questions that drill down to discover insights that drive follow-up actions, while respecting others' rights.

8. Listen actively

Communication involves sharing information for mutual understanding. The person who best understands a situation is most likely to guide its outcome. Make sure to listen actively when a partner shares an idea.

9. Follow the money

By mapping the contact-to-contract process, documenting the value chain and actively listening, the real value associated with each trade becomes clearer. Knowing the

economics beyond the scope makes it possible to align the company's capabilities to deliver value that impacts your profitability and productivity while helping achieve company objectives.

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